The Liaison Kitchen: Discover What’s Cooking

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The Liaison Kitchen: Discover What's Cooking
University of Houston Libraries

Featured Chefs: Catherine Essinger, Adrian Ho, Irene Ke

The Ingredients:
The Origin of the Liaison Kitchen
In 2007 the University of Houston Libraries launched an investigation into best practices for subject librarians.

Ingredient: Environmental Scan
The scan determined what outreach methods had been most effective for UH subject librarians.

Ingredient: Focus Groups
Focus groups gathered new ideas from the faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students.

The Meal:
The Liaison Kitchen

The project concluded with a workshop for all subject librarians, The Liaison Kitchen, where subject librarians “tasted” the research data, selected and discussed “menu items,” and “cooked up” an action plan for the year.

Entrees: Workshop content
I. Communication Methods:
The librarians at the UH have adopted many communication methods, such as virtual library pages, blogs, newsletters, and others. Focus groups, however, indicated that not every method works well with every user group.

II. Two-Way Communication
The workshop leaders facilitated a discussion that let librarians learn from one another’s experiences and brainstorm solutions.

III. Collaboration
Participants were asked to plan a collaborative project with a campus partner as if creating a recipe. After brainstorming, they could formally propose it to the partner.

Sides: Handouts
Participants were provided with a number of culinary-themed handouts designed to record ideas, reinforce the workshop content, and gather feedback.

Recipe for Success:
Meeting customer Expectations: The Rule of Biscuits and Gravy

Desserts: Post-workshop projects & Mitigating Kitchen Nightmares
The UH liaisons have been busy this year.

Recipe for Success:
Introducing new library services: White chocolate mousse

Menu for feedback
A group problem solving exercise at the workshop allowed the librarians work collectively on the challenges they reported in the environmental scan and identify solutions.

History and Political Science Librarian Alexandra Simons hosted an election night and an inauguration viewing in the library, which she heavily marketed to her departments.

Art librarian Catherine Essinger supplemented promotional gift bags with play-doh and other fun items for her art professors.

Business and economics librarian Loretta Wallace souped up her services with customized webpages, online tutorials, and a facebook page. So popular were her efforts that she was given a consulting space within the business college itself.

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