



Research in Practice

The Reciprocal Benefits of Library Researcher-in-Residence Programs

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Traditionally, libraries have offered scholar-in-residence programs to encourage researchers to visit libraries and to make use of their collections and materials¹. New forms of residence programs, designed to encourage the development of research culture within the library, are emerging and gaining popularity at Canadian academic libraries. While these programs are often developed “to help enrich

and develop the research culture at the University Library” (Researcher-in-residence program, 2015), the benefits of these researcher-in-residence programs extend beyond the walls of the University Library. As the Director of the Centre for Evidence Based Library and Information Practice (C-EBLIP) at the University of Saskatchewan (Wilson) and the 2015-2016 Researcher-in-Residence at the University of

¹ See for example: the Dibner Library Resident Scholar Program at the Smithsonian Libraries, the Scholars-in-Residence Program at the Burke

Library (Columbia University Libraries), and the Schomburg Center Scholars-in-Residence Program at the New York Public Library.

Saskatchewan (Berg), we want to share how we have experienced the benefits of the program, as well as consider how researcher-in-residence programs can contribute to the research capacity of an institution and individuals.

The University of Saskatchewan (U of S) Library's Researcher-in-Residence pursues their own research agenda while in residence. There is no expectation to conduct research relevant to the University Library. However, researchers make a commitment to undertake one or more activities designed to engage the U of S librarians, which may include the following:

- Presenting a research seminar or outlining the research being undertaken.
- Conducting seminars or workshops on selected aspects of research methodologies relevant to library and information science research.
- Advising individual librarians about their research in progress or about the development of research skills and/or interests.
- Mentoring librarians in aspects of research work.

The U of S's program provides dedicated office space, access to computing facilities, and other supports-in-kind for a visiting professional (educator or practitioner) to spend a period of time at the University Library.

In addition to the Researcher-in-Residence program at the University of Saskatchewan, new researcher-in-residence programs have been developed in Canada. Each program has a slightly different focus. In May 2016, Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec launched a researcher-in-residence program. Concordia's program invites doctoral students, professors, and librarians to propose and complete a research project that addresses pre-defined themes that align with the library's strategic direction. In addition to funding for the research project, the program "offers the opportunity for

scholars or doctoral students to focus on an area of inquiry in a supportive and enriching environment, and to interact with Concordia Library staff and its resources" (Researcher-in-residence program, 2016). The program aspires to encourage both the scholar and the library staff to "become engaged in the use of research in library practice and the concept of evidence-based librarianship" (Concordia Libraries, 2016).

In 2013, McMaster University Library in Hamilton, Ontario hosted its first Faculty Member in Residence, Brian Deltor. Deltor and Vivien Lewis (McMaster University Librarian) have published about their experience with the program in the January 2015 issue of *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*. McMaster's 'Faculty Member in Residence' program invites faculty members to spend a year in the library encouraging and mentoring librarians in their research endeavours, while conducting a research project related to library and information studies and library culture. Like the Concordia program, McMaster's resident is encouraged to "become actively involved in at least one library project" either as a research study or as a member of the work team. (Libplessla, 2014). The program hopes to advance and enhance the research agenda of the faculty member while providing research mentorship and modeling for practicing librarians.

The focus and execution of each program are slightly different, but the goals are much the same: to enhance the research culture in the academic library and to help build research capacity amongst practicing librarians.

The Experience and Benefits for the Resident (From Selinda's Perspective)

I began my residency at C-EBLIP at the University of Saskatchewan in August 2015, and completed the residency in June 2016. I recognize that moving across the country for a sabbatical is not possible for everyone, but for me, the experience was well worth the effort that

the move required. I have grown and evolved as a researcher and as a professional as a result of the residency. The researcher-in-residence program provided me with a very productive and gratifying sabbatical filled with new colleagues, new experiences, and new learnings.

Access to Resources: Don't Underestimate the Photocopier

Resources-in-kind seems like a vague and rather insignificant element of the remuneration across researcher-in-residence programs. However, this is also the element of the program that I am most thankful for on a daily basis. One cannot underestimate the value of an ergonomic chair, two computer screens, and a photocopier/printer that will print on both sides expeditiously. The productivity of my sabbatical would have decreased significantly had I been limited to a folding chair, a laptop on a small desk, and an inkjet printer. These amenities are also not free, so in addition to the comfort, there is additional monetary benefit. Further, I had access to fantastic IT support and services, reliable phone and teleconferencing services, statistical and data assistance, and of course, library materials. I made use of these services regularly throughout the year. As academic librarians we are privileged to have access to abundant and rich resources and services at our disposal and maintaining access to these amenities during a sabbatical away from home cannot be underestimated.

Immersion in a New Culture

I have such an appreciation for the chance to be a part of another institutional culture, even if just for a year. This immersion has provided me with an opportunity to see different ways to be a professional, a leader, and a researcher, as well as to see the different ways a library can function. We are all too often immersed in our own world to see different ways of being, and the sabbatical is the perfect time to consider these different ways. An immersion into another institution is a great catalyst for this process.

The University of Saskatchewan has a rich and ever-evolving culture of research. Being a part of that culture and contributing to making it stronger and richer was a very rewarding experience. The University of Saskatchewan Libraries, in particular working closely with Virginia, has inspired me and allowed me to see new ways that I can contribute to the health and productivity of the research culture within and outside of my own institution. Not only in the development of research culture, but across the library as a whole, there is reassurance in witnessing that most institutions are struggling with the same issues, all the while being inspired to see new ways of dealing with such issues.

A Place to go Each Day (If I Choose)

For me, the process of getting up, having a shower, dropping the child off at school, and ultimately arriving at the office to work is a pattern that I like and within which I thrive. While I did not want to spend my sabbatical in the same office that I have spent the last 7 years, I knew that I would benefit from having a place to go. I knew that I need to be away from the demands and distractions of my home. Having access to new and uncluttered space to work provided me with a retreat-like space.

In addition to the physical space, the office also provided me with an opportunity to connect with (new) people. Colleagues are wonderful for mentorship and professional camaraderie, but are also essential for asking for advice on places to eat in the city, for grabbing a coffee or lunch, or for talking about the weather or state of the winter roads. The colleagues that I connected with at the University of Saskatchewan also provided inspiration and support for my research, especially for my dissertation. Colleagues are very important to cheer you on from the sidelines and the Researcher-in-Residence program did provide me with a wonderful cheer team!

New Fish in an Old Pond

It is a harsh reality but we often do not see the expertise that we are surrounded by each day in the same light that we see the *new*, the *distant*, and the *fresh*. Talking with people outside of your everyday world seems glamorous, and perhaps even more valuable. During my residency, I got to be the person who offered the fresh and novel voice to conversations. I had discussions with University of Saskatchewan colleagues about research projects, research programs, and research culture that normally I do not have, or that I have so often at my own institution that no one wants to hear any more. I was able to provide a new voice to their conversations and that felt wonderful. Similarly, I likely listened a little more carefully to the voices around me. I did not assume that I already knew what my colleagues would say. Instead, I hung on every word hoping to take away some of the great wisdom and perspective that these librarians were sharing with me. Being the new fish in an old pond was a unique experience where I listened more intently and was listened *to* more intently.

The experience and benefits for the institution (Virginia's perspective)

The University Library has hosted two previous researchers in residence. Each has been a very different experience but all have enriched our library research culture in some way. Selinda Berg's residency has been particularly fruitful. She is working on her PhD in library and information studies (LIS), has extensive experience in research and publishing, and has an open and curious personality. All combine to make Selinda's residency beneficial for all concerned.

New Fish in an Old Pond

I will start my section where Selinda left off. Our old pond is quite lively in terms of research, research supports, and research outputs. However, there is always something to be

learned from a new fish, and the University Library certainly took advantage of Selinda's time with us. Most notably, the drop-in visits to Selinda's office provided librarians with new ways of looking at their own research. Librarians took the time to come and meet Selinda, and to speak to her about their research projects, their programs of research, and specific issues they might be dealing with. Having a fresh perspective to bounce things off of is helpful to librarians at all levels of their research endeavours. Selinda brought in previous experience from her work at Western and Windsor, and the experience of working on her PhD. Her reputation as it pertains to the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) Librarians' Research Institute gave her words and advice weight. Our librarians were thrilled to be able to interact with Selinda on a day to day basis, and much was learned from these one on one encounters. On a personal note, Selinda fully engaged with the C-EBLIP and was integral to the development of the C-EBLIP Research Network. I truly appreciate my relationship with Selinda, our friendship, and our collegial conversations.

Sharing of Skills and Knowledge

This is slightly different from the section above in that the U of S Library Researcher-in-Residence program requires that our researcher makes a commitment to formally engage with the librarians in a structured way. The first such activity during Selinda's residency not only engaged our own librarians, it also engaged librarians from across Canada. Selinda presented the very first pre-symposium workshop the day prior to the 2nd annual C-EBLIP Fall Symposium: Librarians as Researchers. Her workshop topic focused on how to turn a research idea into a research question. Formal feedback received from workshop participants indicated that the workshop was "very good" and "excellent," while informal feedback gave the impression of enthusiasm and inspiration. Early in 2016, Selinda met with C-EBLIP members for a

facilitated discussion on how we might best navigate and lead ourselves through the exciting and ever-evolving landscape of research dissemination. We talked about blogs and Twitter, comfort zones and new vistas, and maximizing benefits of engagement in social media. Prior to Selinda's departure, she will be presenting a talk to U of S Library employees about embarking on a PhD. Our group looks forward to Selinda's thoughts and insight as she comes to the end of her doctoral journey.

A Focus on Research

The identity of the researcher-in-residence aside, just the fact that we have a researcher-in-residence program serves to announce to the wider campus community that our librarians are faculty members and research is part of our assignment of duties. It also helps to remind us that research is part of our jobs. The University Library has a service mission and an academic mission, and so do librarians. The presence of the program and of the researcher-in-residence puts research front and centre for us. With busy schedules and a major focus on the work of the library, research can sometimes be relegated to a secondary task. However, research is important not only for academic considerations such as tenure and promotion, but also as a means to progress the discipline of librarianship. Practicing librarians conducting and disseminating research enhances the LIS evidence base. It provides a much needed perspective from a practical viewpoint. The more we are able to engage with our practice issues in a rigorous and robust manner, the better we will be at making timely and appropriate decisions and moving our practice and service forward. The researcher-in-residence program is a focal point, for ourselves and for those outside of our library.

Closing

A well-run researcher-in-residence program can be an asset to any academic library where research is a focus. The program also enriches the resident's experience and knowledge as a researcher. Extending these programs beyond Canada and even beyond academic institutions can provide opportunities for librarian researchers to be new fish in old ponds, and can provide new energy and fresh ideas for the host institution. Communication and collaboration are important catalysts in developing an environment which supports and nurtures research. The more opportunities we have to trade knowledge and ideas, share skills and philosophies, and experience research life outside the boundaries of our home institutions, the richer and more vibrant our own research will be.

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