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Facilitating Peer Learning in the Library: Crafting the Perfect Batch of Undergraduate Peer Research Mentors

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Facilitating Peer Learning in the Library: Crafting the Perfect Batch of Undergraduate Peer Research Mentors

Abstract

Librarians at a college library developed a Peer Research Mentor (PRM) program for undergraduate students in order to facilitate peer learning and expand the library's formal instruction program beyond the traditional reach of the library and librarians. The presenters will discuss recruiting the initial cohort of eight PRMs, strengthening PRMs' research skills through an intensive training curriculum, and an overview of the various instructional outreach projects that have been designed and implemented by PRMs for other students. The presentation will discuss program assessment methods, share findings from the current cohort, and outline plans for the program's development.

Keywords

Library reference services, Peer teaching, Peer learning, Undergraduates, Academic libraries, Library outreach

Disciplines

Curriculum and Instruction | Educational Leadership | Information Literacy | Library and Information Science

Comments

Presented at the [2015 LOEX conference](#), Denver, CO, April 30-May 2, 2015.

Go to www.govote.at and use the code 22 53 56

**Does your library have students
working in these areas?**

1. Instruction
2. Reference
3. Research consultations
4. Outreach
5. None

Facilitating Peer Learning in the Library: Crafting the Perfect Batch of Undergraduate Peer Research Mentors

Mallory Jallas
Clinton Baugess

LOEX 2015

Gettysburg College
Musselman
Library

Gettysburg College / Musselman Library

- Four-year, residential, liberal arts college
- Undergraduate
- Gettysburg, PA
- FTE: 2,600
- Single library campus
- 15 librarians
- 215 instruction sessions*
- 3,163 reference transactions*
- 234 research appts.*

* Reporting on academic year 2013-2014

Why Now?

- Campus commitment to enhancing the intellectual climate
- Focus on high-impact practices
- Supporting student learning and IL
- Project Information Literacy findings
 - 11% seek assistance from a librarian when evaluating sources*

Why Peer Research Mentors?

Not because of...

- A merged, one-desk model
- Removing librarians from the reference desk
- Declining questions requiring a librarian
- Increasing number of research consultations
- Increasing time to do liaison work, outreach, etc.

Why Peer Learning?

- Students able to learn from another student outside of the usual faculty-librarian-student hierarchy
- PRMs able to draw upon personal experience to use language more easily understood by other students
- Draw upon social relationships to connect with students who may not otherwise seek help from a librarian
- An established part of Gettysburg's campus culture

**What formal peer-to-peer programs
exist on your campus?**

Peer Learning at Gettysburg

- Diversity Peer Educators
- Peer Learning Associates
- Peer Tutors
- Orientation Leader
- Residence Assistant
- Community Advisor
- Leadership Mentors

Peer Programs in Libraries

Peer Reference

Heinlen, 1976; Holliday & Nordgren, 2005; Faix et al., 2010;
Stanfield & Palmer, 2010; Faix, 2014

Instruction

Bodemer, 2014; Bodemer, 2012; Holliday & Nordgren, 2005

Research consultations

O'Kelly , Garrison , Merry, & Torreano, 2015

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working in these areas?**

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- Training** (upfront & on-going)
 - + Reference Desk**
 - + Outreach Project**
-

The Gettysburg Model

Program Goals



Hiring & Recruitment



The screenshot shows the Musselman Library website. The top navigation bar includes links for Students, Faculty, Employees, Alumni, Families, and Library. Below this is an orange banner with the text "Musselman Library". A secondary navigation bar contains links for Home, Services, About Us, Student Learning, College Authors, The Cupola Scholarship, GettDigital Collections, and Special Collections. The main content area is titled "Peer Research Mentors" and includes a breadcrumb trail: Home > Library > About the Library > Employment > Peer Research Mentors. A left sidebar menu lists various categories: Services, About the Library (with sub-links for Policies, Departments & Staff, Friends, Employment, and Internships), College Authors, Copyright, The Cupola Scholarship at Gettysburg College, GettDigital Collections, and Special Collections & College Archives. The main content area is titled "Job Description – Peer Research Mentors" and contains the following text:

The Reference & Instruction Department of Musselman Library invites Gettysburg College first –year students to submit applications to become a Peer Research Mentor for the 2015 spring semester. A Peer Research Mentor is a student who works alongside librarians to support students engaged in research, while also improving one's own research skills. This position is open to two first-year students in any major. The Peer Research Mentor team intentionally includes students representing a range of class levels (the current group of Peer Research Mentors include 3 sophomores and 3 juniors). While the appointment is for a semester, there is potential for continuation. If you love information and helping people find exactly what they need, this could be the position for you!

Peer Research Mentors will engage in three main areas:

- 1. Training.** Mentors will participate in a concentrated series of training sessions in January during the week before classes begin, as well as ongoing training throughout the year (1 hour bi-weekly). Training topics include basic customer service principles, navigating our online and print library collection, understanding today's information environment, search strategies, evaluating information, the inner workings of the library (from cataloging to interlibrary loan), current library issues, and other topics of interest to the mentors.
- 2. Reference service.** Mentors will work at the library's main reference desk 2-4 hours per week, partnered with a professional librarian. In addition, qualified mentors may meet with students

Faculty

Do you have any students in your courses that would be a good fit?

Administrators

How can we diversify our applicants?

Internally

Are any of our current student workers interested?

**Different class
years**

Diversity

**Variety of
majors**



Training

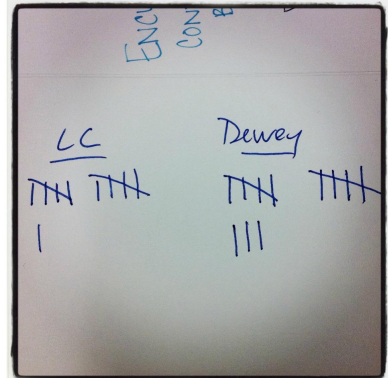


Boot Camp

Cohort
building



Games = Fun!
&
Assessment



Structured
around
research
process



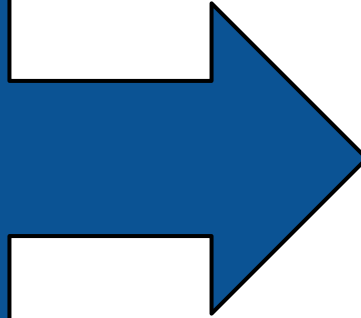
Active
learning



Bi-weekly Meetings

Semester 1:

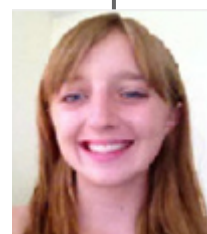
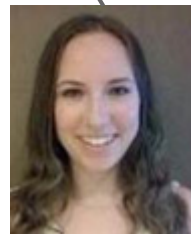
- Extension of Boot Camp
- Librarian-led
- Terrible timing



Semester 2:

- Topics from PRM interest
- PRM-led
- Better timing!

Librarian Supervisors



Reference Desk



- Two, 2-hour shifts a week
- Paired with “librarian buddy”
- Tracking “PRM Connection” in desk statistics
- Exploring “resource of the week”

Outreach

“Mentors will design and implement an outreach program each semester. Each mentor will consult with a supervising librarian in order to customize a project that reflects the mentor's interest and skills.”

Go to www.govote.at and use the code 89 61 92

**How does your library have
students provide outreach to
other students?**

Course Connections

- PRMs worked with their previous courses
- This outreach varied by course
- Faculty response was positive and encouraging



Course Connections

Musselman Library

Musselman Library / Research Guides / Art & Art History / Images

Art & Art History: Images

Home

Books

Articles

Images

Galleries & Museums

Asian Art Resources

Citation Help

ARTH 214 Sun

ARTH 267 / PP 322

Find Images of Artwork



Finding images of artworks can be tough. It is important to think carefully about what **keywords** you use to search and if you know any identifying information such as the **artist** or **title** of the piece. Once you have identified an image that you want to use be sure to consider the size, pixel count, and quality of image that you need. If you are looking for a famous or historical piece of art also remember that you may be able to find the image in a book and scan it for your own use. Just be sure to remember to **cite** the images when you are done and verify what types of **redistribution rights** the image may have!

- [ARTstor](#)
A digital collection of art images and descriptive information covering art, architecture and archaeology. Includes unique software tools to enable active use of the collections. The mobile version can be accessed at [Artstor Mobile](#)
- [Artsy](#)
Contains 100,000+ artworks by 18,000+ artists from art fairs, galleries, museums, and art institutions.
- [AP Images](#)
AP Images is the world's largest collection of historical and contemporary photos. AP Images provides instant access to AP's iconic editorial photos of today's breaking news, celebrity portraits by renowned Invision photographers, historical images across all genres, creative rights managed and royalty-free stock photography a microstock subscription or music tracks to round out a story, project or production.

- Research guide redesign
- Student perspective on the guide
- Faculty feedback on changes
- Resulted in more collaboration

Course Connections

- PRMS co-taught IL sessions
- Research consultations by PRMs
- Some courses made them required
- Some PRMs offered “office hours”

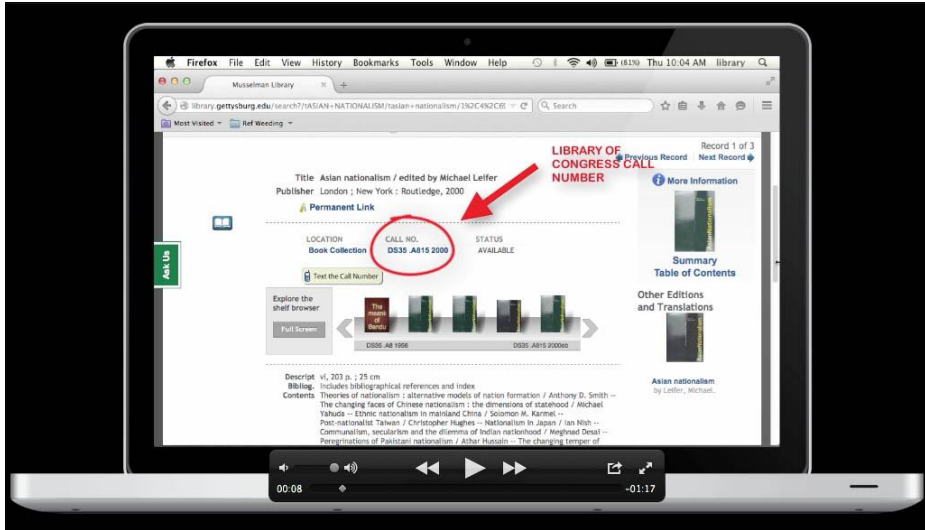


Workshops



- PRMs develop topics for workshops
- Ranged from RefWorks to sessions for international students
- Timing and attendance were issues

Videos



- Small group of PRMs
- Developed framework: Understand. Structure. Engage. Reflect.
- Video production throughout semester

Assessment

Training

Reflection

Games

**PRM
Experience**

Evaluations

Check-ins

Reference

Reference
Statistics

Outreach

Surveys
Web Analytics

Next Steps

- Hiring additional PRMs (2-4)
- Examining outreach program(s) impact
- Focusing on assessment
- Updating “Boot Camp” content

Questions?

Slides and handout available at:

<http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/librarypubs/42>



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Recommended Reading

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