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Journal of eScience Librarianship
putting the pieces together: theory and practice

Science Librarian Internship as a Way to Get Started in eScience

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Abstract

The Science Bibliographers' Group of Boston College first proposed the creation of a paid science librarian internship position in Summer 2008. Since then, the three interns hired over time have gained exposure to a wide variety of activities undertaken by science librarians, and, at the same time, have significantly furthered the Library's understanding of, and participation in, eScience. In addition to important contributions in reference and collection development activities, intern contributions have included an environmental scan/best practices review of relevant eScience initiatives, design of an eScience brochure, development of a faculty survey to gauge interest in library data management, and a capstone presentation on eScience for all library staff. Building upon that work, the Science Bibliographers' Group developed a Vision Statement and Action Plans for eScience. Our current intern is working closely with members of the group on the creation of a LibGuide focused on data management and, concurrently, development of curricular materials for data management workshops to be implemented during the 2011/12 academic year. Ideally, these increased efforts in eScience-related work will result in an enhanced profile for eScience on the Boston College campus, and, ultimately, creation of a new, eScience-focused position in the Boston College Libraries. An internship program can provide current knowledge and skills to educate and support a university research library through the early learning stage of developing an eSciences program, while simultaneously providing a valuable hands-on learning experience for a potential science librarian.

Goals and History of the Science Librarian Internship at Boston College

Boston College (BC) is a leading American Jesuit university with approximately 9,000 full-time undergraduates and 4,900 graduate and professional students. As a Doctoral/ Research Extensive university, BC offers PhD programs in Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Nursing, and Physics. In fiscal year 2010, university researchers received over $60 million in sponsored research funds. The Boston College Libraries are members of the Association of Research Libraries.

In Spring 2008, the Boston College Science Bibliographers' Group — bibliographers for Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Education (including Science Education), Geology, Mathematics, Nursing, Physics, and Psychology — proposed to Library administration the creation of a paid Science Librarian

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Internship position, with funding from the operating budget. The Science Bibliographers' Group had already identified a long list of projects and initiatives to support the Boston College Strategic Plan to expand support across the sciences. The internship's goals were:

- Foster interest and excitement in science librarianship as a career path for students pursuing library/information science graduate degrees in the Boston area;
- Hire a candidate with clearly demonstrated interest and experience in the sciences;
- Gain added support for collection development and reference activities;
- Raise awareness locally that Boston College is working hard on its science collections;
- Promote the idea that Boston College would be a good place to consider for future employment.

With funding for the internship position secured, resumes were solicited from students currently enrolled in Library Science graduate programs. The internship was posted to several regional job boards, such as the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, the Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) web site, and the Special Libraries Association jobs board. The faculty member at Simmons College GSLIS who teaches Literature of Science and Technology was also contacted and asked for potential candidates. Resumes were evaluated based on relevant experience and interest in the sciences, and several candidates were brought in for interviews with the Science Bibliographers' Group. It is interesting to note that previous efforts to hire science librarian students as non-paid interns had failed; this time, with funding at the highest level possible for graduate student employment, there were numerous excellent candidates.

This first year's experience was so successful that when funding became available again for Summer 2010, the Group submitted another, similar proposal, but this time, with eScience-related activities/tasks featured much more prominently. This evolution was the result of heightened awareness of eScience on the part of the Science Bibliographers' Group (due in part to attendance at the First Annual University of Massachusetts and New England Area Librarian E-Science Symposium), as well as interest in eScience at the highest administrative levels of the Library. The internship for Summer 2011 had again, at its core, eScience activities, including development of web-based user materials and workshop design for data management instruction.

Structure and Tasks of the Initial Internship Position (Summer, Fall 2008)

The internship was designed to allow the intern to work with every member of the Group through the internship period, with each group member supervising hands-on work of particular interest to that member, and a single member handling overall scheduling and logistics. Desired tasks were a combination of specific tasks and "running" tasks. The specific tasks had clearly-defined endpoints, while the running tasks could be worked on throughout, and did not require immediate supervision. This would provide a broad array of experiences in tasks common to most science librarian positions, and in an array of disciplines.

The first internship included work in all of the following areas, as well as other tasks:

- Collection and analysis of journal usage and citation data in various disciplines for budget allocations analysis support;
- Identification of various possible journal additions for Computer Science and

Mathematics, should expected funding/ program expansion materialize;

- Review of science reference collections for updated editions;
- Updating of RefWorks and other instructional documentation;
- Creation of new, and revision of, existing LibGuides in various areas;
- Collection of links for patient or consumer health information handouts for nursing students;
- Assistance in weeding.

Evolution of the Internship to Incorporate EScience (Summer 2010)

The creation of the 2010 internship clearly reflected changes in the landscape, with eScience and other e-resource activities now featured more prominently. In addition to many of the same tasks as in the 2008 internship, this internship's assigned task list included:

- Assist Science Librarians in an environmental scan of the literature/best practices of relevant eScience initiatives, toward creating a roadmap in this area for the Boston College Libraries;
- Create draft survey and brochure related to data generation and management, part of which was incorporated into a Scholarly Communication Survey sent to all faculty at Boston College;
- Provide important research and analysis support for a newly-formed taskforce focusing on e-book purchasing/collection development;
- Participate in newer forms of reference service added/augmented since 2008 (Text-a-Librarian and 24/7 chat reference).

Assessment

After both internships, the Science Bibliographers' Group evaluated the program based on reports generated from the interns, completed work, and group experiences.

What Did the Interns Gain?

Both Science Interns, Becky DeAngelis (2008) and Myrna Morales (2010), gained a much better understanding of the role of science librarians, particularly in an academic setting. They gained experience in working with a variety of supervisory styles and the day-in/day-out tasks and concerns that form a science librarian's day. By having the opportunity to delve more deeply into particular areas of work including eScience, journal collection analysis, and budget allocation issues, they also gained a depth of experience that will stand them in strong stead for future job-hunting. On Myrna's last day, she presented a PowerPoint presentation on eScience, in general, and in the context of Boston College, as she had come to see it through her experiences and the eyes of the Science Bibliographers' Group. This synthesis has proven invaluable to moving the science librarians ahead in their thinking about eScience, and helped inform Myrna's understanding of eScience more broadly.

What Did the Boston College Libraries Gain?

Both interns provided bibliographers with invaluable insight into current thinking in library school in a host of areas, but most especially in eScience and technology innovation. Both interns completed tasks that made significant, long-lasting contributions to the everyday work of each of the bibliographers. In the context of eScience, Myrna created the draft for an eScience brochure for Boston College, incorporating the knowledge she already possessed, as well as that gained from her Boston College research and internship experience and in working with the Science Bibliographers'

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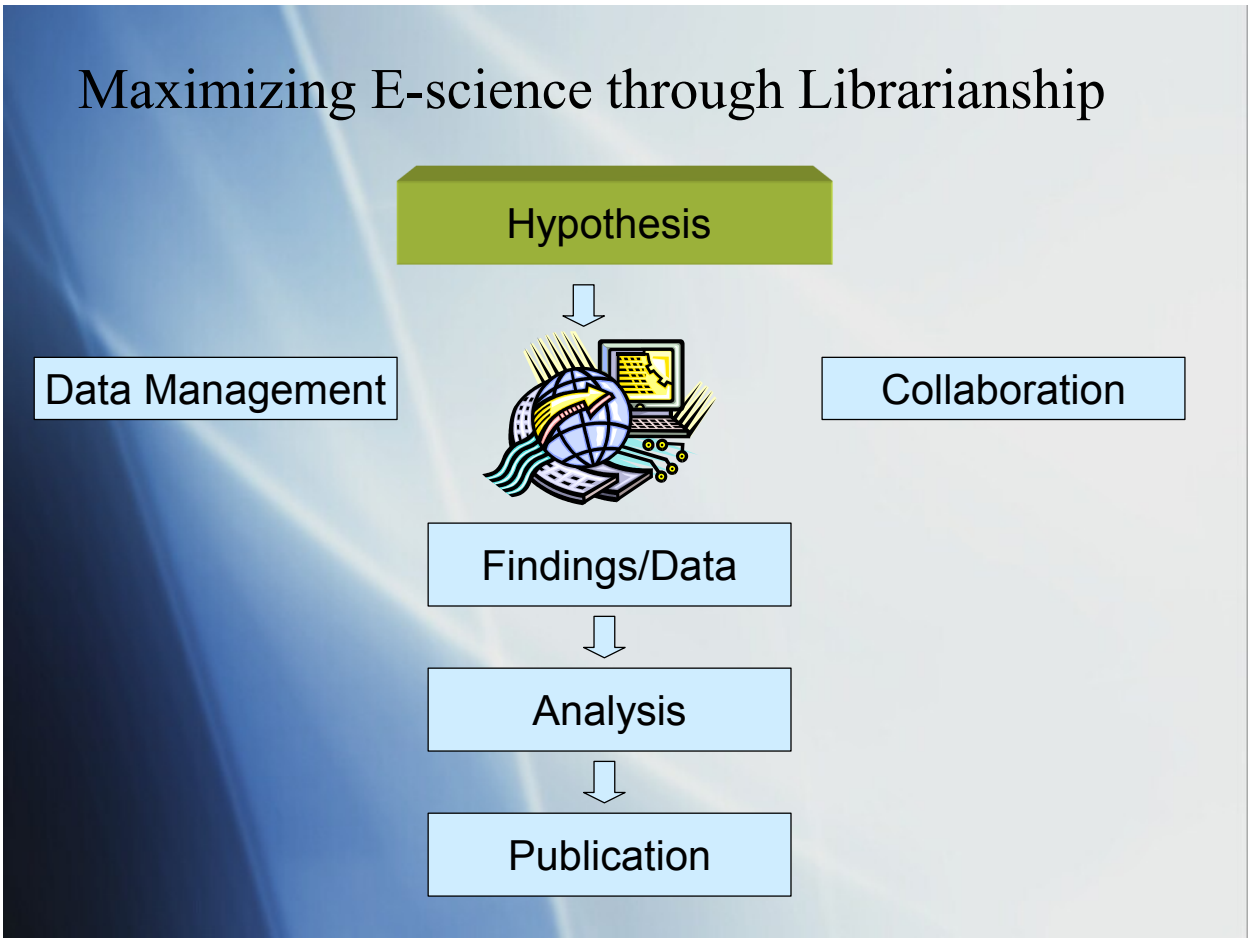
Figure 1: Slide from presentation made to library staff by Myrna Morales, 2010 Science Intern



Group. Myrna's "capstone" PowerPoint presentation on eScience, was, as noted, especially useful in clarifying eScience issues for the Group, while providing an engaging learning opportunity for all library staff (Figure 1). During a poster session at the Third University of Massachusetts and New England Area Librarian E-Science Symposium, members of the Group shared a discussion of the experience (Anderson et al. 2011).

Next Steps

Following up on the Summer 2010 internship accomplishments, the Science Bibliographers' Group identified additional work and goals. Building upon Myrna's extensive literature review, draft brochure, and PowerPoint presentation/synthesis, the Group developed a Vision Statement and Action Plans, as well as draft faculty/student/staff surveys and a draft brochure. In February 2011, the science bibliographers met with Library administration as a first-step in garnering further internal and wider-collaborative organizational support in the area of eScience. The response was positive, resulting in a discussion of a possible data summit on campus. This initial idea was later replaced with the plan to invite a high-profile, outside speaker to address faculty on the growing need for better data management, curation, and preservation in all disciplines. It is hoped that this event will raise awareness of eScience among faculty and data partners to

build a foundation for future collaboration. Planning for this is underway. This advocacy work also helped in crystallizing next steps for the science bibliographers; the Group is now focused on self-education and development of user materials and workshop curricula in support of data management.

Science Librarian Internship (Summer 2011)

The Science Bibliographers' Group was successful in advocating for a new science librarian intern for Summer 2011. Led by our Data Librarian, our newest intern has helped the group in developing a robust "Data Management" LibGuides site, as well as in collecting curriculum materials for development of a data management workshop to be offered starting in Fall 2011. Coverage of traditional science librarian work experience has been maintained, but is now more limited in its scope. Ideally, these increased efforts in eScience-related work will also result in an enhanced profile for eScience on the Boston College campus, and, ultimately, the creation of a new, eScience-focused position in the Boston College Libraries. This is a long range goal; it may be possible, if time and resources are available, to provide additional internship opportunities until an eScience professional position becomes a reality.

Conclusions

Creating a Science Internship position is a valuable and productive approach to establishing the groundwork for new initiatives such as eScience. Library intern students contribute enthusiasm, skills, many hours of hard work, and critical support while garnering excellent experience and enhanced knowledge in the field of science librarianship. A well designed science internship program benefits both the intern and the hosting library.

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