

## **SESSION I                      User Education**

### **Establishment of bibliographic instruction as an independent course in a veterinary medical college**

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information management.

Bibliographic instruction is traditionally being taught as an ancillary part of established courses in most college or university curricula. Rarely is it being taught as an independent course for credit. The Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine (VMRCVM) has established and offered an independent information retrieval and management course since 1987. Students' evaluations of the course have consistently been positive and graduate faculty advisors have continued to strongly recommend it for their students.

Establishment of such an independent course in a college or university curriculum is a unique opportunity and challenge for librarians. The challenge is posed by the fact that students as well as faculty are generally not aware that skills needed for basic information retrieval and management are rapidly changing and evolving. They are consequently not cognizant of the merits of such a course. It is necessary therefore that these intended "consumers of information" be apprised of the changing technologies in information delivery and management before such a course can be successfully established in the curriculum.

Three basic steps are highly recommended in establishing such a university or college course. Step one is to lay a firm foundation for the course. Step two is to draft and submit a proposal for the course. Step three is to give attention to sustaining student enrollment for the course.

#### **Step I**

This entails identifying the groups that need to be involved. Depending on the organizational structure of the institution, the group involved should include those who will be taking the course, those who will be recommending or referring students to take the course, and those who will be providing the funding for the course. In most institutions, these groups will be the students, faculty-advisors, and the administrators, respectively. Once the groups have been

identified, efforts should be directed towards seeking out supportive individuals and enlisting their assistance. Within the student-group, the heavy-users of the library who frequently have in-depth reference queries and have some exposure to effective information retrieval techniques will be more likely to support the establishment of such a course, as will faculty-members who are active researchers. Even though the active research faculty members may not personally go to the libraries, they are frequent users through their research students and assistants. Within the administrative group, Deans, Associate Deans, and Directors of research divisions or departments are the ones likely to be responsive to instructional courses on information retrieval and management.

## Step II

After a solid foundation has been laid, the next step is to draft and submit a proposal for the course. A viable proposal should include the following elements:

1. justifications for the course
2. educational objectives for the course
3. list of texts and teaching aids
4. copy of the course syllabus
5. any letters of support for the course.

In writing the justifications, specify the reason or reasons why the proposed course should be taught. This should address not so much the intrinsic value of the subject matter, but rather the value of this course to a particular curriculum or program of study. This is because arguments establishing the value of the course in the curriculum of certain students are more persuasive than arguments, which address staff competence.

In stating the educational objectives, list the major learning objectives such as the new capabilities, skills, level of awareness, etc. that students will derive from this course. For example, an educational objective could be: "Having successfully completed this course, the students will be more competent in locating published information, both current and retrospective, using bibliographic tools in printed and electronic formats. He/she will also be able to construct databases using data-management programs to more effectively manage the many types of data inherent in their professions."

When submitting the list of teaching aids, it is helpful to indicate a budget for the course for fiscal consideration. Costs for site-licenses for software programs, computers, printers, network access, and projectors, if not already available, need to be incorporated into the budget. The budget should also include the costs of photocopying handouts such as search-guides and manuals.

When formulating the course syllabus, it is prudent to keep in mind that it will be reviewed by people not familiar with the subject matter. So it is advisable to avoid jargon. Care should be given to the organization of the syllabus. List topics or major units with percentages of time. If a topic or subtopic contains over 20%, a breakdown is needed. Letters of support for the course, even though not essential, should be included if available for they add strength and credibility to the proposal.

### Step III

The final step, after the course has been approved, is to give attention to sustaining student enrollment for the course. Students will enroll for the course when it is beneficial to their university or college programs. This is achieved by ensuring that the subject matter covered is kept current and relevant to their course of studies, and by providing practical workshop-type classes which are more effective than class sessions steeped in theoretical aspects of information retrieval and management. It is also achieved through feedback from students through course evaluations (Appendix A and B) and through continuous fine-tuning of the syllabus and teaching formats and updating software programs and computers to accommodate their needs.

### Conclusion

The outcome of establishing an independent, for-credit, bibliographic instruction or information retrieval and management course is fiscally sound and professionally rewarding.

- It enables more efficient use of librarian resources by freeing up time for librarians to work on new projects, to develop and offer new library services, and to keep abreast of emerging technologies in information transfer.
- It reinforces faculty status and collegiality for librarians in universities and colleges who have faculty status.
- It instills a commitment in librarians to teach information skills to their patrons.
- It imposes obligations on librarians to continuously update their professional skills.



Appendix B

<b>VIRGINIA TECH</b>			ID NUMBER										FORM	SEAT NO.			GROUP					
INCORRECT MARKS (2) (X) (4) (5) (this light)			CORRECT MARK (1) (2) (3) (4)										UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA									
NAME	COURSE	DATE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	A	1	2	3	1				
<b>EVALUATION OF LECTURER</b>			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	A	1	2	3	4	1				
Veterinary Medical Sciences			2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	A	1	2	3	4	2					
Course _____			3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	A	1	2	3	4	3						
Instructor _____			4	5	6	7	8	9	0	A	1	2	3	4	4							
Item 1-5 scoring range:			1	2	3	4			poor	excellent												
1. Command of subject.			5	6	7	8	9	0														
2. Clarity of presentation, statement of objectives, organizations of materials, emphasis of major points.			6	7	8	9	0															
3. Enthusiasm for teaching the subject and ability to stimulate student interest, success in providing an atmosphere conducive to work and learning.			7	8	9	0																
4. Overall rating of instructor.			8	9	0																	
5. Optional comments or other suggestions for improving the instructor's effectiveness.			9	0																		
_____			10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20									
_____			21	22	23	24																