

CARL LRI Poster: Creating a Research Interest Group for librarians in an academic institution

Abstract: This poster will provide an overview of the process used to create a Research Interest Group (RIG) for academic librarians, highlighting the benefits of creating such a group, and identifying the possible challenges in coordinating a RIG.

The kairotic moment to form a Research Interest Group (RIG) to strengthen the culture of research among an academic institution's librarians came about shortly after one librarian from the institution attended the CARL Librarian Research Institute (LRI) in 2013. Taking the structure of the LRI itself as inspiration, she formulated a proposal for the RIG. The proposal was well-received by the institution's library community and the librarians were highly interested in participating.

The research culture among the institution's librarians was yet not as strong as at other academic institutions, as research or scholarly activity is encouraged, but not mandatory, to obtain a permanent position. Nonetheless, creating a welcoming space for reflection and dialogue on research addressed a need that had arisen from the intrinsic motivations of the librarians within the institution.

The creation and implementation of the group occurred in an organic manner. The first meeting was about defining objectives for the RIG (i.e. what topics to cover, what format to follow, how frequently to hold meetings). Participants shared past and current research projects as well as future ideas that were starting to germinate. It was the first time librarians from the institution had a venue to share research interests among colleagues, and many participants were compelled to share their enthusiasm with RIG's creation.

Several ideas were enacted from this first meeting. A Journal Club was established as a separate but complementary entity from the RIG. Since many participants were new to research, there was a need for more information on research processes and services available within the institution. The RIG's first year was a mix of formal meetings with guest speakers (e.g. professors from the School of Information Studies, members of the Research Facilitators' office, and from the Research Ethics Board office) and informal meetings of the RIG's participants (e.g. lightning talks on participants' past and present research projects, conference presentation practice).

In June 2014, participants met to reflect on the first year of the RIG, and members agreed that they had a greater understanding of the services and resources available at the institution and that the culture of research within the library was developing; therefore, participants preferred to have a more active role in the second year. A distribution list was created to instill ongoing debate and discussion among participants. The group is in the process of solidifying its purpose by developing a vision and mission statement and selecting long-term goals. It is looking into the possibility of developing an initial funding pool to begin supporting some of the costs of research by librarians in the institution. It continues to provide supporting activities, such as analysis software training

sessions and scheduled group academic literature reading sessions. Furthermore, the group will create a restricted-access wiki to document its events and track its evolution.

The librarians participating in the RIG have gained critical thinking skills from participating in the group, have a forum for peer support in conducting scholarly activity, and have raised their research profile.

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