Review of Library Service and Learning: Empowering Students, Inspiring Social Responsibility, and Building Community Connections

Michelle Colquitt

Gwinnett Technical College

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Gone are the days of viewing a library simply as a repository of books, or a place for quiet contemplation and serious academic study. McDevitt and Finegan (2018) have curated an excellent collection of essays that provide generative ideas for involving students—mainly at undergraduate research institutions in library research. This text is easy to digest. It is divided into three parts, with an introductory essay outlining key definitions, and a final chapter for further considerations for incorporating service-learning into the library.

In the introductory essay, McDevitt and Finegan (2018) outline the definitions of both experiential learning and service learning. Citing York, Groves, and Black, they define experiential learning as "education that emphasizes personal experience rather than learning from books, or other secondary sources [that] broadens the classroom experience by providing concrete opportunities to observe, conceptualize, and apply knowledge and experiment" (p. VIII). Building upon the idea of experiential learning, McDevitt and Finegan (2018) cite Jacoby's definition of service learning as "a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs, together with structured opportunities for reflection designed to achieve desired learning outcomes" (p. VIII). It is important to keep these two definitions in mind while critically evaluating this text. Building further on the distinction between experiential and service-learning, it is related that "service-learning is generally understood to be a subset of experiential learning. Given that, it is not surprising that there might be some confusion when it comes to use of the terms. It does not help that service-learning itself has been variously defined" (McDevitt & Finegan, 2018 p. 407).

Divided into three parts, Part I. Library and Information Literacy Credit Bearing Courses or Sponsors of Undergraduate Community Based Research, Part II. Library Support for Courses with

Applied Service-Based Projects in the Disciplines, and Part III. Library as Location for Student-Led Educational Outreach Events and Projects, this text is cohesively organized. While some of these topics might not be critically essential to our jobs, they are possibly generative for the next great Library idea. Most of the ideas presented in this text involve some form of collaboration—which is essential to successful librarianship.

In Part I. Library and Information Literacy Credit-Bearing Courses or Sponsors of Undergraduate Community Based Research, academic librarians from research universities were afforded the opportunity to share about their specific practices. Service-learning, a guiding ideal of this text, is specifically on display in this part. Many of the projects outlined in this section seemed a bit repetitive, with slight tweaks in implementation and execution, but with similar outcomes. The two chapters in this section most fascinating to me were: Chapters Two and Three, both of which incorporated the usage of infographics to gauge student learning.

The chapter with a somewhat more experiential learning bent is Chapter Two, which covers using infographics to present student research for an Information Literacy class. There is still a service-learning component in this chapter, in that students identify a community agency and a problem the agency might encounter. Once the problem is identified students are then responsible for creating an infographic relating to the problems each agency might encounter. Learning the methodologies behind creating infographics was quite fascinating. My one complaint is the fact that the infographics were presented at the end of the chapter in grayscale making them a bit difficult to read and interpret. Presenting information in a visual method is such a dynamic way to determine student learning, however, it would have been better suited to this audience to present this in a colorful and easy to read manner.

Incorporating experiential and service learning, Chapter Three presents a more research oriented bent. In this chapter, Kirsch and Bradley, Librarians at the University of South Carolina Upstate (Kirsch has since become affiliated with Briar Cliff University) present the framework of a class where students will partner with a local non-profit to physically volunteer at least five hours and then to commit to five hours of research to assist in problem solving efforts for the non-profit. Once the student has volunteered and researched, they were expected to create a video presenting their findings. (McDevitt & Finegan, 2018 p. 50). Like other chapters outlining their curricula, Kirsch and Bradley effectively outline the whole process to include a thorough video grading rubric.

After reading part one, librarians and support staff can realize natural areas for the incorporation of service-based learning. Part Two constitutes a deeper dive into incorporating service-learning into discipline-based classes. As previously mentioned, there are areas where service-learning can natively and easily be incorporated into the curricula. There are chapters covering the incorporation of service-learning into the arts, digital storytelling for pre-service teachers, public history, public relations, archaeology, and international business.

Of particular enjoyment was the chapter *Moving Words* by Gruber, Pratesi, and Waseskuk, two librarians and an art instructor affiliated with the University of Northern Iowa. This project constituted a collaboration between first year visual arts students, a local youth writing project, and the University of Northern Iowa's Rod Library Digital Media Hub. The visual arts students created short stop-motion films at the Digital Media Hub that were based on works created by the students of the writing project. This project was born out of a commitment to diversity and inclusion and is emblematic of the changing culture at the University of Northern Iowa. (McDevitt & Finegan, 2018 p. 115-116). The arts might not instinctively feel as if it is the "correct" area for library service-learning collaborative partnerships.

However, Gruber, Pratesi, and Waseskuk affirm that "this creative collaboration has supported student learning in the arts and has helped position the library as a key contributor to strong campus efforts to enhance community engagement. Academic libraries can play an important role in community engagement efforts and projects, further positioning them as vital stakeholders both on campus and in the broader community" (McDevitt and Finegan, 2018 p. 135-136).

In Chapter Ten, *Fostering Community Engagement through Intentionality and Faculty-Librarian Partnerships*, Lassiter and Fisk, an English professor and librarian respectively affiliated with the University of New Mexico Gallup, collaborate with each other in a higher-level composition class that eventually contains a service-learning component with the assignment of a field observation visit to a community-based non-profit. One problematic area of Lassiter's teaching practice is that she begins her first class with a viewing of Michael Jackson's song *Man in the Mirror* to facilitate a class discussion of how change starts on the individual level (McDevitt and Finegan, 2018 p. 196). Given the recent allegations leveled by the *Leaving Neverland* documentary against Jackson, it could be suggested that an alternative version of the song—not performed by Jackson, or an alternative song altogether be found to foster discussion. It is understandable that Lassiter would choose this song to generate conversations about social justice issues, although, there are other songs or other video clips that could generate an excellent dialog about social justice with far less controversy.

Libraries are well known as the heart of their communities. Libraries, and librarians by our nature, should embrace the concept of collaboration with stakeholders across the disciplines to promote service-learning opportunities. Part III of this text emphasizes using the Library as location for student-led educational outreach events and projects. Several unique service-learning projects are outlined in this section. These projects include: a Children's Reading Celebration and Young Author's

Fair, an Undergraduate Research Conference, a Banned Book Read Out, visual merchandising of library display windows, a Wikipedia edit-a-thon, working in the Oral History archive, conducting poster sessions in the library, and conducting a Nutrition and Literacy Fair. These activities, all diverse, relate exactly how the library can help facilitate service-learning.

One of the most interesting programs covered in this section is the Banned Books Read Out. Students are given the autonomy to lead a program emphasizing the joy of reading "dangerous" books. Essentially, this program is an event held in the library where students read from banned books much like a Poetry Slam. Heflin, an English Professor affiliated with Indiana University of Pennsylvania, states "my pedagogical motivation for assigning a scholar-in-society project for all my literature courses is centered in my commitments (1) to expanding literature beyond the classroom walls and (2) to helping my students, most of whom will go on to teach at the primary, high school, or university levels, find innovative ways of sharing their joy of reading with their students" (McDevitt & Finegan, 2018 p. 302). Sharing excerpts from some of the lesser known banned books, or some of the more baffling selections of banned books could generate a great conversation among the participants of this event.

Another exciting student led service-learning event is a Wikipedia Edit-a-Thon. Despite the fact that Wikipedia, a free encyclopedia that anyone can edit, has its critics, when used in concert with other resources it can be an awesome tool to drive student learning. At the minimum Wikipedia fosters interest in learning about a given topic and can generate keyword suggestions for continuing research. Vetter and Woods state "Wikipedia Edit-a-thons provide opportunities for students and faculty to (1) increase digital writing skills, (2) practice critical thinking and digital engagement surrounding issues related to information literacy and the politics of representation and access in digital spaces, and (3) make improvements to a public knowledge database (Wikipedia) as a public service" (McDevitt & Finegan, 2018

p. 335-336). The concept of sharing knowledge digitally as a public service is revolutionary and something that information professionals should research and embrace with open arms. This Wikipedia Edit-a-Thon, which focused on the topic of Art+Feminism led to thirty-six visitors creating edits on seventy-four articles. Also created during the Edit-a-Thon was a new 3,450-word article on women in the arts (McDevitt & Finegan, 2018 p. 343-344). This project certainly seems doable for a Community College or Technical College Library. Vetter and Woods' article can certainly serve as an exemplar for planning a student led Wikipedia Edit-a-Thon.

As an aside, almost every chapter in this book is governed by a Creative Commons License, the notable exceptions being four chapters in the Library as location for student-led outreach section which are not covered by any Creative Commons License. It is important for the user to have a keen understanding of Creative Commons to determine if they are in appropriate compliance with the license when developing or adapting any program for their own Library. The Creative Commons website outlines what you are free to do with the work under any terms the licensee has in place. As previously mentioned, all images are presented in grayscale, therefore, there are some issues with clarity. The final chapter presents a concise summation of other topics to consider when incorporating service-learning into Information Literacy instruction.

Published by the Association of College and Research Librarians, or ACRL, this work is primarily geared toward academic librarians who work with undergraduate research populations. However, this work is certainly beneficial to those of us who work in Technical or Community College Libraries. The information presented in this text could also possibly generate programming ideas for public librarians, as well. Universally, librarians already have a keen grasp on service-learning, notwithstanding, it is

essential in our roles as community leaders to embrace service-learning opportunities with our

collaborative partners.