

Workshops That Work

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Abstract

Offering meaningful library workshops that educate and promote academic success is an ongoing challenge. From basic library instruction for undergraduates to immersion seminars with an emphasis on skills for graduate students and early career scientists, three libraries work together to present informal educational opportunities that address specific needs at three very different campuses of The University of Southern Mississippi (USM). The Gunter Library at the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory campus focuses on skills needed by graduate students and early career scientists. Cook Library at the main campus in Hattiesburg emphasizes undergraduate instruction and faculty professional development. The Gulf Coast Library at Gulf Park in Long Beach partners with the Academic Success Center to serve a constituency of non-traditional students at a commuter campus. This presentation looks at how these different approaches work to provide instruction and support for academic success at each site.

Keywords: Library workshops, University of Southern Mississippi, USM, Gulf Coast Research Laboratory.

Located in Hattiesburg, MS (USA), the Joseph Anderson Cook Library contains the principle holdings of books, journals, microforms, music, media, and other materials that support the research and instructional programs of The University of Southern Mississippi. Cook Library has five floors of book stacks, study areas and computers, and access is provided to over five million books and microforms and over 150,000 journals. Library services, such as circulation, reference and interlibrary loan, can be found on the first and second floors with the collections being housed on all five floors. It serves a residential campus of approximately 10,000 undergraduate and graduate students (2018-19). Cook Library has long been recognized as the heart of the Hattiesburg campus and has made room to accommodate complementary units, such as the University's Speaking Center, Writing Center, and iTech, as well as a forthcoming Student Advisement Center. In 2018-19, the gate entry count recorded 525,413 visits.

The Gulf Coast Library, located on the Gulf Park campus in Long Beach, MS (USA), has print and non-print materials that support the research and curriculum needs of the students, faculty and staff. All of the University Libraries' electronic holdings are accessible to the students on the Gulf Coast, and materials are available for campus-to-campus loan. The Gulf Coast Library includes 37,000 volumes of print materials and provides study space and access to computers throughout all three floors of the facility. It shares its space with the Academic Success Center and a 24/7 study room. The campus serves 1,400 undergraduate and graduate students. In 2018-19, the gate entry count recorded 55,178 visits (University Libraries FY 2017-18 Annual Report p. 3).

Located at the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory (GCRL) in Ocean Springs, MS (USA), Gunter Library provides library resources and services for over 200 resident research scientists and technicians, faculty, and graduate students, and 90 Summer Field Program undergraduate students. GCRL is home to the Division of Coastal Sciences (School of Ocean Science and Engineering), Marine Education Center, Center for Fisheries Research and Development, and the Thad Cochran Marine Aquaculture Center. The library also serves the local community including Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Gulf Island National Seashore, and Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. Library collections include over 1,300 print serial titles, 7,000 books, and over 30,000 reprints, reports, and other grey literature. Gunter Library users have access to all University Libraries' print and electronic resources. The January through September 2019 gate entry count recorded 7,700 visits.

Workshops offered at the three USM libraries fall into three general categories: library skills, academic skills, and other topics. A program of course-integrated instruction constitutes the largest segment of teaching provided by the librarians, but it is considered separately from the workshop programming. Library skills workshops are directed toward undergraduate students. Academic skill-building workshops include citation management, managing your scholarly identity, creating a professional CV, pathways to student success, end of semester motivation, and measuring research impact using library tools. These workshops are variously designed for first-year undergraduates, upper level undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty. The category of "other topics" consists of specialty workshops that are focused on the needs of graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, and early career scientists. Topics address specific needs such as science communication and careers in the sciences.

During the past few years, USM Libraries have operated in an environment where temporary and permanent staffing losses created a risk of negatively effecting service to library patrons. At the same time student needs for general and specialized instruction have not diminished. One method the three USM Libraries have used to address this challenge is partnership. The USM Libraries have partnered internally and externally to create and host workshops that fit the unique character of the students and faculty sited at each campus. Expertise, resources, and credit are shared in a sensible and equitable way that benefits each partner.

The libraries formed internal partnerships between and among the three libraries to take advantage of the expertise available on one campus to benefit students and faculty at another campus. In some instances, the need for librarians to travel from one campus to another was temporary, such as with the Citation Management Tools workshop taught by a librarian based in Hattiesburg at the Gulf Coast Library. Librarians at the Gulf Park campus later taught this same workshop, but partnership with the Hattiesburg library filled a gap during a temporary position vacancy. In other cases, one librarian developed a depth of knowledge that remains unique among her colleagues, such as with the Measuring Research Impact Using Library Tools workshop. The Hattiesburg-based librarian offered this workshop at both the Gulf Park and GCRL campuses.

Proximity can play a role in successful partnerships external to the USM Libraries. For example, Cook Library partners with the Speaking Center located on the first floor of the library. A librarian uses space within the Speaking Center to hold a sort of office hours during which students can receive assistance with the research needed for their speeches. The librarian has been added to the Speaking Center's online scheduling tool and is also available for drop-in visits during her posted office hours. Librarians have also provided Speaking Center peer-consultants with basic library skills training approximately once a year so that they are better equipped to assist students in their moment of need. Another external partnership began in spring semester 2019, between the Gulf Coast Library and the Academic Success Center (ACS), which is located on the first floor of the library. They are co-hosting library skills and academic skill-building workshops. The space for holding workshops within the ACS is an informal setting and allows refreshments, two qualities not present in the library's more traditional computer lab classroom. The partnership also created an opportunity for librarians to team-teach with peer tutors of the ASC. To reach the largest possible audience, these joint workshops are promoted using the full resources of both the ASC and the Gulf Coast Library.

Gunter Library has developed both internal and external partnerships. Given that the library has only one full-time librarian, the potential benefits of partnership are immeasurable, as one person cannot be all things to all people. During the annual Summer Field Program, which is largely composed of undergraduate students from other universities, the head of Gunter Library presents course-integrated instruction designed to familiarize students with library resources and services. Throughout the year, internal partnerships with Cook Library and Gulf Coast Library provide Gunter Library patrons with the opportunity to attend academic skill-building workshops. Gunter Library's external partnerships deliver specialized topics from experts within the University but outside the Libraries. Examples include the Science Communication workshops taught by graduate students and post-graduates from the Communication Studies Department and a Career Services Workshop for Grad Students. To improve workshop attendance and engender continued participation of partners, Gunter Library surveys its user groups to identify specific needs for specialty workshops.

Each library is responsible for publicizing their workshops. All three libraries use a combination of print and digital media to reach the target audience for a given workshop. A mailing list called USMmailout is the University's official internal communication platform, with weekly

email distribution to faculty and staff on Wednesdays, students on Thursdays, and students, faculty, and staff on Fridays. Similar email distribution lists are available for only the Gulf Park campus and only the GCRL campus. Each library maintains its own social media presence. Cook Library has Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts, while Gulf Coast Library primarily utilizes Facebook. Digital signs are present in the lobbies of both Cook and Gulf Coast Libraries, with an additional digital sign at the research services desk of Cook Library. These digital signs display a rotating gallery of slides designed to increase awareness of library events, resources, and services. The internet homepage for each library features a news carousel that rotates through a series of images promoting newsworthy library activities, including workshops. Each image in the carousel is hypertext linked to a news item with more information. The Libraries have taken advantage of the graphic design services of University Communications to create posters that are subsequently posted on bulletin boards in buildings across campus. The Gulf Coast Library is fortunate to have a Circulation/Media Specialist with graphic design skills and she creates flyers and posters to promote library workshops and other events. Gunter Library produces a monthly newsletter which is used, among other things, to promote library workshops. The librarian at Gunter Library attends monthly faculty meetings of the Coastal Sciences Division and uses the opportunity to promote library workshops. The partnerships themselves include an opportunity to bring awareness of library workshops to a wider audience by cross-promotion of library workshops through the communication networks of the partner organization.

The three pillars of success in holding workshops that work are sharing skills and resources, sharing space, and sharing credit.

Additional Reading

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