

### So Much Reading – So Little Time!



#### 1 - Problem Statement

Librarians' work lives are busy. Rarely do we have time to discuss an interesting article or share with our colleagues what we are currently reading in the professional literature. For many librarians there is little time to read and reflect. In a field rich with literature, how can one keep up with the reading and stay engaged in the conversation?

#### 2 – Solution

##### Start a Librarian Journal Club at Your Library!

A journal club at your library provides a forum for you to get together with your colleagues and thoughtfully discuss 1-2 articles. Journal club meetings are fun ways to keep up with the literature and not miss important and interesting articles. Journal clubs are common within the sciences, but found less frequently in librarianship. (Please pick up the bibliography to become more familiar with the use of journal clubs in the library world and beyond.) There are many benefits to beginning a journal club (see section 5).

#### 3 – What We Did at the Leatherby Libraries

In Spring 2008 a librarian journal club was formed at the Leatherby Libraries. The inspiration for forming the club came after reading Elizabeth Kraemer's article in the *Journal of Academic Librarianship* titled "Keeping Up with the Journals: A Librarian Journal Club at Oakland University" (2007, v. 33, p. 136).

The club has been embraced by the majority of the librarians. Membership is optional and was initially open to just librarians. At the second meeting, a majority agreed to open the club to staff members who are in library school. In January 2009, membership was opened to any interested library staff members. We meet once a month over lunch during the spring and fall semesters. We are now in the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester of our journal club!

### 4- Steps for Establishing & Maintaining a Journal Club

#### Planning the First Meeting

- Gauge your colleagues' interest in forming a journal club. How many members do you want/need? Even a small club of 3-4 members can generate a rich dialogue.
- Once you have your interested members, ask for feedback on a preferred day/time for your regular monthly meeting. (At the Leatherby Libraries, most librarians prefer a Friday meeting over lunch.)
- Pick 1-2 articles you (as the leader of this new club) will present for the first meeting.
- Send a meeting notification with links to the articles you will be discussing at least 2 weeks before the meeting to allow time for reading.
- Be sure to inform your members to read the articles *before* the meeting.
- Prepare at least 3 questions or points for each article that you will use to stimulate discussion.
- Bring refreshments to the meeting. Food is important!

#### Planning Future Meetings

- In between each meeting, send out requests for recommended articles for discussion. Review the recommendations and determine the best articles for discussion.
- Assign members/articles to future dates. If you are lucky, you will have members plugged into dates several months in advance.
- Ask assigned members to lead the discussion for their dates and bring at least 3 questions or points for discussion.
- Enjoy the discussions!

### 5- Benefits of a Librarian Journal Club

- Provides forum for deep and focused reflection on 1-2 articles per month.
- Allows a space for ideas to flourish.
- Stimulates discussion on possible new programs, services, and/or teaching methods.
- Builds dialogue and relationships between librarians in an informal setting.
- Encourages open and respectful communication of colleagues' differing philosophies and attitudes.
- Provides time for librarians to get to know each other better outside of a formal agenda, but in a free-flowing discussion.
- Allows new and seasoned librarians to learn from each other.
- Provides a forum for librarians to bring articles/concepts of interest to the attention of their colleagues.
- Builds a potential bridge between departments. (What's being discussed in electronic resources that the instruction librarians may benefit from knowing about? What's happening in cataloging literature? Any new developments being discussed in archives?)
- Provides time for busy librarians to keep up with the literature.
- Gives librarians the opportunity to share the lead in discussions with their colleagues.
- Requires little time, cost, and resources (generally 1 hour per month for the meeting and 15 minutes – 1 hour of reading time/preparation; minimal cost for refreshments).





## 6- Making Your Journal Club Successful

### Tips for Club Leaders and Co-Leaders

- Make your club non-mandatory, allowing members the freedom to come and go as their time permits.
- Do not schedule more than 2 articles for a meeting. The idea is to have an involved, thoughtful discussion. Even 1 article may be enough for some meetings.
- Be careful when selecting articles for discussion that you do not habitually bog your members down with lengthy, scholarly works. Having brief articles from publications like the *Chronicle of Higher Education* or *Library Journal* from time-to-time is wise!
- Be a conscientious timekeeper and make sure your meetings do not routinely extend beyond 1 hour, but do not get stuck on the 1 hour meeting timeframe either. If your discussion goes just 30 or 45 minutes, that's fine.
- Get the other members involved in selecting articles and leading the discussion as much as possible. Do this by regularly sending out requests for others to send article recommendations to you.
- Make sure that members know, if their article is being discussed, that they will lead the discussion and have questions/points ready for the meeting.
- Do not do all the work yourself, but realize as a club leader that you may be bringing articles and leading the discussion more than your colleagues.
- Have a stash of good articles ready that you can present if you do not get volunteers. Plan on needing to dig into this stash a few times each year!
- See if you can be a co-leader of your club with a colleague to minimize the work required to maintain an active club.
- The club should not be a forum for creating more work for the members or you may see attendance dwindle! (Although a discussion may lead to the implementation of a new program, service, etc., which is great, this should not be the goal of the club.)
- Know ahead of time that all of your colleagues may not be interested and attendance will fluctuate.
- Bring good food/drinks and advertise ahead of time that food will be available. If your library budget cannot cover this cost, see if members will take turns bringing the refreshments.

## 7- Other Creative Possibilities for Your Journal Club

- Create a webpage for your club with information on upcoming dates, articles (with links), and the names of the discussion leaders.
- Create a blog or wiki for your journal club to continue the discussion beyond the in-person meeting.
- Invite all library staff, not just librarians, to some or all of your journal club meetings.
- Invite library school students who live in your area to attend the journal club meetings at your library.



## Librarian Journal Club @ The Leatherby Libraries!



Journal Club Members in Action! (L-R clockwise): **Annie Knight**, Coordinator of CUC Library Services; **Nancy Stenerson Gonzales**, Coordinator of Cataloging; **Andrew Tessandori**, Cataloging Assistant; **Lorraine Attarian**, Chair, Collection Management Division; **Brett Fisher**, Chair, Library Systems, Technology, and Electronic Resources Division; **Doug Dechow**, Instruction Librarian; **Kevin Ross**, Associate Dean; and **Cindy Mitchell**, Acquisitions Assistant. Members not in photograph: **Randy Boyd**, Archives and Cataloging Librarian; **Julie Artman**, Chair, Public Services Division, and **Amanda Melilli**, Interlibrary Loan Assistant.

## Contact Me

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