

The Future of Library Liaison Relationships

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A Special Issue on Liaison Librarian Roles

ARL Special Report on Liaison Librarian Roles

- Liaison positions exist at nearly every research library, and a **recent ARL member survey documented a substantial broadening of liaison roles.**
- Many believe that liaison librarian functions are **becoming more central** to fulfilling the library's mission in a digital age.
- While research libraries may agree on the importance of the position, **how to reconfigure liaison work** has become a topic of broad concern.
- **Identifying emerging roles and determining how to develop corresponding liaison capabilities are common challenges.**

Recurrent Themes within ARL Libraries

- **New forms of relationship building on campus**
 - **central to effective liaison functions and**
 - **needed to respond to the changing work of faculty and researchers and to constantly evolving learning outcomes, research processes, and communication practices.**
- **Research libraries are increasingly seeking to influence larger dialogs about changing practices that are occurring on campuses and within disciplines.**
- **Liaison librarians need well-developed, high-trust relationships to create strategic opportunities to participate in and influence disciplinary and departmental decisions.**

Activities and Skills of Liaisons

- The **range of activities** addressed through liaison work is **growing**.
- Liaison librarians increasingly need the **ability to acquire new skills and leverage more specialized expertise among their library colleagues in service of their clients**.
- Liaisons **cannot be expert themselves in each new capability**, but knowing when to call in a colleague, or how to describe appropriate expert capabilities to faculty, will be key to the new liaison role.
- Just as researchers are often **working in teams to leverage compatible expertise**, liaison librarians will need to be team builders among library experts where this advances client research.

ARL--How to Move Forward

- While there may be growing consensus on where to go, **how to make the journey is a pressing question.**
- Organizations will need to **map out different routes** to address their particular circumstances, but for fellow travelers the authors have some helpful observations and astute insights to offer.

ARL Liaison Report and RULibraries—Mapping our Future

- Dialogue to discuss the ARL report
- Liaison Task Force
- Framed the issue for a May 7 Forum
 1. Amplify the educational role of librarians
 2. Emphasize the scholarly communication role of librarians
 3. Strengthen the remote delivery of research/reference services

What is the future role for library liaisons at Rutgers?

The Rutgers University Libraries have engaged in a series of discussions over the past year focused on re-conceiving research libraries for the 21st century. The CLIR report, *No Drip/Candle*, followed by the Scholarly Environment in the Digital Age symposium, and Jim Neal's talk—"Primal Innovation and Radical Innovation: Deconstructing the Future of the Academic Research Library" provided much to think about as we move into a new era of delivering library services on campus.

Given all the changes in scholarly communication and the impact of new technologies on campus, combined with another round of budget cuts and organizational reviews, we have a fresh opportunity to rethink the ways that we interact with the Rutgers community.

Recently published reports and articles provide a baseline for considering new ways to position librarians on campus. A team of librarians has reviewed those reports to create a framework for discussion about the evolution of new roles and institutional strategies for liaison work here at Rutgers.

A dialogue about new approaches to working with the Rutgers community will provide library staff from all library units an opportunity to talk together about possibilities for strengthening campus relationships related to library services, instruction, and scholarly communication. The discussion will allow us to talk through the principles that matter to us, consider the pros and cons, costs, tradeoffs and consequences of various options and determine we're willing to accept in order to move forward.

Approach 1—Amplify the educational role of librarians

Actions to Implement

- Determine best practices for collaborating with the teaching faculty to incorporate information literacy into the curriculum
- Learn more about the content and method used by the teaching faculty to promote critical thinking and help students learn
- Strengthen relationships with graduate programs.
- Create incentives for closer collaboration and innovation between faculty and librarians
- Encourage self-help through new media tutorials/guides at the point of need

Supporters Would Say

- Reaches faculty and students where they work
- Builds credibility as faculty and with students
- Taps new sources of revenue for support
- Demonstrates the value of librarians to the educational mission of Rutgers

Opponents Would Say

- Takes too much time from other roles
- Requires a change of Rutgers culture first
- Not too little income and impact for time investment

Tradeoffs

- Takes time away from other worthy instruction efforts
- Utilizes canned rather than innovative customized tools developed locally

What is the future role for library liaisons at Rutgers?

Approach 2—Emphasize the scholarly communication role of librarians

Actions to Implement

- Educate and dialog with constituents about such issues like copyright, open access, and privacy
- Know scholarship patterns to foster joint development of new tools and resources
- Advocate sustainable economic models of scholarly communication
- Partner in building agile and responsive scholarly learning communities
- Create new structures and titles for liaisons that reflect their enhanced roles

Supporters Would Say

- Needs change to stay relevant
- Builds upon positive experiences with BU Core and dialogue launched through faculty forums
- Communicates value of alternative models
- Strengthens partnership with faculty

Opponents Would Say

- Takes away from other important initiatives
- Anticipates faculty acceptance that is not assured
- Saves too little to make a difference

Tradeoffs

- Requires less time spent on other activities
- Shifts selector role to new areas of expertise that must be learned

Approach 3—Strengthen the remote delivery of research/reference services

Actions to Implement

- Embed library liaisons more directly in the life of the academic units
- Partner with faculty and students in the creation and assessment of knowledge
- Adopt a tiered model for scheduled, pooled reference services
- Engage users where they do their work
- Provide different modalities for face-to-face reference services

Supporters Would Say

- Engages users where they do their work
- Blends the library into University goals and interests
- Provides a clearer path of referral to specialists
- Offers staff more flexibility and mobility in delivering services

Opponents Would Say

- Removes librarians from face to face interaction
- Reallocates already limited time of librarians
- Decreases visibility within the library

Tradeoffs

- Embeds support outside library leaving less coverage inside
- Requires reallocation of just in case to just in time model of service

The advantage of deliberative dialogue

- Engaged librarians in learning about options tried elsewhere;
- Allowed people to reason and talk together to make tough choices;
- Encouraged people to weigh possibilities rather than dismiss them;
- Kept people focused on outcomes;
- Gave everyone an opportunity to participate;
- Helped people focus on areas where they agree so they can move toward effective action;
- Let people work through a problem to develop a shared sense of direction for moving ahead.

Dialogue Outcomes

- Deliberated: People explored the pros/cons/consequences/tradeoffs/costs of each approach.
- Candid, rich discussion--talked openly about struggles and aspirations
- Gave examples and personal experiences
- Safe space to explore possibilities
- Found substantial common ground,
- A different kind of talk, another way to act

Common Ground

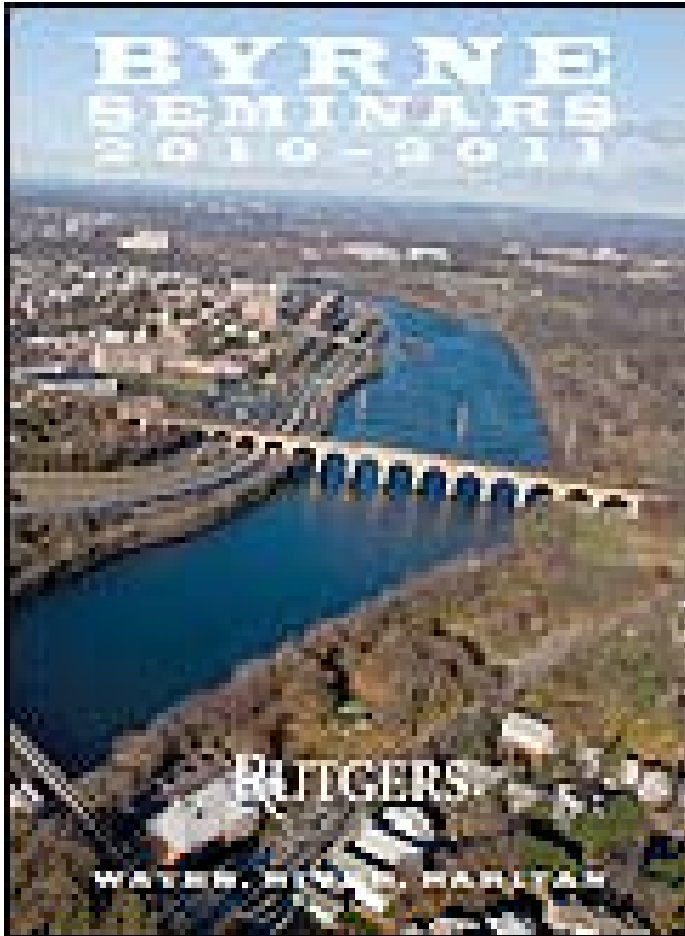
- We want to reach out, **engage**, and do the right work
- There is a **gap** between what we're doing now and what we would like to do
- We need to come up with a **shared understanding** of our respective and group **strengths**
- Greater **familiarity with University activities** will inform our work

Common Ground (cont.)

- We need to **prioritize** what we do
- We can **do more together** than we can do individually
- We need to **embed** ourselves where users do their work
- We need to look at our services **holistically**
- We need to **engage** in meaningful, synergistic relationship-building and collaborations

Faculty Meeting June 11

- Reviewed the Forum
- People presented examples of successful liaison efforts underway
- Agreed to form an Action Team to follow up with the ideas and concerns generated by the dialogue



*RU*core

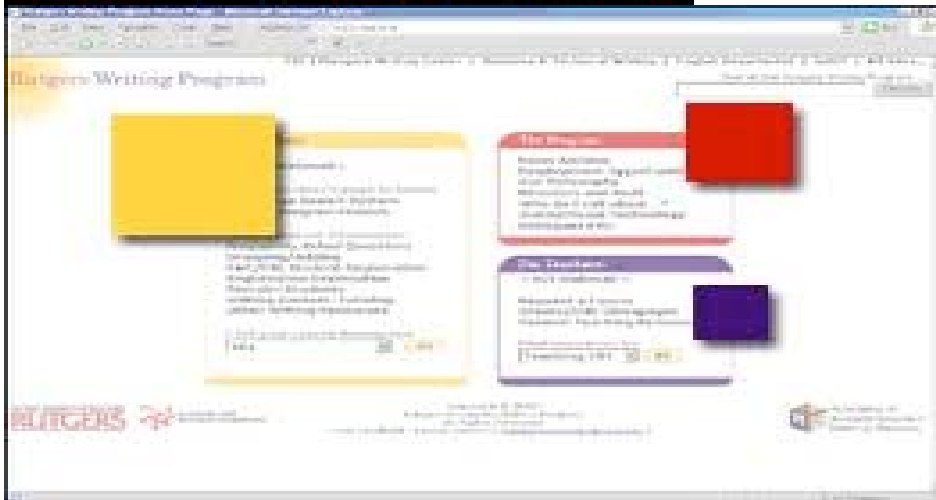
Rutgers University Community Repository

» [RUcore](#) » [Search Portals](#) » Classics Text Portal

Classics Text Portal

Creating digital libraries in specific subject areas is both very important for academic departments. Rutgers University Libraries is addressing this with the Classics Texts Portal. Using the subject Browse list is a convenient way to become an Author represented include Aristotle, Boethius, Epictetus, Galen and across the entire collection for those texts that are in English.

--Quick Browse by author and titles or search by keyword



Next Steps—Action Team

- Develop an action agenda
- Prioritize
- Identify existing models that can be replicated
- Low hanging fruit
- Share the positive things we're doing
- Work in teams/we are all liaisons—across 3 areas
- Create relationships beyond traditional departments
- Embed ourselves

Turning Outward

- People want to see **action**
- **Nimble, agile, catalytic, visible**
- Learn more about the real **needs and aspirations** of the RU community
- Prioritize essential efforts that are **relevant** and **significant**
- Focus on areas where we can make an **impact**
- Identify **assets** we can bring and assets elsewhere
- Important that we **be where students and faculty are**
- Energize, **high impact**, value of library contributions

New Roles for Library Liaisons

1. Engage more directly with scholars in knowledge creation and dissemination
2. Embed physically and virtually in teaching, learning and research, through courseware, curricular planning, academic units and other means.
3. Focus on the needs and aspirations of the Rutgers community and how they relate to the library's mission.

New Roles for Library Liaisons (cont)

4. Work as team members to interact with liaison units.
5. Work more directly with the whole university.
6. Integrate reference and instructional services, resource development and management, and scholarly communication into the work of individual liaisons.

New liaison activities underway 2010-2011

- Courseware integration and tools
- Distance learning tutorials and other tools
- LibGuides development, coordination, integration into teaching, learning, and scholarship
- International programs
- International collections initiatives
- Expanded data services
- Promotion of RUCore and related services

New liaison activities underway 2010-2011 (cont)

- Support for multimedia expression and evaluation
- Science database and citation analysis workshops
- Copyright webinars
- Byrne seminar collaboration
- Customized Portals, including RU Research Data, Classics and the Center for Women's Global Leadership Poster Project
- Need assessments of Newark science departments
- Digitization-on-demand of out-of-copyright resources

New liaison activities under consideration 2011 and beyond

- Author's Rights guides and education
- Open Access initiative
- Profiling university units
- Incorporation of library liaison and Libguide information into syllabi
- LSM Initiatives
- Mobile services
- Information literacy initiatives across the curriculum

Vision Statement

- Actions important
- But realized we needed a common vision to guide our work
- Discussed the elements of our vision
- How to redefine liaison responsibilities
- New roles and the skills we will need
- Considered indicators that would reflect if we had achieved our vision
- Document drafted and reviewed by the Action team, NBCG, P&CC (visited in December to discuss changing roles, February to discuss Vision)

Rutgers University Libraries

Liaison Relationships: A Vision for the Future

Our Vision

We seek to strengthen our partnership with the Rutgers University community to advance research, teaching, and scholarly communication. In order to establish more robust liaison relationships, we must move from a collection-centered to an engagement-centered model of service.¹ Engagement-centered libraries—“getting in the flow of users,”² whether in virtual or physical contexts—will shape our work, individually and collectively.

Putting the Libraries in a more strategic position within the academy and within our diverse community will diffuse our influence throughout the campus, integrating our services and resources into strategic campus initiatives, and improving the value delivered to students, faculty, and staff. By targeting and engaging services that save time and enhance scholarship, built around user workflow, the Rutgers community will recognize our increased value to the academic enterprise.

Over the coming years, we need to turn outward, and reposition the Libraries from repository to strategic university asset that engages deeply in the teaching, learning, and research processes. As the academic enterprise transforms, the library must remain an essential player in this paradigm shift. We must increase awareness of the importance of information resources, tools, organization, architecture, and literacy.

Turning outward will reposition the libraries to occupy a more visible, highly valued role on campus. Transformation from our traditional role building collections, providing access, and delivering information services will allow us to demonstrate value and increase our impact on campus.

¹Wright, “The new model for us.” ²Wright, “Liaison and Service are Essential to Academic Research.”

Elements of Our Vision

- Desire to turn outward, to engage more directly with the Rutgers Community
- Strengthen our partnerships on campus
- Reposition the libraries to occupy a more visible, valued role on campus
- Move from a collection-centered to an engagement-centered model of service
- Get in the flow of our users
- Increase impact/value
- Create a narrative to articulate our vision
- Help us navigate an ever-changing landscape

To achieve the Vision

- Restructure from an individual to a team-based response
- Strengthen and blend services/instruction/scholarly communication
- Prioritize liaison activities and realign relationships
- Turning outward requires us to pivot and take a bold step forward—Intentionality
- Authority and accountability

Vision Next Steps

- Continue the conversation
- Not looking for perfect document, but guidance on where we wish to go
- So far, very positive feedback, energizing discussions
- Many feel the conversation and vision inspiring.
- Now we must work toward calibrating our work so that it is relevant and significant

Turning Outward Toward Our Community—Increased Impact

- Our task is to gain clarity on the following points:
- What are the **real needs and aspirations** of people in our community--and how do they relate to our mission;
- What are the **essential priorities** for our work -- so that our efforts are **relevant** and **significant** within our communities;
- What **does impact mean** so we can focus on those areas where we are making a genuine contribution;
- **What assets** do we have to put up against this work -- and what other assets exist somewhere in the community?

Ultimate Goal

- Increased support for the Libraries,
- Better integration of the Libraries in strategic campus initiatives, and
- Improvements in the value delivered to students, faculty, and staff.

Liaison Action Team: Next Steps

- Action Agenda
- Vision Statement (draft available)
- Vision Strategies
- Liaison Job Description
- Liaison Assembly--Thursday, March 3, 12:00-2:00, Pane Room, Dana, Robson
- Identify Additional Rutgers Units
- Inventory Library Faculty and Staff Assets

Thanks to the Liaison Action Team

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