

IMPORTANT NOTICE: please plan to attend the UWOFA General Meeting, Thursday 16 March from 12:30-2:30 p.m. South Valley Building (Arthur and Sonia Labatt Building) Room 35. Agenda at <http://www.uwofa.ca/meetings/agen060316.html>

Do Librarians and Archivists Teach?

Librarians and archivists are among Western's invisible teachers. UWOFA supports recognition of the full range of teaching performed by librarians and archivists; our Employer's negotiating team, thus far, does not. The teaching activities of librarians and archivists become visible when we ask: who learns what, and from whom?

Learning from Law Librarians

New law students confront complex documents organized by unfamiliar classifications and citation rules. Western's law librarians introduce them to legal collections (in print and electronic forms), basic topics in legal citation, case law, and legislative research. In their first-year course on legal research, writing and advocacy, students learn 'to plan and conduct library and computer-assisted legal research...' (from the course description). This course is coordinated by the Director of the Law Library, with a faculty member.

In a third-year course on advanced legal research, students learn how to locate and update relevant case law, locate relevant legislation and commentaries, and how to use Canadian, American, and British legal materials. They learn to document solutions to problems arising in the research areas of the law firms, courthouses, and government departments where they expect to work as articling students. Their course teachers are two law librarians, who devise the course problems by virtue of their expertise in handling legal reference requests, their knowledge of legal resources, and their professional ties to law librarians beyond the academic environment.

Learning from the Librarian Responsible for Biology

Students in Biology 022 and 023 learn to identify and develop research questions and locate and evaluate a variety of library resources related to a research topic. They are introduced to concepts such as the cycle of scientific publication and the importance of ethical conduct in scientific work. They learn basic search strategies for the Western Libraries online catalogue, are introduced to four of the major online scientific databases and learn the strengths and weaknesses of several different web search engines. Learning takes place within an introductory information literacy program consisting of four WebCT Vista library modules with corresponding quizzes for extra credit. This online program was developed by the librarian in close collaboration with faculty teachers. The librarian also provides virtual support to these large classes.

In Biology 290, the same librarian collaborates with faculty teachers to provide a graded WebCT Vista library assignment. Students learn rudimentary research processes by starting their research with given scientific articles, then progress to advanced searching methods for retrieving related literature from two scientific literature databases and the library catalogue. Their research skills are applied to finding a research article and describing its usefulness for their independent lab experiments. Students are introduced to the citation process and the importance of using such formats consistently. The mandatory, formal library classes, drop-in help sessions, and e-mail support are all conducted by the librarian, who provides similar subject-specific teaching in Biology 271, 272, and 285.

Learning from the Librarian Responsible for Nursing

Librarian-taught information literacy is mandatory throughout all four years of the undergraduate Nursing program and in the post-RN program. Students learn the development of information and knowledge in Nursing, as well as skills to locate, access, and retrieve information relevant to Nursing education, research and practice. Emphasis is placed on life-long learning and using information after graduation in conscientious and judicious ways in clinical practice. This learning is a recognized part of Nursing education accreditation.

Learning from the Librarian Responsible for Physical and Occupational Therapy

Evidence-based practice has changed the education of Physical and Occupational Therapists through the introduction of an information literacy program. In hands-on sessions taught by the librarian, first-year students in both of these professional programs learn how to define and execute search strategies in relevant databases. Since keeping current with changes in both fields is vital, both curricula emphasize techniques of life-long learning in order to incorporate both classroom and research education with clinical education. Students learn critical evaluation of relevant websites by assignments requiring them to compare website content with articles retrieved from PubMed. The librarian provides advanced database search assistance during office hours to students, researchers, and faculty members seeking help with their assignments or research projects.

Learning from the Librarian Responsible for Clinical Medicine

Western's students are not the only learners who benefit from the teaching of librarians and archivists. Physicians, whether on campus or participating in the Southwestern Ontario Medical Education Network, stay current with new knowledge through professional development workshops. Workshop topics are devised in collaboration between the Clinical Medicine librarian, Faculty Development Office, and physicians. The content of each workshop is solely created by the librarian, who identifies resources required by physicians for their own research and/or clinical practice. Physicians learn database-specific tools and life-long learning skills. They learn about the research process and the resources required for evidence-based practice, including the best resource to use, why it is the best resource for a specific need, the level of evidence to accept in making clinical decisions, and how to use resources effectively and efficiently.

The clinical medicine librarian also teaches graduate and undergraduate students in the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry. Their classes are mandatory and some courses examine the students on the library material taught. Students and physicians are taught the same principles and skills.

Learning from University Archivists

In the Archives, students attend fifteen to twenty classes each year, in History, Geography, English, the History of Science and Medicine, and Visual Arts. Students learn about the nature of archival research, the value of original materials, and how archival materials are acquired and preserved. In projects involving the use of rare books, students also learn book history, the importance of paper, font and printing method, and what makes a book rare. In a course on archival studies taught at FIMS, students learn the basic principles of archival practice and managing archival collections, and gain practical experience in the arrangement and description of archival materials. All the teaching is done by archivists.

So, Do Librarians and Archivists Teach?

This brief glimpse of some of their many teaching activities leaves no doubt: librarians and archivists teach plenty, and many of their teaching activities are required—*not* optional—elements of academic programs. Examples could be multiplied to include a wide range of learning activities, from help at reference desks, informal help with specific resources, to planned, in-class assistance tailored to specific course assignments. This rich spectrum of teaching activities must be recognized in their Collective Agreement as part of their professional duties. The support of the faculty bargaining unit is crucial to making our Employer recognize that librarians' and archivists' teaching constitutes a vital part of the university's teaching and research missions.