Research Calisthenics in the City of Angels: One Archivist’s Experience at the Institute for Research Design in Librarianship (IRDL)

By Elizabeth Surles, Archivist, Institute of Jazz Studies, Dana Library, Rutgers University—Newark

IRDL goal
- Increase the number of academic librarians with specific research skills in conducting and disseminating the results of research

IRDL is a partnership among the Loyola Marymount University William H. Hannon Library, the San José State University School of Library and Information Science, and the Statewide California Electronic Library Consortium (SCELC). This project is made possible in part by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

My goals
- Learn research methodology
- Develop a research proposal
- Learn to use statistical analysis software
- Network professionally
- Gain confidence and begin to publish

IRDL Curriculum Objectives
- Write effective research questions & hypotheses
- Choose an appropriate research design
- Conduct a literature review
- Explain the conceptual logic behind various data collection approaches and describe the rationale for selection of specific methods
- Access & participate in the Institute virtual community and related networks for support during the research process
- Identify appropriate sampling strategies
- Use & apply commonly used qualitative data collection methods
- Assess & apply different qualitative data analysis options
- Design & implement a survey
- Understand survey data management
- Explain various analytic options for surveys
- Write & disseminate effective research report

IRDL Instructors
- Greg Guest, Research Director, FHI 360
- Lili Luo, Associate Professor, School of Information, San Jose State University
- Michael Stephens, Assistant Professor, School of Information, San Jose State University

IRDL will continue in 2015 and 2016. The next proposal submission and application deadline is February 1, 2015. For more information visit IRDLonline.org.

Outcome
The most beneficial outcome from attending the IRDL has been the variety of ways I’ve adapted and reused my final IRDL proposal, “Sharing Notes: Current Music Description Practice in the Context of DACS.”

From conference papers to blog posts, developing the proposal has helped me pursue research, writing, and publication with more confidence and enthusiasm. I also benefited from attending the IRDL because of the program’s emphasis on building a research network. Using web 2.0 technology to maintain the IRDL community has created synergy and excitement.

The IRDL is a “nine-day summer research bootcamp” designed to provide academic and research librarians with training and support to help them propose and complete a significant, high-quality research project. I attended the IRDL June 15-27, 2014 at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) in Los Angeles. The IRDL brought together 22 librarians, 1 data services specialist, 1 data analyst, and me, the lone archivist. We stayed on the LMU campus and attended intensive research methodology and publishing workshops, and practiced using web 2.0 tools to launch an online IRDL community.

At the IRDL I learned to evaluate the quality of research questions, qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, sampling strategies, and the rationale for using a specific project design. As the only archivist, I wondered to what extent I could apply what I learned in an archival context, but because the focus of the curriculum was revising our research proposals, I applied many concepts we learned during the workshops when I revised subsequent proposal versions. With one-on-one consultations and dedicated writing time, IRDL instructors assisted our efforts to improve our proposals.

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IRDL Instructors, Principle Investigators, and Program Personnel

Photo (E. Surles): William H Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University