Feeling Like a Third Wheel?
Leveraging Faculty-Student-Librarian Relationships for Student Success
ACRL 2011 National Conference Poster

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Listen to Your Faculty And Improve Student Learning!

1. How do librarians fit into the faculty-student-librarian relationship on your campus?
    a. What would this relationship look like ideally?
       What weaknesses can you identify in this relationship? *(Please see our ACRL 2011 poster for an examination of common weaknesses in this relationship.)*

2. What do you already recognize about faculty and the library on your campus?
    a. What do you think faculty know about the library?
    b. What do you think faculty would like the library to do for them and their students?

3. What more can you find out about faculty and the library on your campus?
    a. What methods could you use to learn about faculty experiences, expectations, and hopes for collaboration with librarians? (see list below for suggestions)
    b. What resources do you need to accomplish information gathering from faculty?
    c. Who are the stakeholders you need to support your efforts?
    d. What is a reasonable timeline?

4. What did your study reveal about the faculty-student-librarian relationship on your campus?
    a. What are the major weaknesses?
    b. What are some strengths you can build on?

5. What are some possible solutions to weaknesses on your campus?
    a. What resources do you need to accomplish each solution?
    b. Who are the stakeholders you need to support your efforts?
    c. What is a reasonable timeline? Are there intermediate steps you can take?
    d. What are the obstacles you anticipate? How can you work around them?

Tried and true methods for talking to faculty to find out what they think the library does for them and for students, and what they wish it could do:

- Formal Interviews — Following the model of the ethnographic studies at ERIAL and CUNY, a range of faculty can be interviewed about their expectations and experiences of the library. It can be very useful to audio record interviews, but may not always be appropriate.

- Focus Groups — With a small financial investment (usually to pay for lunch!), libraries can host focus groups with faculty. These gatherings can also be excellent opportunities to educate faculty about library resources and services. A series of focus groups might be arranged around specific issues, such as assignments, instruction, research resources, and library services. It can be useful for focus groups to be discipline-based.

- Surveys — A brief survey can be a less time-intensive way to gather input from faculty than focus groups and interviews. However, it can be difficult to get faculty to respond, and surveys do little to build relationships with faculty.

- Informal Conversation — Librarians who are thinking purposefully about an issue can take advantage of ongoing, day-to-day contact with faculty to informally query them.

How to get answers you didn't realize you were looking for:

While preliminary questions and topics should be developed in advance, open-ended questions or prompts allow respondents to frame issues from their own perspectives, and leave more room for unexpected, and therefore more useful, answers. One approach is to ask a narrow focus question (one that has "yes" and "no" as answer choices, or choices from a list) followed by another question in order to understand the initial response. Another way is simply to ask open-ended questions. Examples of both types of questions are listed in the table below.

Narrow Focus Question (with follow-up)	Open-Ended Question/Prompt
Have you included library instruction in any of your courses? Why or why not?	What are your expectations for student research? How do you communicate those expectations to students? How do students in your class learn to do research?
Do you give your students assignments that require them to do research, or assignments that require them only to use texts assigned in class? How did you choose to do that?	Talk me through a student assignment from beginning to end.
Do you require your students to use the library for their assignments? Why or why not?	How are students expected (or required) to locate sources to use when completing research-based assignments? Are students expected (or required) to solicit assistance in completing research-based assignments?