

# Embedded in Campus Knowledge Creation: Library Leadership in an Annual Undergraduate Conference

By Danielle W. Westbrook.

**Elizabeth Rennie** of Thompson Rivers University (TRU) presented "Embedded in Campus Knowledge Creation: Library Leadership in an Annual Undergraduate Research Conference" (session 10) on day two of the 2013 BC Library Conference. Rennie talked about her involvement in the TRU Undergraduate Student Research & Innovation Conference and described how librarian participation has created networking opportunities with faculty and allowed the library to highlight the accomplishments of TRU students.

The session started with an overview of the history of the TRU Undergraduate Student Research & Innovation Conference. After its inception in 2006, the Kamloops-based TRU undergraduate conference expanded to include students from the Williams Lake campus in 2007/2008 and added a preconference for faculty in 2009. In 2010, the conference began incorporating disciplines not traditionally thought of as research-based, such as the culinary arts, to further showcase innovation on campus. This year, the 2013 conference was successfully promoted amongst Kamloops community members, gaining considerable momentum and garnering both on- and off-campus interest.

Rennie noted that the library's contribution to the conference started with promotional activities at the Williams Lake campus. Students were encouraged to ask questions about the conference at the campus' library, and the library created a display about undergraduate research. The enthusiasm of the Williams Lake students piqued Rennie's interest and got her more involved. The Williams Lake campus began collaborating with the Kamloops campus library to brainstorm new instructional sessions to support students participating in the conference.

During the first few years of the conference, the library used traditional modes of outreach: from library displays both beforehand and at the conference itself, to holding workshops on attending a conference and creating a conference poster.

Although their efforts were well-received and appreciated by those who attended, Rennie remarked that the Library wanted to pursue outreach activities that would be more impactful in terms of raising the library's profile amongst students and faculty.

In 2011, the library began running more instructional sessions leading up to the conference. These workshops were based on conference feedback from faculty and students, and included topics on how to turn a paper into a presentation and techniques for presenting. Rennie noted that these workshops proved to be more popular, and they allowed the library to create opportunities to involve faculty members in library instruction. The library coordinated booking the room and determining the topics, and both librarians and faculty ran the sessions.

Rennie highlighted that while the workshops, displays and resources provided by the library have greatly assisted students in their preparation for the conference, the library was able to become further embedded by participating in conference planning and operational activities. Librarians have begun acting as conference moderators and contributed feedback for student presenters. Librarians attended and were engaged in conference activities such as poster sessions, and helped to create an environment where students were able to talk about their work and accomplishments. Becoming more embedded in conference activities has also provided TRU librarians with an opportunity to work alongside faculty and deans in attendance.

Rennie has spearheaded library involvement in the TRU undergraduate conference. She co-chaired the 2012 conference and chaired the 2013 conference. Rennie noted several challenges that both she and other librarians have faced in supporting the conference, such as the time commitment, the difficulty of having to unite differing views of what an undergraduate research conference should look like,

and succession planning. Nevertheless, library involvement in the conference has allowed librarians to foster stronger relationships within the TRU community and has created unique opportunities for the library to engage, connect with and support faculty and students.

To find out more about the TRU Undergraduate Student Research & Innovation Conference, check out the [2013 conference website](#).

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