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Kill the One-Shot: Using a Collaboration Rubric to Liberate the Librarian-Instructor Partnership

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Using a Collaboration Rubric to LIBERATE the Librarian-Instructor Partnership

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Institutional Background

Valparaiso University is a private, independent Lutheran institution with five undergraduate colleges, a graduate studies program and a law school. The student body is currently composed of about 3,100 undergraduate students and 700 law and graduate students.

The student-faculty ratio is 13:1. Grounded in the liberal arts, Valpo's programs include Valpo Core, a first-year experience unit that is meant to initiate freshmen into the "life of the mind" through textual dialogue.

Students admitted to the honors program, Christ College, complete Freshman Program, an intensive two-semester seminar in the great books tradition.

Instruction Environment and Priorities

Currently, the university writing program is a driving initiative. The University director of writing is implementing a vertical writing intensive curriculum that includes writing in the disciplines. She holds ongoing Writing Intensive Curriculum (WIC) training seminars for faculty with an assignment design component. The seminars include information literacy (IL) workshops facilitated by librarians. The WIC courses must integrate IL instruction, and faculty are required to consult with librarians within their subject areas to determine how best to incorporate IL and IL educators into their courses. Once faculty complete the seminar and demonstrate that the course under review fulfills the WIC requirements, they may add the writing intensive designation. Students are required to take WIC courses.

In addition to the writing program, other positive collaborations occur through the first-year programs. CORE and Freshman Program faculty partnerships have led to increased information literacy instruction and improved assignments. Subject faculty engaged in the capstone experience also often partner with library faculty on both assignment design and instruction; these collaborations invite an embedded instruction model.

While the environment for collaboration across campus has many positive features, there is still much work to be done. The librarians are challenged by the fact that information literacy can be defined differently amongst different constituencies, even within the library itself. Librarians frequently encounter faculty or administrators who relegate IL to a set of skills and the teaching as show-and-tell.

Instruction Program Content

Our program provides course-related and course integrated one-shot information literacy instruction sessions that are often paired with individual student research consultations; this is the predominant structure.

Many librarians are also embedded in courses within their liaison areas, and the level of embeddedness, as well as instruction construct, varies.

Online-only instruction has occurred as well. Librarians also present regular freshman orientation programming.

Impetus for the Rubric

The Valparaiso librarians have had varying levels of success with convincing subject faculty of the importance of integrating IL into the curriculum. Formal and informal conversations with subject faculty, especially surrounding the launch of the writing-intensive courses, suggested that some faculty who were resistant to IL had a limited understanding of what it might mean to collaborate with a librarian. These subject faculty often had a narrow, one-size-fits-all conception of library instruction, assuming it would take place in the library, last an entire class period, be mostly a repeat of content that students had learned previously, and not be customized to their particular courses' needs.

The problem seemed to be a lack of imagination on the subject faculty's part and lack of clear communication on the library's part. When deeper conversations between library and subject faculty revealed a willingness to integrate IL instruction, especially after the instruction's potential usefulness was better understood, the authors decided that a document was necessary, in order to explain to other "IL doubters" how library collaboration can come in a variety of forms.



Recommendations

Let go of what may be comfortable. If the 50-minute one-shot is holding your IL instruction hostage, it may be difficult to change. However, you will find it freeing to up-end the status quo. Entice that old instruction model over to a window and...do your best work.

Identify promising faculty spaces, i.e. points of entry. Valpo librarians realized that the new writing program provided a good opportunity to bring IL to the faculty. There was institutional buy-in for this new program, and the director of writing understood the importance of IL education. The authors cultivated this relationship and were able to join the faculty training workshops. Such points of entry likely exist in other campus contexts. It can take time to establish relationships and build connections, but the authors have noticed that opening one door and doing good work leads to more opportunities. Be open, present and engaged. Confidently have your elevator pitch at the ready. Then be judicious about where you spend your energy.

Use the rubric to improve existing contexts. You might already use an IL instruction model, but feel that it is not working as well as it should. Perhaps you feel constrained by faculty expectations or ingrained departmental practices. Introduce the rubric and let it help you offer creative alternatives. It is possible instructors will be pleasantly surprised and open to change.

Use the rubric to make your case to instructors new to library instruction. The rubric is very useful when you are first establishing an IL instruction model. Rather than breaking the one-shot habit, you can begin where you mean to end. By negotiating your involvement based on the particular needs of the instructor and students, as well as what you are willing and able to offer, you will build a solid, sustainable foundation that is custom built. It will function much more effectively than a one-size-fits-all structure.

Outcomes

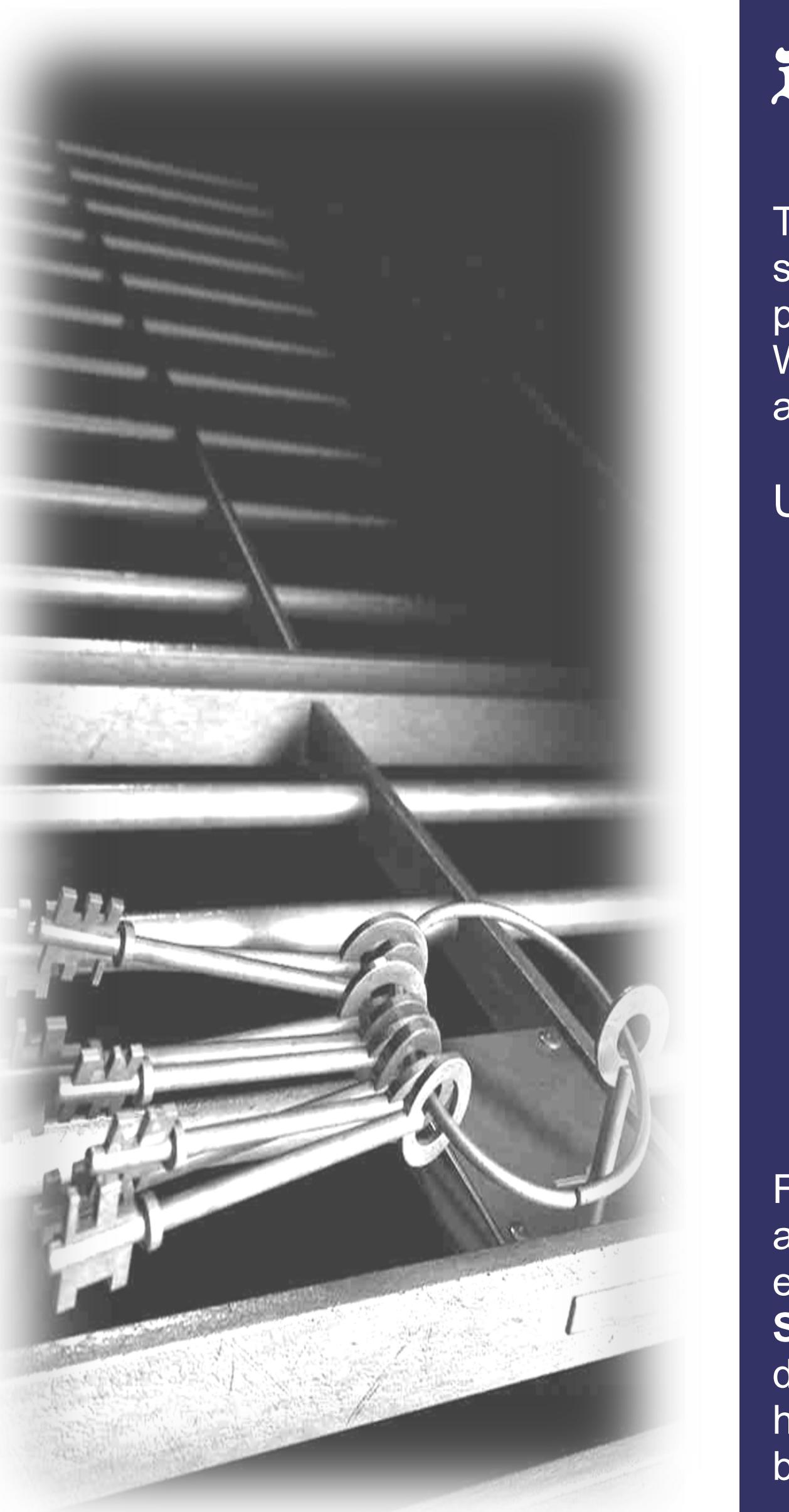
The collaboration rubric has been indispensable to Valpo librarians as they have worked to integrate IL into the curriculum on their campus. Following are some of the major dimensions of how the rubric has contributed to this work.

Negotiation Tool. By giving instructors many ways of understanding library collaboration, the rubric serves as a "foot in the door" for librarians. Because it presents multiple options, it moves the conversation from "No" to "Well, maybe," allowing librarians then to work with subject faculty to negotiate what might be best for a particular course.

Librarians' Agency. The rubric also opens up the conversation about what, exactly, librarians might bring to the classroom. The rubric shatters the myth that librarians have one, singular "library presentation" that they just dust off and present repeatedly. Instead, because the rubric includes lenses for **Teaching Content Level**, **Teaching Time**, and other pedagogical choices, it creates space for librarians and instructors to have a discussion about what content the librarian could share with the students. Through such conversations, instructors can come to see librarians as peer colleagues who are capable of employing a variety of methods to teach a range of IL competencies, relevant to the students' needs and abilities.

Optimization Within the Classroom. Because the rubric suggests so many lenses through which to understand IL instruction, it allows librarians and instructors to choose library instruction options that are best for that particular course. As Valpo librarians frequently tell the instructors, they don't want to be involved in every class at the superlative level -- it is not scalable and has diminishing returns on investment. In some courses, a 30-minute classroom visit from the librarian might be best, allowing just enough time for a refresher on particular resources. In other writing- and research-intensive courses, sustained contact over multiple sessions might be best, with students even required to meet with the librarian one-on-one for personal consultations, as IL competencies are reinforced. As another example, some courses need customized LibGuide pages; others could just rely on the general discipline LibGuide.

Winning Over IL Doubters. The rubric has been a powerful tool in winning over "IL doubters" -- those subject faculty who previously had little respect for the librarians as teachers. The rubric shows subject faculty that information literacy is a serious, multifaceted discipline, and that librarians are in fact IL experts. It also shows instructors that collaborating with the librarian does not have to be onerous. Rather, the librarian is willing to be flexible and to customize instruction to the course's needs. Furthermore, the rubric suggests many aspects of collaboration that subject faculty simply have never considered before, such as assignment design and assessment. On numerous occasions, after presenting this rubric to a roomful of subject faculty, the authors have heard comments of "I never knew librarians would do that!"



Developing the Rubric

To encourage subject faculty to think more creatively about the prospect of working with a librarian, the authors decided to create a rubric. The authors sought to identify the major categories or "lenses" through which to understand librarian-instructor collaboration. The authors reviewed the library literature pertinent to such collaborations, including Junisbai, Lowe & Tagge (2016), Cassidy & Hendrickson (2013), Lindstrom & Shonrock (2006), Gardner and White-Farnham (2013), and Smith & Dailey (2013). Through this review of the literature, several common themes emerged. To these themes, the authors also added additional lenses that they deemed important from their own personal experiences.

Ultimately, nine lenses emerged:

- Design of Support Materials (e.g., LibGuides)
- Student Contact Outside of Classroom
- Design of Assignments
- Visibility in Virtual Spaces
- Classroom Visibility
- Timing of Support
- Teaching Time (Length)
- Assessment of Student Learning
- Teaching Content Level

For each lens, the authors gave examples along a spectrum of involvement. They wanted to show that different levels of involvement might be more appropriate for different courses, depending on the course level, the program of study, the assignments, etc. The goal was to shatter subject faculty's expectations by showing that, with library instruction, no one-size-fits-all exists. The levels of involvement range from **None**, to **Minimal**, **Healthy**, and **Superlative**. Each term was chosen to be as neutral as possible, to suggest that the level of involvement is not a moral judgment but rather a determination of whatever is best for that particular course. The librarians frequently explain to subject faculty that, for a particular course, many lenses will have no or minimal involvement, whereas others will have healthy or superlative involvement -- these levels of involvement do not have to be "across the board" decisions.

How Valpo Librarians Use the Rubric

Librarians introduce the rubric to faculty during discussions about how information literacy instruction will be integrated into their courses, with the expectation that librarians will participate in the design and delivery of the course material. The authors view this as a negotiation. Where subject faculty are resistant to giving over class time or pedagogical agency, it has proven useful to slide this tool across the table to clarify the librarian's position.

Rather than starting with "grace-and-favor," the rubric upholds the value of the IL work and places the librarian on solid ground. It helps the librarian say that there are better and best ways to achieve IL education within a course, and that course (or even disciplinary) context is part of the arrangement. This message is shared with faculty during the writing workshops when the authors introduce the library's IL program and faculty learn they must include work with librarians in their courses.

The rubric is used by teaching librarians when they meet with faculty one-on-one to establish how IL will be integrated into their courses. It is also used with faculty who already work with librarians, but who may not envision IL integration beyond the one-shot model.

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