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# Photomicrographs, the NPR 100, and Student Teaching: Library Liaison Ideas That Really Work

## **Abstract**

In 1997, Gettysburg College's Musselman Library revived a dormant liaison program. Librarians were assigned to each department and program on campus and expected to serve as the first point of library contact for the teaching faculty.

Some core communications and activities emerged that we now encourage every liaison to practice; attending department meetings, sending reviews of new materials, tracking faculty book orders, and visiting faculty offices are seen as standard liaison activities.

We were delighted to find that almost every librarian had some unique and interesting experiences to report. The authors collected these experiences so that they could be shared with the entire staff, especially new librarians who are just settling into their liaison responsibilities. Here we share some of our favorite liaison stories from across the curriculum. [*excerpt*]

## **Keywords**

photomicrograph, college library, library liaison, librarian liaison, reference, library instruction, information literacy, library assignment, Gettysburg College, Musselman Library, library exhibit, art exhibit, collection development

## **Disciplines**

Information Literacy | Library and Information Science

# Photomicrographs, the NPR 100, and student teaching

## Library liaison ideas that really work

by Katherine Furlong and Janelle Wertzberger

**I**n 1997, Gettysburg College's Musselman Library revived a dormant liaison program. Librarians were assigned to each department and program on campus and expected to serve as the first point of library contact for the teaching faculty.

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### Sciences

One of our more interesting liaison stories involves the electron microscopy lab in the biology department.

When visiting the departmental offices to confer with a professor about a research instruction session for another class, the biol-

ogy liaison noticed a bulletin board filled with electron photomicrographs. The images, taken by students in the microscopy lab, were strikingly beautiful and artistic. The biology liaison inquired about the photos and suggested that this work would make a unique exhibit in the library.

The professor immediately gave the liaison a tour of his microscopy lab and invited her to attend a lab session later in the semester, when the students would be well-versed in scanning methodology. The liaison accepted the invitation and spent three happy hours learning about electron microscopes and how microscopic images are created.

There were only four students enrolled in the class, and the librarian spent one-on-one time with each of them during the lab period. She learned about sample preparation, the difference between a scanning electron microscope and a transmitting electron microscope, and darkroom development of the photographs.

She also had the rare opportunity to interact with students in a different power dynamic—on this day, the students taught the librarian in a biology laboratory instead of learning about research databases in the library. During these interactions, the students

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were very candid about their research needs and library usage patterns.

Two of them came to the reference desk later and asked for assistance with other biology projects. The liaison believes that their requests were influenced by her lab visit.

Later in the semester, the library hosted an exhibit entitled "The Art of Electron Microscopy." Information about the course and the lab were included with photographs of the students, the professor, the lab, and, of course, the photomicrographs themselves. We mounted the exhibit on an accordion-style display and positioned it just inside the front door. We plan to use this display for student work from different disciplines in the future.

There is a short postscript to this story. Not long after the liaison's lab experience, the library prepared a lighthearted newsletter piece about our food and drink policy. The article was inspired by an exhibit of damaged library materials.

Included among those materials was a book that had a fungus growing on it. We took the book to the electron microscopy lab, where the professor took a sample of the offending growth, scanned it, and identified the fungus as a strain of penicillin. We used his photomicrograph and comments in the newsletter.

## Social sciences

Our economics liaison found reaching faculty members via students is effective. By chance, he met with a number of honors thesis writers through the Reference/Instruction Department's Research Project Consultation service. He realized there was a need for better faculty-librarian collaboration if students were to successfully complete their economics honors research.

The liaison approached the faculty member involved and asked if he could attend the students' end-of-semester research presentations. His request was granted. This meeting began a discussion between the faculty member and the librarian about actual and expected student research skills.

A few short weeks later, the economics liaison found himself meeting with three economics professors to design a research component for senior majors. Economics majors participate in a fall senior seminar class and then write honors papers in the spring. The

professors felt that research assistance was needed throughout that final year.

The meeting also gave the liaison another chance to refresh faculty members' familiarity with the myriad of library resources provided for their discipline. The economics liaison has high hopes that the department will integrate research competencies into the senior year and then populate the lower-division courses.

Our education liaison had a similar experience with student presentations. She attended student teachers' presentations of their final portfolios. She was impressed by the quality of work and wanted to showcase it in the library. Faculty and students were enthused by this opportunity to display their work. We used the accordion-style display near the library entrance to exhibit photographs of student teachers in the classroom, as well as statements of their teaching philosophies and reflections of their time spent student teaching.

## Humanities

Gettysburg College has a strong history program and, not surprisingly, a vested interest in the Civil War. To meet the needs of scholars and students, the Civil War Era Studies Program was established in 1998 and is dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of mid-19th-century America.

Although librarians at Gettysburg do not hold faculty status, the history liaison jumped at the opportunity to attend and participate in workshops held for faculty teaching or those planning to teach in this new program.

By attending the workshops, she was able to effectively determine how the library, and the library's Special Collections, could contribute to the learning process. She determined that the library owned many primary materials that could be used in innovative ways by students and scholars. By participating in pedagogical discussions, the liaison successfully marketed the library's collections and services to faculty from a variety of disciplines. Use of Special Collections and Archives has increased as a direct result of participation in these faculty workshops.

The liaison for Japanese Studies has found great success by actively participating in the campus Japan Club. From inviting club members to her house to make sushi to going on

field trips to view the cherry blossoms in Washington, D.C., she has learned that for this department, social interaction is key. The liaison has the opportunity to explore new and exciting places, foods, and traditions. At the same time, she makes sure that library resources are visible and accessible.

### **Fine arts**

Collection Development through Information Literacy? It can be done! When approached by a faculty member for help in integrating research skills into the music majors' curriculum, the music liaison stumbled upon an interesting idea for getting help in updating the library's CD collection.

An assignment was developed using National Public Radio's (NPR) list of "The 100 Most Important American Musical Works of the 20th Century"<sup>1</sup>. Students researched each of the songs, learning key reference and bibliographic sources in music. As part

of the assignment, students determined whether the library owned a recording and score of the musical work. If the library didn't own an item, students searched for the best recording or score, wrote a justification for their decision, and submitted their requests to the library for purchase.

Library staff fast-tracked the acquisition and processing of this material, making sure that recordings were available for students in time for their end-of-semester presentations. The eclectic NPR list (everything from Santana to Samuel Barber) provided a well-needed boost to the library's contemporary music holdings. Students felt a real sense of ownership and pride in the collection. The faculty member has become a vocal supporter of the library, and has praised our instruction, acquisitions, and processing departments across campus.

### **Conclusion**

We share these stories with you because  
*(continued on page 1020)*



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**A Question of Manhood, Volume 2: The 19th Century, from Emancipation to Jim Crow**, edited by Earnestine Jenkins and Darlene Clark Hine (482 pages, May 2001), continues the analysis of black masculinity begun in volume 1 for the pre-Civil War period. Culled from various history journals, the 20 essays focus on what it was like to be an African-American man during Reconstruction and the years immediately following. Topics include black politicians in Reconstruction

South Carolina, black policemen in New Orleans, black cowboys and convicts, black lawyers and physicians in the New South, black soldiers in the Spanish-American War, and the real man behind the legendary Stagger Lee. A well-referenced, fine-tuned selection. \$59.95. Indiana University. ISBN 0-253-33924-3.

**Women of the Book: Jewish Artists, Jewish Themes**, by Judith A. Hoffberg (96 pages, March 2001), is the catalog of a traveling exhibition of works of art in book form created by 90 Jewish women artists. Curated by artist-book expert Hoffberg, the exhibition featured themes on family rituals, traditions, and liturgy; the Holocaust; the integration of Jewish culture into art; humorous takes on being "Jewish"; cultural memory; and the celebration of festivals. \$23.95. Florida Atlantic University Libraries, P.O. Box 3092, Boca Raton, FL 33431-0992. ISBN 0-9706189-0-5. ■

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*("Photomicrographs . . ." continued from page 1006)*

they illustrate a few ways that trust can be built between librarians and departments (here, both faculty and students). It is crucial that librarians find creative ways to keep the library relevant to campus life.

Conference presentations indicate a groundswell of interest on the topic of liaisons and campus partnerships.<sup>2</sup> Creative ideas for collaboration are all around us; we simply need to find new ways of telling our library stories across campus.

Librarians at Gettysburg don't just visit the departments and send out new book lists. Librarians attend classes, go on field trips, serve as research assistants, vote on committees, sing in choirs, and participate in labs. As a result, our liaison program is becoming more vital every year.

The stories we have shared are replicable. Show some interest! Get out, get active, and get involved. For many of us, it's the best

and most rewarding part of being a college librarian.

### Notes

1. Visit <http://www.npr.org/programs/specials/vote/list100.html> for NPR's list.

2. ACRL's 10th National Conference, Crossing the Divide (Denver, March 15-18, 2001), included several programs on this topic, including: Susan Sykes Berry, Trisha Mileham, and Joan Ruelle, "Playing Well with Others: Ideas to Increase Your Campus Library Partnerships," panel presentation (Denver, ACRL 10th National Conference, March 16, 2001); Susan Ariew et al., "Creating Successful Librarian-Faculty Collaborations: The State of the Art," panel presentation (Denver, ACRL 10th National Conference, March 17, 2001); and Terri Holtze, "50 Ways to Reach Your Faculty," poster session, (Denver, ACRL 10th National Conference, March 17, 2001). ■

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*("Preservation News" cont. from page 1014)*  
guide to choosing easy and relatively inexpensive storage enclosures and locations that will preserve this type of art.

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