

Embedded librarian: Enhancing student education through collaboration

By Deb Nielsen and Kealin M. McCabe.

On March 13th, 2012, ALPS (Academic Librarians in Public Service) hosted the Embedded librarian: Enhancing student education through collaboration session with Kealin M. McCabe. The session outlined how the University of Northern British Columbia librarians are taking a unique and proactive approach to student learning by embedding themselves directly in campus cultural centres, courses and course management software, providing students with access to research assistance at the point of need.

Librarians are leaving the confines of their libraries to reach students in new and innovative ways, working with class instructors to enhance student learning. Students are spending less time in the library and more time in the virtual environment in order to complete their academic assignments. This shift has forced librarians to rethink the ways they reach out to students and contribute to their academic success.

This free session was delivered online via Blackboard Collaborate (formerly Elluminate) and attended by 40 participants. In addition to outlining the embedded librarian process, Kealin demonstrated how to incorporate a wide variety of technical tools and free software to enhance the experience for both her and the students. Kealin outlined how the library can be incorporated into various courses using course management software (BlackBoard /Moodle), a basic chat widget (Meebo), a virtual

classroom (Elluminate/Blackboard Collaborate), and LibGuides, YouTube and outpost reference hours in UNBC's First Nations Centre. Kealin uses a number of tools to help provide the best assistance possible including screen sharing software, Join.me and Elluminate and video and screen capturing software, Jing, Voila, and Skitch, and Issuu and iStudio Publisher for document production. Kealin uses WASSAIL for pre and post- evaluation.

She cautions that the Embedded Librarian program initially required some promotion to get it started but once the faculty could see the results in student success, it has become enormously popular. The program has increased interaction with the students demonstrated in the increase of office appointments and research questions. As well, as increased access to research assistance for the students both online and face to face. Finally, the program has increased opportunities for collaboration with faculty in the creation of assignments, increased access to students in class, increased awareness of student assignments, promotion of the library and promotion of library staff skills.

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