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## Teaching Students to Fish: Creating a Sustainable Student Peer Research Program

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## Teaching Students to Fish: Creating a Sustainable Student Peer Research Program

### Abstract

A Peer Research Mentor (PRM) program was developed at Musselman Library, Gettysburg College to augment traditional reference services and expand library outreach. Goals included enhancing these students' information literacy skills helping them become better researchers, as well as sharing that knowledge with peers. This poster will highlight the initial and on-going training, their involvement at the reference desk, and outreach projects to date.

### Keywords

Reference, Students, Outreach, Peer Research Mentor, ACRL, Academic Library

### Disciplines

Educational Leadership | Educational Methods | Information Literacy | Library and Information Science

### Comments

This poster was presented at the [Association of Colleges & Research Libraries \(ACRL\) Conference](#), March 25-28, 2015.



# Teaching Students to Fish:



## Creating a Sustainable Student Peer Research Program

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A Peer Research Mentor (PRM) program was developed to augment traditional reference services and expand library outreach. Goals included enhancing these students' information literacy skills and sharing that knowledge with their peers.

Gettysburg College  
Musselman  
Library

### Training

In order to create a sustainable learning community, a cohort of students from various grade levels participated in ongoing training. The training equips PRMs with a foundation for assisting at the reference desk and helping students with library research needs one-on-one.

### Reference

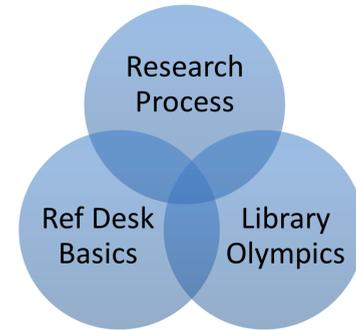
PRMs work twice a week at the reference desk with a librarian buddy. This allows for PRMs to build their research skills in a supportive setting alongside experienced professionals.

### Outreach

PRMs design outreach projects under the guidance of the librarian supervisors. The PRMs have an office hour each week that provides them time to plan, outline, prepare, and assess their ongoing outreach projects.

### Boot Camp

PRM training was structured to mimic the research process and included best practices for the reference desk. "Library Olympics" were held in order to assess the PRMs' learning and inject fun games.



### @ Reference Desk

PRMs interact with their librarian buddy at the desk, debriefing reference questions and exploring the assigned "Resource of the Week." A tip sheet has been developed to highlight the goals for the program and share best practices for the librarian buddies.



### Course Collaboration

PRMs worked with professors in courses that they had taken previously. Their outreach offerings included visiting during class time, hosting office hours, and creating research guides. Some students were required to meet with a PRM for a research consultation.

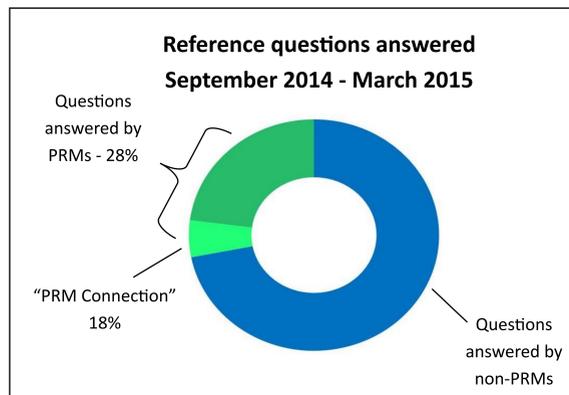


### Bi-Weekly Meetings

Bi-weekly training sessions are held to develop a learning community. These sessions go more in-depth on various topics (e.g. citations, Special Collections, ebooks, etc.) using active learning. The sessions evolved from librarian-led programs to training sessions designed and led by PRMs.

### Supervising

PRMs meet with their supervisor weekly to debrief their time at the reference desk, discuss outreach projects, and talk about topics of ongoing training.

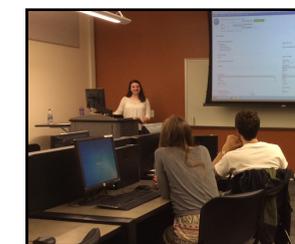


### Statistics

Statistics for the 2014-15 year to date reflect an overall increase in reference questions. A new referral designation, "PRM Connection," was created to track questions related to PRM outreach projects.

### Videos

Several PRMs worked together to design video tutorials for the library. They identified topics, scripted the content, and created the videos. The initial products are in final production.



### Workshops

PRMs hosted workshops for students on research, RefWorks, and citations. The PRMs designed, promoted, presented, and assessed the workshop sessions that were held in the library.

### Training Assessment

PRM training is assessed through various evaluations, supervisor check-ins, and end of semester reflections that help to inform topics covered in future training.

### Reference Assessment

The number of reference questions answered by PRMs are analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the peer-to-peer reference model using the "PRM Connection."

### Outreach Assessment

PRMs designed assessment tools that included follow-up surveys about research consultations and workshops, and web analytics of research guides and video usage.