Engaged Scholarship and Embedded Librarianship

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Abstract

The authors, a sociology professor and a librarian, draw attention to the relatively limited contribution of librarians to the field of engaged scholarship (ES), which they demonstrate through a review of relevant literature. They contend that the limited contribution of librarians is not the outcome of librarians being consciously excluded from ES projects by faculty. It is their point of view that ongoing exclusion of librarians reflects a lack of awareness among faculty regarding a recent shift in library science referred to as embedded librarianship (EL). Using examples from the EL literature primarily about undergraduate research experiences, the authors identify a viable role for librarians in ES, particularly in instances where enhancing the "information literacy" of students, research assistants, or community members is a learning or research priority. This reflective essay provides readers an opportunity to reflect on how—when and where appropriate—librarians might contribute to ES.

Introduction

March 25, 2014, marked the inaugural *Engaged Scholarship Symposium* at the Pennsylvania State University. Organizers encouraged faculty to provide their students with more "out-of-classroom academic experiences that complement classroom learning," such as undergraduate research, community-based learning, internships, and capstone experiences (i.e., engaged scholarship, also referred to in the literature as community-engaged scholarship; in this article, we will call it engaged scholarship). Engaged scholarship (ES) faculty shared their experiences and fielded questions from the audience. Curiously, after a full day of programming, the library was not mentioned—not once—and that observation prompted this reflective essay.

The authors draw attention to the limited contribution of librarians to ES, which they demonstrate through a review of articles in the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement (JHEOE)* and relevant literature from numerous disciplines. In the rare instances where librarians appear in ES literature, they are usually portrayed in a quiet supporting role, for example, as

archivists for or curators of ES projects. However, ES faculty are not consciously excluding librarians; rather, this de facto exclusion reflects a lack of awareness on behalf of both faculty and librarians regarding a recent trend in library science called embedded librarianship (EL). Using examples from the EL literature primarily about undergraduate research experiences, the authors identify a viable role for librarians in ES, particularly in instances where enhancing "information literacy," that is, "the set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze, and use information," is a learning or research priority *(ACRL, n.d., para. 1)*. This reflective essay, therefore, provides readers an opportunity to reflect on how librarians might contribute to ES when appropriate.

Engaged Scholarship

The scholarship of engagement is primarily discussed in literature on higher education; however, a review of the broader literature in the social sciences and humanities also reveals the widespread appeal of ES. With emphasis on librarians, the authors reviewed the entirety of the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement (JHEOE)* in view of its mission as "the premier peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary journal to advance theory and practice related to all forms of outreach and engagement between higher education institutions and communities" *(JHEOE, n.d., para. 1)*. In addition to their special attention to articles in *JHEOE*, the authors also surveyed literature beyond journals devoted to ES. These particular articles—52 in total—were selected because they have the highest citation ratings in their respective disciplinary areas. The criterion of citation rating (i.e., a count of the number of times an article is cited in the scholarly literature) is an imperfect measure of impact; however, it is a valuable proxy when considering articles across disciplines that may not share common standards of impact; in this context, citation ratings become a viable criterion for article selection. A wide variety of disciplinary areas were represented in the broader literature, including the following:

- African studies *(Isaacman, 2003; Mahlomaholo, 2010)*

- communications *(Barge et al., 2008; Barge & Shockley-Zalabak, 2008; Cheney, 2008; Deetz, 2008)*

- community research *(Cuthill, 2010; Norris-Tirrell, Lambert-Pennington, & Hyland, 2010)*

- criminology *(Uggen & Inderbitzin, 2010; Weber & Bowling, 2011)*

- cultural studies *(Ang, 2006)*

- higher education *(Hodge, Lewis, Kramer, & Hughes, 2001; Vogelgesang, Denson, & Jayakumar, 2010)*

- human resources *(Franz, 2011; Gelmon, Ryan, Blanchard, & Seifer, 2012; Glass, Doberneck, & Schweitzer, 2011; Tsui, 2013)*

- information (technology) studies *(Medaglia, 2012; Mueller & Lentz, 2004)*

- international education *(Shultz, 2013)*

- Latin American studies *(Webber, 2007)*

- law *(MacKinnon, 2010)*

- medicine *(Calleson, Jordan, & Seifer, 2005)*

- management *(Kenworthy-U'Ren, Van de Ven, & Zlotkowski, 2005; McKelvey, 2006; Van de Ven & Jing, 2012)*

- marriage and family studies *(Small & Uttal, 2005)*

- organizational analysis *(Van de Ven, 2007)*

- policy studies *(Schneider & Sidney, 2009)*

- political science *(Farr, Hacker, & Kazee, 2006; Gearty, 2007; Robinson, 2000)*

- psychology *(Bartlett, 2011; Finkelstein, 2002)*

- public administration *(Bushouse et al., 2011; Martin, 2010; Orr & Bennett, 2012)*

- science and technology studies *(Phaneuf, Lomas, McCutcheon, Church, & Wilson, 2007; Woodhouse, Hess, Breyman, & Martin, 2002)*

- social justice/responsibility *(Kearins & Fryer, 2011; Stanton, 2008)*

- social research *(Torre & Fine, 2011; Van de Ven, 2007; Waddington, 2011)*

- social work *(Fogel & Cook, 2006)*

- sociology *(Kleidman, 2006; LaMarre & Hunter, 2013)*

- speech studies *(Hartelius & Cherwitz, 2010; Pollock, 2010)*

- sport studies *(Schinke, McGannon, & Smith, 2013)*

- teaching *(Peterson, 2009)*

- trust studies *(Ping Li, 2011)*

This list is not exhaustive, but it captures an array of disciplinary areas. A review of these materials follows.

JHEOE

Since 1996, only one piece in the fields we surveyed has featured a library or librarian as its central topic. The reflective essay "A University Library Creates a Digital Repository for Documenting and Disseminating Community Engagement" *(Miller & Billings, 2012)* deserves special attention, as it is the only article published by *JHEOE* that has specified a role for libraries in ES.

The essay is about a digital repository at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. A portion of the repository, ScholarWorks@ UMass Amherst, is set aside for housing digital materials from community-engagement initiatives. According to Miller and Billings *(2012)*, "this innovative application of library science" *(p. 109)* supports assessing and tracking engagement; the repository helps establish "institutional mechanisms for documenting and disseminating information about community engagement" *(p. 111)*, which facilitates promotion and tenure decision making among faculty and constitutes a resource for administrators to measure their success on mission-critical goals regarding engagement.

One-dimensional types of ES assessment measures, such as number of student credit hours logged in the field or amount of external funding obtained with or for community partners, are no longer sufficient to document the dynamic relationships that faculty build with community partners. Administrators, therefore, need more centralized resources to capture the scope of ES across units and leverage new opportunities from those already gained. External forces are also at work. Since 2009, universities seeking the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's *(2015)* *community engagement* classification are required to demonstrate their ability track, campuswide, community engagement activities. The combination of external and internal pressures makes digital publishing and archiving an appealing technique for supporting ES on campus. Thus, although

> [t]he traditional role of the library in the academic
> enterprise has generally been one of disseminating the
> results of academic work through the acquisition of
> books and journals.… [l]ibrarians have partnered with
> faculty members to build and maintain teaching and
> research resources in either print or electronic form.
> *(Miller & Billings, 2012, p. 112)*

Archiving ES activities in digital repositories becomes a natural extension of the role libraries have traditionally played in academic environments.

As intellectual property rights change and as faculty host more of their unpublished research online, it becomes imperative that faculty work with librarians to host their work in accessible institutional repositories, such as ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst, in order to "retain the right to distribute their own works more openly" *(Miller & Billings, 2012, p. 114)*. "Recognizing the collaborative potential between emerging library technology and community engagement," Miller and Billings write, "is a significant innovation" and "a functional step toward effective demonstration of collective impact" *(p. 117)*. Still, barriers exist: Faculty would be required to devote significant time to uploading materials, and administration must properly reward faculty for this work.

Miller and Billings's article offers one vision for how ES faculty and librarians might collaborate. Librarians support ES faculty; support comes after ES faculty return from the field flush with materials for the librarian to diligently store and organize. Thus, librarians are—somewhat ironically—only indirectly engaged in ES.

Although it is unfair to depict Miller and Billings as the sole representatives regarding how librarians fit into ES, their work is the sole guide in *JHEOE*, and therefore acts as something of a bellwether. There was once another way. In the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Public Service & Outreach*, which would later become *JHEOE*, Younts *(1996)* stated that "[u]niversities and colleges are becoming more aware of their responsibility to extend knowledge and expertise to society" and referred to this function as the "third mission of the academy" *(p. 2)*. Disseminating knowledge is a mission priority for librarians. Younts also indicated that "analyzing critically the importance of interdisciplinary collaborations" *(p. 7)* was a foundational concern for the journal, which is yet another area of expertise in library science. Neither of these two roles appears to have crystallized for librarians.

Broader Literature

A review of the broader literature confirms that academics view librarians as having a limited role in ES. In general, the library is mentioned either in passing or as a passive storehouse for field materials. The most positive vision of librarians is related to instruction, a theme absent in the Miller and Billings *(2012)* piece. According to Doberneck, Glass, and Schweitzer *(2010;* see also *Glass et al., 2011, p. 12)*, librarians play a role in "publicly engaged instruction" under

> *instruction—noncredit—managed learning environments.* Scholarly resources designed for general public audiences that are often learner-initiated and learner-paced (e.g., museums, galleries, libraries, gardens, exhibits, expositions). *(p. 23)*

Providing the public with resources and firsthand instruction constitutes a way for librarians to participate in ES; however, these lessons are to be aimed at the "general public," so college-based service-learning, undergraduate research, and community-based learning courses appear not to be included. In fact, instruction is the only active role specified for librarians in the broader literature on ES; the rest are passive or implied.

As noted, more passive depictions of libraries persist. Cheney *(2008)*, for example, mentions the library, stating that "we have prominent, theoretically informed scholars among us whose work is as much in the streets as it is in the library" *(p. 281)*. The rare mention of the library is noteworthy; however, on balance, this passing mention functions to reify the cultural boundary between the librarians back home and the faculty engaged in the field. Again, the faculty is active; librarians are passive.

Consistent with Miller and Billings *(2012)*, the librarian is the curator of ES materials. Norris-Tirrell et al. *(2010)*, in research on metropolitan revitalization, noted that "the project developed a community archive at the local public library and a manual for community groups interested in creating participatory video ethnography/oral history programs with youth" *(p. 182)*. The piece did not specify whether any librarian contributed to the establishment of this archive at a local community library. If the role of the librarian is that of curator in ES, then logically the role of the library becomes a storehouse for ES materials.

Pollock *(2010)* also depicted the library as a kind of "bank," this time, like Miller and Billings, as a digital repository. She mentioned

libraries twice in her work on collecting oral histories, presumably in North Carolina, of desegregation efforts. Pollock *(2010)* stated that

> we now have the ability to make these interviews available "jukebox" style to anyone who wants to listen; to accommodate people who drop in to offer a life history or to donate family archival materials (some dating to the Reconstruction) to our digital library bank. *(p. 463)*

She also reported on a library collection at a church, St. Joseph's, wherein an "eleven-year-old daughter of the church's pastor is organizing the six hundred volumes that now comprise the John 'Yonni' Chapman Memorial Peace and Justice Library" *(Pollock, 2010, p. 464),* the volumes being digital recordings primarily by local children. To her credit, Pollock nicely balances her depictions of libraries as passive banks with a picture of libraries as supportive and lively places in the community. Still, the role of librarians either is absent or goes unmentioned.

M. Smith's work epitomizes the passive librarian. Smith *(2011)* interrogated the gap between academics and practitioners, identifying the library as stuck between the two; he wrote that

> [a]cademic journal subscriptions have become increasingly expensive, causing many libraries, especially university libraries, to discontinue subscriptions. Few human service agencies can afford subscriptions to all publications in the field. *(p. 88)*

The library is hamstrung between the needs of the community, which it struggles to meet, and the needs of the academic publishing world, which require funding to support active faculty. Later, Smith *(2011)* provided the quintessentially passive role for libraries, which does not even involve librarians: "It is the responsibility of the faculty member to ensure that all collaborators have access to university resources: data, libraries and journals, technology, and students" *(p. 94)*. In this way, librarians appear to be—if unconsciously—actively uninvited. There is another way, however; it is to embed the librarians in ES.

Embedded Librarianship

Embedded librarianship (EL) is the subject of a growing literature and is generally considered one of a number of viable

options for the future of the librarian as a profession *(Becker, 2010; Dewey, 2006; Knapp, 2012; Knapp, Rowland, & Charles, 2012; Siess, 2010).* Although the term itself dates back only to the early 2000s, the embedded librarian concept (i.e., a librarian partnering with researchers outside the traditional library environment) dates back to the 1970s, with medical librarians taking the lead *(Shumaker, 2009).* Other terms in use for similar arrangements are "informationist" *(Cooper, 2011; Davidoff & Florance, 2000; Rankin, Grefsheim, & Canto, 2008; Thomas, Bird, & Moniz, 2012)* and "clinical librarian" *(Brady & Kraft, 2012; Kesselman & Watstein, 2009).* The EL model can be viewed as an effort to meaningfully engage with faculty members and undergraduate students.

It is important to recognize, however, that "being embedded" can be defined in different ways. Librarians have embedded in research-intensive classes in order to provide assistance to students over a longer period, becoming a regular part of the class so that they can get the overall picture of what the students are working on. Librarians have also been embedding themselves in online courses via course management systems *(Bennett & Simning, 2010; Kesselman & Watstein, 2009).* By actively providing office hours and reference services outside the library, librarians are assuming a new role rather than passively waiting in the library to be called upon—their traditional role as commonly understood *(Clyde & Lee, 2011).* In addition to embedding with undergraduate classes, librarians are also becoming more involved in primary research by integrating into teams of researchers, which serves as another route to contribute to ES, provided the research being conducted engages the community in scholarly ways *(Kesselman & Watstein, 2009; Robinson-Garcia & Torres-Salinas, 2011; Shumaker, 2012).*

The educational imperative of librarians, embedded or not, is teaching students the concept of information literacy. Definitions of information literacy have changed over time and are commonly debated in library circles; however, the most generally accepted definition is that offered by the Association of College & Research Libraries *(2000)*:

> Information literacy forms the basis for lifelong learning. It is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education. It enables learners to master content and extend their investigations, become more self-directed, and assume greater control over their own learning. An information literate individual is able to:

- Determine the extent of information needed

- Access the needed information effectively and efficiently

- Evaluate information and its sources critically

- Incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base

- Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose

- Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally. *(p. 2)*

Essentially, librarians are trying to teach students how to learn effectively and efficiently, which is important for any student, but even more so for students in ES.

Librarians' Limited Opportunity to Contribute

Although academic librarians are enthusiastic supporters of information literacy standards *(e.g., Association of College & Research Libraries, 2000; SCONUL Working Group on Information Literacy, 2011),* they often have limited access to students in a classroom environment and especially limited access to students in special curricular arrangements such as independent studies or undergraduate research experiences which, critical to this essay, tend to define the scholarship of engagement. Some institutions offer established library orientation programs for students; others do not. This lack of consistency leaves librarians in the difficult position of "selling" course instructors on the benefits of library instruction for them, their classes, and their students.

Teaching opportunities for librarians usually involve a single in-class session, typically to an introductory or lower division course, with little or no opportunity to reinforce or assess student learning with an assignment afterward or a course reading beforehand. For example, even in innovative research-based first-year seminars, the goal of "enhancing [students'] internet and library research skills" translates to a relatively straightforward single "lecture given by a reference librarian" *(Firmage, Tiegtenberg, & Cole, 2007, p. 89, 94).* The upshot is clear: The librarian is left to teach, as quickly as possible, the bare necessities of how to use their institution's library system and if time permits, discuss the benefits of

scholarly journals and show students how to navigate a handful of specific online databases.

Mainly, librarian instruction is treated more as an occasional add-on to traditional courses than as routine engagement of the librarian in practical day-to-day situations involving information literacy *(Smith, 2007)*. Additionally, these one-time teaching arrangements are typically scheduled around the needs of the course instructor, sometimes as overt "filler" for when they must be away from the classroom, for example, to attend an academic conference. With so many aspects of the instruction outside the librarian's control, it can be difficult for librarians to have an impact on students. There is an implicit message that library skills are crucial on paper but are an add-on in practice, and that one visit from a librarian is sufficient for students to "get" information literacy. A tangible benefit of embedding partnerships is that the librarian can have a greater voice in how (and when) their efforts are utilized.

Embedding as an Alternative

Librarians are increasingly dissatisfied with this one-shot model of instruction *(Mery, Newby, & Peng, 2012)*. As an alternative to business as usual, embedding librarians into seminars held in the library, as well as the classroom, would afford them the opportunity to impart information literacy to students at a far deeper level than what might be accomplished during a quick rundown of the library's resources. Librarians can offer multiple, compounding lessons on the ethical consequences of plagiarism or the benefits and pitfalls of using crowd-sourced information hosted by sites like Wikipedia. After all, information literacy skills lace together nearly any lesson in the natural and social sciences, especially with regard to student research opportunities. The literature documents instances of librarians entering the classroom to teach entire credit courses themselves *(Li, 2012)*; assisting subject faculty with assignment design *(Kirkwood & Evans, 2012; Kobzina, 2010)*; and providing detailed, discipline-specific library instruction *(Ferrer-Vinent & Carello, 2011)*.

There are those who advocate embedding both librarians and undergraduate research experiences into the college curriculum *(Hagel, Horn, Owen, & Currie, 2012; Husic & Elgren, 2003)*. This solution benefits all parties. Librarians gain an opportunity to increase their student impact, students gain important skills in learning and research, and teaching faculty gain valuable partners in the ES enterprise. It is worth noting that the terms "undergraduate

research" (UR), "undergraduate research experience" (URE), and "mentored research" are used to describe a concept substantially similar to ES. Each of these terms can describe students, usually with faculty guidance, engaging in their own original research—experiments, archival research, mathematical investigations, and so on—with potentially publishable results *("About CUR," 2011)*. Stamatoplos *(2009)* astutely observed that information literacy "either seems to be assumed or ignored" by teaching faculty in undergraduate research, noting the irony that undergraduate researchers "may have greater and more complex overall need for quality information and evaluative skills than the average student engaged in course-related activities" *(p. 239)*. Smith *(2007)* argued that "efforts to teach and develop information skills should [also] be integrated throughout undergraduate programs" *(p. 137)*, including but not limited to undergraduate research experiences.

A good model exists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in its Terrascope first-year experience. Students are split into teams, and "a librarian [is] assigned to each team by a member of the MIT libraries," where librarians are reportedly seen as "invaluable in identifying and locating resources that will be useful to the team" *(Epstein, Bras, Hodges, & Lipson, 2007, p. 71)*. Additionally,

> in the class [librarians] also play a strong role in helping students evaluate the text that will ultimately appear in their… [projects, and]… [l]ibrarians review these drafts and identify problems in sourcing; in some cases they also review some of the source material themselves to ensure that students have interpreted it accurately. *(p. 71)*

Another example worth considering is a web-based information literacy unit developed at Royal Roads University Library for master of business administration students learning online; according to McFarland and Chandler *(2002)*, "success" depended on the "collaboration of librarians with business school and instructional design staff" *(p. 115)*. For librarians interested in embedding in academic activities associated with ES, Hoffman and Ramin *(2010)* provided a set of purported best practices. Also on library engagement more generally, see Thomas's *(2013)* programmatic and colorfully titled work "Getting in Bed With Our Customers: How Did We Embed Our Services to Push the Library Mission at Vaal University of Technology."

Faculty Reluctance—A Barrier to Library Contributions?

Research on faculty working side by side with librarians is scarce, and support for understanding why faculty might be reluctant to do so is even more scarce. The matter, however, can be mapped out, and perhaps no scholar has reflected on this concern more than Stamatoplos *(2009)*, who wrote:

> Because independent undergraduate researchers generally operate outside the formal curriculum, they can fail to recognize the potential value of interaction with librarians. Though many such researchers likely use libraries and librarians to some degree during their work, the information aspects of their work would certainly improve with greater understanding and formal attention by librarians. Also, faculty members may not instinctively refer their research protégés to libraries or librarians in the same way they might in a course environment. *They may feel fully competent to manage their research students' information and library skills alone, while being themselves unaware of the assistance and value a librarian can bring to the collaborative research process and the student's knowledge of information resources.* As for librarians, since such research is largely separate from coursework, it can be practically invisible because their focus is on supporting the formal curriculum. Therefore, they may exclude it from formal library services or programming and unintentionally neglect or underserve undergraduate researchers. Libraries may currently serve the undergraduate research community incidentally through existing services; however, this is too important an area not to consider and target it specifically when appropriate. *(p. 239)*

Although it is not possible to make strong concluding remarks based on this quote alone, it does not appear that faculty are actively avoiding the aid of librarians in the conduct of ES. This is a two-way street. Librarians need to make their services and willingness known to ES faculty; ES faculty need to reach out—when and where appropriate—to their library support.

Conclusion

In this reflective essay, the authors, a sociology professor and a librarian, began by drawing attention to the limited role of librarians in ES through a literature review, which was then juxtaposed with a recent trend in library science referred to as EL. Librarians often have limited access to students in a classroom environment and especially limited access to students in special curricular arrangements such as independent studies or undergraduate research experiences, which, critical to this essay, tend to define the scholarship of engagement. Using examples from the EL literature primarily about undergraduate research experiences, the authors identify a viable role for librarians in ES, particularly in instances where enhancing the "information literacy" of students, research assistants, or community members is a learning or research priority. In the end, they contend that the limited contribution of librarians does not result from conscious exclusion of librarians from ES projects by faculty. Instead, ES faculty might not know about the recent shift toward embedding librarians and what that might mean for ES; likewise, EL is so new even to library science that librarians might not have made their services and potential contributions known to ES faculty. Hence the utility of this essay for opening up such discussion.

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