Closing the Distance: Bringing a Personal Librarian Program to Online Learners
Who am I?

Name: Amanda Ziegler
Institution: University of West Florida
Title: Online Outreach Librarian
Years at institution: 6+
Years in position: 1
Years position has existed: 1
Learning Outcomes

● Identify benefits of a personal librarian program for online students

● Identify (and anticipate!) possible road-blocks and difficulties

● Be prepared to develop your own personal librarian program
What was the problem?

- 30% of students at UWF are in entirely online programs
- Historical reliance upon relationships with individual faculty members for instruction invitations meant little contact with entirely online courses and programs
- Limited time and resources
Why not go with an embedded librarian model?
EMBEDDED LIBRARIANSHIP

1) Can be time consuming
2) Reliant on faculty
3) Lacks direct connection with students
We wanted to play to our strengths: Personal connection with our students.
How We Did It
Setting up the program

Online
- Assigned to subject specialists
- 2 emails per semester

Traditional
- Assigned alphabetically
- 6 emails per semester

Both programs began in Fall of 2013
# Guidelines

## How Can my PL Help Me?

**Your PL will:**

- Assist with finding information for your research assignments by helping you identify relevant resources and databases, demonstrating how to use them, and helping you understand citation
- Help you locate materials held in other libraries
- Help you when you have trouble accessing the Library's website or an electronic resource
- Answer questions about library policies, procedures, and services
- Keep you informed of new resources, services, and programs
- Put you in contact with other UWF academic support units that can help you with information technology questions, writing assistance, or tutoring services

**Your PL will NOT:**

- Do your research, write your paper, or edit your paper
- Replace advisement roles of any other department on campus
- Proctor your exam
- Make photocopies
Hello,

Greetings from the University of West Florida Libraries! You have been identified as an online learner at UWF and there are some helpful library resources that I hope will make your research assignments easier. First, let me introduce myself. My name is Amanda Ziegler and I am the Professional Studies and Online Outreach Librarian at the University of West Florida. I have a background as a Children’s and Teen Librarian, and particularly focused on early literacy, encouraging reading for enjoyment and outreach to English language learners at the schools in my community while working in public libraries. Now as an academic librarian, I enjoy connecting with students of all ages. I am here to answer any questions you may have, help you locate library resources and take advantage of library services- some especially for online and distance learners. I look forward to getting to know you and helping you locate the resources you need!

If you need research assistance, don’t hesitate to email (aziegler@uwf.edu), call me (850-474-2439), or contact me to set up an appointment via Skype (screen name: azieglerUWF). I am happy to:

- Assist with finding information for your research assignments by helping you identify relevant resources and databases, demonstrating how to use them, and helping you understand citations.
- Help you locate materials held in other libraries
- Help you when you have trouble accessing the Library’s website or an electronic resource
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As online learners, there are library services specifically designed for you (check out this research guide: http://libguides.uwf.edu/online). Some of these services are:

- Online tutorials (http://library.uwf.edu/tutorials/) and research guides
- The Digital Library (http://library.uwf.edu/digital-library) for multimedia resources
- Interlibrary Loan (http://library.uwf.edu/interlibrary-loan) for hard-to-get books and articles
CHALLENGES

● Collaboration across departments (also an advantage!)
● Getting students personal information (email addresses)
● Getting student information in a timely manner (2nd Year)
● Having to use GradesFirst in 3rd Year (also an advantage!)
● No differentiation of statistics in the first 2.5 years between traditional and online PL programs
● Having to write content that appeals to new AND continuing students for the Online emails
SUCCESS!!

- 10% response rate for the first year was consistent with library literature
- Responses from online students FAR outpace responses from traditional PL students!
- Faculty and advisors LOVE this model!
- Student response is VERY enthusiastic
Student Responses

- Finding resources for an assignment
- Citation help
- Finding a particular article or book
- Need non-library help and aren’t sure where to go
- Where do I start with…?
- Can I meet with you?
How to not make our mistakes

- Give yourself as much lead time as possible when dealing with other departments on campus! Make your needs clear!
- Use buzzwords to emphasize importance: RETENTION! ACCREDITATION!
- Think about tone and timing of communication
- Put assessment first; find a way to differentiate statistics for your online PL program from other stats
- Make it look pretty! Use audio and video if possible.
- Keep it short, sweet and simple! More responses to shorter emails.

BOTTOM LINE: Don’t be afraid to fail! That has been our biggest success!
Future Program Plans

- Use some images (picture of librarian, video)
- Improve formatting to make it more visually interesting
- Stick with 3 per semester for emails (intro, midterm, finals)
- Send out an online specific survey at the end of the program
- Use consistent theming/visual cues with the products we are working on with embedded courses
- Better subject lines in our emails!
- Differentiate between new and returning students
Ideas for Assessment

What We Use

● End of program survey

● Track interactions
  ○ Type
  ○ Time (>/< 20 min)
  ○ Date/person

What I’d Like to Do

● Retention Data

● GPA Data

● Repeat vs. One off interactions
Step by Step Guide

1) Decide who is going to organize and spearhead
2) Get buy in from other librarians (this is easy! Not time intensive!)
3) Who do you need to approach for student data? Approach them now. Remember your buzzwords.
4) What are your goals? How will you define success?
5) How are you going to assess those goals?
6) Draft your communication plan- what is the best method and frequency for your institution?
7) Draft your communication- keep it engaging.
8) Let teaching faculty know you are doing this.
Questions?

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