Faculty-Librarian Collaborations at the University of Texas
By Roxanne Bogucka and Michele Ostrow

Opportunities for faculty-librarian collaboration can be difficult to find, especially in a large research university environment. This article describes two successful faculty-librarian collaborations at the University of Texas at Austin. The first program is an extracurricular library outreach and education series which highlights faculty research, using popular culture as a tool to engage students with science and science information resources. The second program is a curricular collaboration which incorporates fundamental information literacy skills into the freshmen core courses on a class by class basis. In addition to supporting faculty instruction, this collaboration provides students with the basis for lifelong learning.

Faculty members already know the benefit of the libraries for their own research. These two programs allow faculty to demonstrate the benefit of the libraries to their students. Additionally, these close collaborations with librarians often broaden faculty members’ understanding of how librarians can support not only their research but also their teaching. As a result of collaborations thus far, the participating faculty are more likely to promote the libraries to their colleagues and students.

Extracurricular Collaboration - Science Study Break Program
By Roxanne Bogucka

In the fall of 2006, the University of Texas Libraries began the Science Study Break program. The program is a faculty-librarian collaboration that gives faculty members a chance to interact with undergraduates and discuss research in a relaxed, informal setting.

Here is the program description, from the Science Study Break website:

Take a break from the books and join UT researchers for cookies, chips, and chat about popular movies and TV shows that deal with science topics. Many viewers uncritically accept scientific information presented in movies or on TV. That may
be good in the case of a medical organization broadening viewers’ knowledge by using *entertainment-education*—for example, embedding information about breast cancer in the storyline of a telenovela. But that may be bad when “science” unconsciously absorbed from popular programming affects citizens’ considerations of public policy issues.

In each program of this occasional series you’ll hear faculty members discuss realms of scientific possibility, evaluate presentations of science in popular culture, or mercilessly mock bad science and worse screenwriting. You’ll also sharpen your Bad Science Detector and discover library resources you can use to check the facts.

These one-hour evening programs occur twice in the fall semester and twice in the spring. Throughout the year, I keep an eye out for movies and TV shows with science, technology, engineering, or medical themes, creating a list of potential programs and the disciplines they touch on. Once I decide on the relevant disciplines for these shows, I use the University of Texas’ departmental directories and the Experts’ Guide to identify potential faculty members whom I could invite to be Science Study Break presenters.

Faculty members whom I have approached have all been intrigued by the program and receptive to the opportunity to use popular culture to teach. Most of those who’ve been invited to participate have accepted. The few who have declined have asked me to check back with them later, when they hope that their schedules will allow them to participate.

Each Science Study Break program takes three to four weeks of advance planning. Recognizing the time-crunch that faces most faculty members, I do as much pre-production as I can. Minimizing their prep time makes it easier for faculty members to agree to participate in extra-curricular programming. Once the movie or TV show has been agreed on, I acquire the DVDs and identify scenes that present some opportunity for scientific discussion. I prepare a spreadsheet that lists each scene, its starting and ending time codes, and the first and last lines or a description of the action. In our initial meeting, we discuss the scenes and the science possibilities, then I give the spreadsheet, along with the DVDs, to the presenter. After our introductory meeting, which can take an hour, we work on the program via email
so faculty members don’t have to schedule time for another face-to-face meeting.

Busy faculty members are relieved to hear that they do not need to be familiar with a show, or take the time to watch several episodes. They need only refer to the scenes on the spreadsheet, typically a total of 20 to 25 minutes of viewing, as the basis for their presentation. The presenters also tell me about particular aspects of their research and/or scientific concepts they would like to include in their presentations, so that I can locate additional scenes that address those concepts.

Another worksheet lists the suggested order of ceremonies. Each program alternates showing scenes from the movie or TV show with discussion by the presenter and questions from the audience. Faculty members use Powerpoint slide shows to illustrate their points. Most participants report that they have been able to incorporate some slides from existing classes and lectures, rather than having to spend a lot of time creating an entirely new presentation for their Science Study Break program. Some repurpose their Science Study Break presentations for use in their classes. Faculty members send me their presentations a day or so before the program date.

Each program also contains a short “library commercial”—a two-minute slide show about a UT libraries resource or service. I ask presenters about their preferred library resources, so that I can highlight appropriate databases or journals. Since most presenters’ content cites some literature, it’s usually easy to figure out what the topic of the library commercial will be. Faculty members also collaborate on the publicity for each program, announcing their participation via departmental email lists and student organization email lists, in the classroom, or via course management applications, and sometimes asking members of student organizations to put up flyers around campus.

The success of this extra-curricular program stems from the opportunity it offers faculty members to
Curricular Collaboration - Information Literacy and the Core Freshmen Curriculum
By Michele Ostrow

In 2006, the University of Texas at Austin began a long process of revising the core curriculum for undergraduates. The curriculum revision included institution of a common freshmen experience called a Signature Course, which in the fall of 2010 became a requirement for every freshmen and transfer student their first year at the university. Information literacy is integrated into the Signature Course program, which has allowed the libraries to reach every freshman with instruction in basic research and information evaluation skills.

Signature Courses are taught by faculty from across the University on topics they propose. They come in two formats – seminars capped at 18 students and large lecture courses with active discussion sections led by specially trained teaching assistants. While the topics vary greatly, each course has six common elements.

1. All students must attend one of two university lectures and talk about them in class.
2. Each student must be introduced to at least one “gem” of the university, usually interpreted as the Ransom Center, the LBJ Library, the Blanton Museum, or the Benson Collection.
3. Students must make an oral presentation.
4. Students are assigned writing that includes significant revisions.
5. Information literacy is taught.
6. The course includes interdisciplinary and contemporary content.

The way the faculty address these requirements varies from class to class, and Undergraduate Studies (UGS), the school that oversees the Signature Courses program, supports this diversity of approaches. When Library Instruction Services (LIS), the unit that has been working with lower division
undergraduates for years to introduce baseline information literacy skills, heard that these courses were being considered as part of the core curriculum, we jumped at the chance to be involved. Up until that point, there was no common course that every freshman took. While we had developed strong relationships with both the rhetoric and writing courses (UT's equivalent of freshmen composition) and Freshmen Seminars (pre-curso-curs to the Signature Courses), we knew that we weren't reaching every student and sometimes were reaching the same student twice. This program would provide us with the opportunity we'd never had before – to reach every student their first year at UT and provide them with fundamental information literacy skills they could build upon as they moved into their majors. In order to achieve our goal, we began lobbying the faculty committee charged with proposing the new core curriculum. Though we talked to quite a few of these faculty members and they all agreed that information literacy was important, they did not feel strongly enough about it to make it a requirement. After the plan came out of the committee and UT formed a new School of Undergraduate Studies with a new dean charged with implementing it, we knew we had one last chance. We secured a meeting with the dean and discussed the importance of information literacy. He had just received some poorly researched papers in his undergraduate class and could easily understand what we were saying about the importance of preparing students to find and evaluate information as a foundation for critical thinking throughout their lives. He told us information literacy would be a requirement and accepted our proposed learning outcomes. These outcomes, based on the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Information Literacy Standards, were written broadly enough to apply over time even as research tools change.

LIS’ approach to information literacy integration is faculty collaboration. We contact each faculty member teaching a Signature Course individually to offer our services. Our resulting faculty collaboration takes many forms including:

- consultation with the faculty over time to help them build their course
- one-shot instruction sessions with course research guides tied to a specific assignment
• TA training to prepare them to teach course-integrated information literacy skills in the discussion sections
• exercises and assignments, with accompanying research guides, to teach information literacy learning outcomes in a way that supports the course content. For example, in one journalism class, we built an assignment and guide to help students find articles from three different types of newspapers and analyze how audience and cultural context impact news reporting.

We also encourage self-service through our Signature Course Faculty Toolkit, a collection of learning objects browseable by topic, type, and learning outcome. This toolkit also serves as a portal to all of the services LIS provides to the UGS courses. For more information, including examples of how LIS has worked with specific courses, see www.lib.utexas.edu/signaturecourses.

Roxanne Bogucka (roxanne.bogucka@austin.utexas.edu) is science instruction librarian at the Life Science Library, and Michele Ostrow (micheleo@austin.utexas.edu) is head of library instruction services. Both are with The University of Texas Libraries.

Join Roxanne Bogucka and Michele Ostrow on January xx, 2011 for a webinar on academic faculty and librarian collaborations. Learn more about their ongoing projects and how they are working to embed library services and programming into courses throughout the university. Bogucka covers how to identify and work faculty for extracurricular programming and identifying content to incorporate into collaborative programming. Ostrow will cover methods for collaborating with faculty to integrate information literacy into freshmen level courses and will discuss approaches that for getting information literacy written into curriculum at the department, school or university level. The webinar will be held at xx pm CST. CE credit will be offered. For more information and to register, go to www.txla.org/ce. This webinar is part of TLA’s Strategic Initiative Series.