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Kenneth J. Burhanna
Kent State University, Kburhann@kent.edu

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INSTRUCTIONAL OUTREACH TO HIGH SCHOOLS

Should you be doing it?

Kenneth J. Burhanna
Kent State University

ABSTRACT

Academic librarians have recognized the need for and the benefits of instructional outreach to high schools, but faced with budgetary challenges, increasing workloads, and other pressures, librarians sometimes struggle to determine if and how they can work with high schools. This paper will seek to provide practical direction in considering these questions. Using the library high school outreach program at Kent State University Informed Transitions as a sample case, this paper will share observations, discuss practical considerations, and offer recommendations that will serve to guide academic librarians in determining what role they can play in providing instructional outreach to local high schools.

INTRODUCTION

Academic librarians have been discussing and studying outreach to high schools since at least the 1960s (Craver, 1987). Interest in this topic has persisted largely for two reasons: one, a need exists, and two, academic librarians perceive such programming as beneficial on many levels.

Many instruction librarians acknowledge that such a need exists, because high schools regularly request visits to academic libraries. It

is also commonly recognized that many students arrive at college unprepared. Many have written about the deficiencies of and expectations for research skills in freshmen students (Epstein, 2002; Levine, 1996; Nofsinger, 1989; Smith, 2002). Major studies have identified the important role of research skills in the future success of high school graduates (Achieve, 2005; Conley, 2005).

Underlining this need has been an outcry for collaboration and alignment between secondary and higher education to achieve “K–20

information literacy” (Nichols, Spang, & Padron, 2005). Ford (1996) recommended dialogue between school and academic librarians and called for leadership. Carr & Rockman (2003) encouraged academic librarians to “...work with their K–12 colleagues in enabling students to succeed in college” (p. 52) and cited several ongoing high school to college transition projects. Others reported on grant-funded initiatives, like the work of the Institute for Library and Information Literacy Education (ILILE) at Kent State University, which has recently developed several high school to college transition collaborations in Ohio (Burhanna & Jensen, 2006).

The literature of librarianship also shows that academic librarians view instructional outreach to high schools as beneficial on many levels. The most immediate benefit—and the reason why high school teachers and school library media specialists are interested in visiting academic libraries—is to help students succeed in their high school assignments (Cosgrove, 2001). The academic library provides access to collections that would otherwise not be available to high school students (Kenney, 1989). Furthering information literacy skills and encouraging lifelong learning are other important benefits (AASL/ACRL Task Force on the Educational Role of Librarians, 2000). Others have cited instructional outreach to high schools as an opportunity to decrease student feelings of anxiety toward large academic libraries (Burhanna & Jensen, 2006; Mellon, 1988). Institutional benefits have also been identified. Outreach to local high schools can improve community relations and public image (Canelas & Westbrook, 1990; Ury, 1996a). Instructional programming to high school students can help with recruiting (Burhanna & Jensen, 2006; Canelas & Westbrook, 1990) and possibly promote higher education in general (Cosgrove, 2001).

It would seem that, in principle, instructional outreach to high schools is a needed and beneficial programming activity; but from a practical point of view, is it something you

should be doing? What practical considerations should be taken into account when contemplating this question? What are the requirements and demands of a large, formalized, high school outreach program? These are the questions being raised by colleagues challenged by diminishing budgets and increasing instructional responsibilities on their campuses.

This paper will seek to provide practical direction in considering these questions. Using Informed Transitions, the library high school outreach program at Kent State University, as a case example, this paper will share observations and lessons learned, discuss practical considerations, and offer recommendations that will guide academic librarians in determining what role they can play in providing instructional outreach to local high schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Some authors have provided practical discussions of the subject, but many of these discussions focus on reporting what was done, providing model approaches, and suggesting ways to promote collaboration, rather than offering details and considerations related to determining levels of commitment, staffing, and formality. In reporting on an instructional collaboration between Brooklyn College Library and New York City Schools, Evans (1997) provided a brief discussion of why instructional outreach to high schools might not be beneficial. Among the reasons listed are (a) it might draw resources away from current college students, (b) high school students could disturb or distract current college students, and (c) it is not an activity rewarded by administrators. In exploring and fostering future high school to college collaborations, other authors asked the question: “Should academic librarians be involved in establishing partnerships with K–12 schools” (Nichols, Spang, & Padron, 2005, p. 6). Yet their answer, “an enthusiastic yes” (p. 6), focused on external needs and benefits as voiced by the profession and failed to consider internal library values and resources. Campbell and McCulley (1992) reported on instructional

sessions offered to visiting high school students at Boatwright Memorial Library at the University of Richmond. They discussed planning, class sizes, and the student assignment, and concluded by offering a model of collaboration that provides seven practical points to consider in planning for a high school visit. Ury (1996b) gave a very practical overview of high school visits to the Owens Library at Northwest Missouri State University. She shared observations on the number of students served, management of class size, and student topics. She also offered 10 suggestions for high school teachers who want to bring their students to an academic library. These suggestions can serve as a helpful guide to ways in which academic librarians can collaborate and consult with high school teachers and school library media specialists.

Providing the most practical overview of instructional outreach to high schools, Pearson and McNeil (2002) described the evolution of a high school users' program at the University Libraries of the University of Nebraska, Lincoln from the late 1980s to 2002. They described how the program has changed, shared participation numbers, and discussed practical solutions to problems. For example, they reported difficulties in collecting fines directly from high school students, and described how they revised their policy to make the high schools responsible for their students' borrowed materials. More recently, Burhanna and Jensen (2006) shared practical observations about collaborating with high schools and their students, pointing out the impact of budget constraints and the importance of becoming familiar with statewide educational standards at the secondary level.

Overall, the literature is lacking in research on the impact of instructional outreach to high schools. It does report on the transferability of library research skills from high school to college. Articles by Goodin (1991) and Kester (1994) affirm the importance of school librarians, but do not agree on whether or not library skills are transferable. Absent from the literature is any substantial research on the

efficacy of instructional outreach to high school students by academic librarians.

Whereas authors have identified many perceived benefits for reaching out to high schools, the literature, on the whole, seems to have overlooked questions related to commitment, resource levels, and institutional values. In addition, little research supports the value of such outreach efforts, which begs the question: Should you be doing it?

BACKGROUND

Kent State University (KSU) is a state-assisted research university. This paper will focus on a program housed at the Kent campus, the largest of KSU's eight campuses. The fall 2006 enrollment at the Kent campus of KSU was 22,317, with 86% of those being undergraduates. Libraries and Media Services (KSU Library) at KSU, a member of the Association of Research Libraries, supports a collection of over 2.7 million volumes and provides access to over 13,000 journal titles. During the last two academic years, the KSU Library's Reference and Instruction Department has provided an average of 446 instructional sessions per year, directly serving an average of 7,985 students.

Prior to formalizing the instructional outreach program to high schools, the KSU Library worked informally with a few local high schools. No statistics exist for this outreach, but librarians estimated that they worked with eight to 10 class visits a year. These visits always originated from unsolicited teacher/school librarian requests to the KSU Library. Then in 2003, the KSU Library became an institutional partner in the Institute for Information Literacy and Library Education (ILILE). ILILE is federally funded through the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the U.S. Department of Education, and was established at KSU to provide leadership in fostering collaboration among K-12 teachers and school library media specialists and in advancing information literacy in the K-12 curriculum. The KSU Library's desire to formalize its

instructional outreach program to high schools grew from its work with and support of ILILE. In addition to providing a strong network of educators interested in the high school to college transition, ILILE helped to fund the construction of an instructional classroom devoted to high school visits.

Three years ago, KSU added the position of first-year experience (FYE) librarian, making a strong institutional commitment to the first-year success of students and the library's role in this success. The FYE librarian provided the KSU Library with the human resources needed to plan and develop specialized programming aimed at fostering first-year student success, with high school outreach being an important component. One of the FYE librarian's first projects was to formalize a library outreach program to high schools.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION - INFORMED TRANSITIONS

In the fall of 2004, the KSU Library launched Informed Transitions as their formal library outreach program to high schools (<http://www.library.kent.edu/highschool>). The program's mission is to foster successful student transitions from high school to college by inviting local high schools to plan class research visits to the KSU Library. Its objectives, as listed on the Informed Transitions Web site (Kent State University, 2007), are as follows:

- To instruct students in information literacy skills helpful for college preparation and a successful transition from high school to college.
- To promote in students positive attitudes toward academic libraries.
- To contribute to the immediate success of students in completing research assignments at the high school level.
- To create collaborations between high school librarians and teachers and academic librarians.
- To promote Kent State University and higher education in general.

Services Offered

Informed Transitions provides visiting high school students access to the KSU Library's online and print holdings. Remote online access to licensed products is not provided prior to or after visits. If a high school chooses, it may initiate borrowing for its students. Once authorized, high school students are granted the same borrowing privileges provided to undergraduates.

Information literacy instruction is a central component of most high school visits. The instruction session is usually designed around a high school assignment that students have been given prior to their visit. For those lacking an assignment, KSU librarians will design one, usually in collaboration with the teacher or school librarian.

Marketing

In the fall of 2004, the KSU Library began promoting the program by a direct mailing to school librarians, with follow-up phone calls. The mailing targeted high schools local to KSU (roughly within 30 miles). In addition to the mailing, the FYE librarian gave presentations to several regional school librarian groups.

Planning the Visit

Planning begins with a request from the high school to the FYE librarian. If the requesting school has not already done so, the FYE librarian directs them to the program's scheduling guidelines (<http://www.library.kent.edu/page/10983>). The FYE Librarian then works with the high school contact to schedule the visit and to gather information related to the students' needs. Depending on scheduling demands, the FYE librarian may work with the class or schedule a colleague who is available. Care is taken to make sure that KSU librarians communicate directly with the school librarian and/or teacher who will accompany the class on the visit to insure that borrowing and other details are considered in advance.

The Typical High School Visit

The typical visit lasts three to four hours. High school classes are encouraged to arrive as early

TABLE 1 — INFORMED TRANSITIONS PARTICIPATION STATISTICS

Academic Year	Participating Schools	Group Visits	Number of Students	Library Tours	Instruction Sessions
2004–2005	8	17	507	17	14
2005–2006	10	19	547	19	16
2006–2007	8	17	453	13	10
Totals	*16	53	1507	49	40
* Schools are counted only once over the three years.					

as possible. Visits are usually comprised of three parts:

1. A brief library tour to orient students to the KSU Library and academic libraries in general. (20 minutes)
2. An instruction session. (30 to 60 minutes)
3. Workshop time to allow students to use the KSU Library's resources and complete their research assignment. (1 to 2 hours, or all available time left).

In most cases, a KSU librarian works with the class for the duration of the visit. Visits typically end by 12:00 or 1:00 p.m.

OBSERVATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Participation and Visits by School Type

Since the inception of Informed Transitions, 53 high school groups have visited the KSU Library, giving 1,507 students experiences using an academic library. Table 1 shows the program's participation statistics. The participation numbers for Informed Transitions represents a 100% increase over the annual number of high school visits prior to the inception of the formal program. Initially, KSU

librarians struggled to make sense of these numbers, only concluding that the numbers were large and that the librarians had devoted a significant amount of time to facilitating these visits. They then began to look closely at what types of schools participated, where they were located, and whether or not the students at these schools typically went on to attend KSU.

As depicted in Table 2, the majority of visits came from schools located within 30 miles of KSU. Yet from the beginning of the program, KSU librarians have been surprised by the requests from schools more than an hour away. In planning for Informed Transitions, it had not occurred to them that schools would be interested in traveling for an hour or more for a visit. Although these visits have been few, KSU librarians are still wary of increased requests from non-local schools, fearing that it will increase their already busy schedule of school visits. Whereas KSU librarians have not stopped non-local schools from visiting, they have taken to politely suggesting that these schools consider visiting a university or college closer to them.

TABLE 2 — VISITS BY SCHOOL TYPES

School Types	Number of Visits
Local Schools (within 30 miles)	47
Non-Local Schools	6
Public Schools	43
Private Schools	10
Top 50 KSU Feeder Schools	22
Non-Top 50 KSU Feeder Schools	31

About a fifth of school visits have come from private schools. At first, KSU librarians welcomed these visits. But in working with these schools, they quickly came to a realization: students from these schools were usually well prepared, high achieving, and from privileged backgrounds. In other words, they, perhaps, needed additional support less than other high school students, and also they were very unlikely to become future KSU students. Whereas the KSU Library does not prohibit visits from private schools, librarians now take steps to make visits from these schools less demanding. For example, a KSU librarian will only devote an hour to such visits and leave the groups to work more closely with their teachers and school librarians.

In evaluating Informed Transitions' participation statistics, the most revealing breakdown has come from looking at the participation of feeder schools. A little over 40% of visits (22) have come from schools appearing on KSU's list of top 50 feeder schools. KSU librarians agree that this is a strong number, but one they would like to increase, at least as a percentage of overall visits. This analysis of feeder school participation proved illuminating to KSU librarians on two levels. First, with higher education's current focus on student success and retention rates, the program's work with feeder schools gave librarians a meaningful approach to talking about their work and defending it to administrators. Second, a close look at KSU's top feeder schools provided librarians with a strong audience on which to focus their future high school outreach efforts. Although they had briefly reviewed feeder school data in their initial planning, they admit to failing at first to realize its value in guiding their marketing efforts and in helping them to clearly define their target audience.

Lack of a clearly defined target audience and geographic area of coverage caused problems for KSU librarians. They found themselves working with students who didn't seem to fit their ideas of who the program was for. Eventually, they began to ask the key questions

they had failed to ask initially. Who is the program designed to serve? What geographic restrictions should be written into the program's public guidelines? How do we present and defend our program to administrators?

Scheduling, Group Size and Librarian Workload

The scheduling guidelines for Informed Transitions encourage schools to visit during the middle of academic semesters, avoiding busy periods at the start and end of semesters. This has been a good policy, but it has also created busy periods for high school visits. Most visits typically come during October and November in the fall, and during February and March in the spring. During these busy periods, as many as three or four visits can occur in a single week, with multiple visits occurring on a single day. At times, KSU librarians have found themselves walking a fine line between serving high school students and KSU students. This problem has not been overwhelming, but it does arise about once a semester. This has been mediated to some degree by inviting more KSU librarians to become involved; yet this is not a true solution, as it does not manage the overall workload of the program. Moving forward, thought is being given to limiting the number of visits that may be scheduled in any given week.

Adding to scheduling challenges has been the size of visiting high school groups. In fact, some of the scheduling pressures described above have been caused by large group sizes. Informed Transitions' scheduling guidelines encourage group sizes of 25 students or fewer, but this limit has become more and more difficult to maintain. Due to budgetary constraints, high schools have requested larger group sizes. For example, when schools have access to school buses, they want to fill them with students to make the best use of their resources. In most cases, KSU librarians have acquiesced to these requests, especially when they come from one of their feeder high schools. As a result, groups as large as 85 students have visited the KSU Library. In these cases, librarians break the groups into smaller classes (25 to 35 students) and additional KSU librarians are enlisted to help. Concurrent or staggered instructional

sessions are offered and the total visit time increases by an hour or two. These large groups strain librarian workload and the availability of instructional classrooms, and create brief surges of student activity at service areas when these students go out into the library to work. The problem of large group requests remains unresolved for KSU librarians. They have considered providing instruction online or via teleconference, but these alternatives require a large investment in development and technology.

Scheduling, group size, and the overall participation level of the program have all contributed to issues related to librarian workload. The workload of librarians involved with the program has been perceived as excessive or bordering on excessive by the librarians themselves and their superiors. Based on a review of program workload, KSU librarians estimate that each visit requires, on average, six hours of librarian time. This estimate includes scheduling the visit, instructional preparation and delivery, and the ongoing support provided during visits. Using this estimate, the program's 53 visits add up to 318 hours or almost eight weeks of librarian time. Is this excessive? KSU librarians believe it is nearly so, and something to watch closely. They do find it interesting that whereas they devote six hours to high school visits, they rarely devote more than four hours to instructional engagements with KSU students. If they were starting over, they would institute stricter scheduling policies and carefully study how much time librarians devote to visits. KSU librarians will closely monitor scheduling and workload in the future, and for the overall good of the library, they need to be prepared to turn down visit requests that overly stress or simply do not fit their schedules.

High School Borrowing

Though only five of the 16 participating high schools chose to authorize borrowing, these five schools have been some of the program's heaviest users. Over the program's life, 1,005 high school patrons have borrowed 3,348 items. Clearly, borrowing has played an important role

in the experiences of visiting high school students (especially those working on assignments in literature and the humanities) by providing them with extended exposure to the texts that support these areas. Problems related to student borrowing have been minor. The rate of overdue and lost materials has been lower for high school borrowers than for KSU undergraduates. KSU circulation staff and librarians noticed early that high school students tended to check materials out as a class or in large groups. On more than one occasion, students have unintentionally mobbed the circulation desk. This occurred for two reasons. First, the teachers and school librarians often reviewed their students' materials before allowing them to check out. This process tended to group students together. Second, the most popular option provided for high school borrowing asks the teacher or school librarian to be present at the time materials are checked out. So high school teachers and school librarians tended to have their students check out just prior to leaving. Now KSU librarians ask teachers and librarians to allow students to check out materials as soon as they've made the decision to borrow them. Teachers and librarians who want to review materials now often sit in the lobby next to the circulation desk and review materials as students walk up. KSU librarians have also begun to look more closely at the service points visiting high school groups will be using, in order to manage their access, so that staff are not overwhelmed and current KSU students do not find their access to services blocked.

Collaborating with High School Librarians and Teachers

KSU librarians have had positive experiences working with high school librarians and teachers. Even though both are often working under harsh budgetary constraints and the pressures of standardized testing within their schools, they have been eager and grateful for opportunities to visit the KSU Library. Due to the alignment of academic and school library information literacy standards, the AASL's Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning (1998), and the ACRL's Information

Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (2000), school librarians and academic librarians talk and think about instruction in similar ways. Yet, although enthusiastic to collaborate, school librarians often do not have significant input on student assignments. Student assignments have been almost entirely the creation of teachers. Communication between the high school and the KSU Library has sometimes been challenging because of these split roles between school librarians and teachers. The school librarian will often schedule the visit and attempt to mediate discussions of the assignment between KSU librarians and teachers. At times it has been difficult to learn about the assignment and even more difficult to offer revisions, as the school librarian serves as a middleman in the process. KSU librarians are hesitant to exclude either party from the conversation. After all, one of the program's objectives specifically seeks to create collaborations between these parties, but KSU librarians now are careful to consult directly with both the school librarian and the teacher, if necessary.

Little needs to be said about the importance of assignments in structuring instructional sessions. The assignment creates a point of need for students, making them more focused and engaged. In most cases, visiting high school students need to do research for papers they will be writing. The most common type of assignment focuses on literature, searching for critical discussions of literary works and for biographical information about authors. Some less common assignments focus on career exploration and historical events. KSU librarians have encountered some problematic high school assignments. Problem assignments usually are inappropriate in some way. For example, they might ask students to look for popular materials when the KSU Library holds largely academic materials. Other problems tend to mirror the same problems found with assignments on college campuses: The assignment asks students to use the same resource, or points them to outdated resources or resources assumed to be present that are not.

Despite communication difficulties, KSU librarians have largely succeeded in learning about and offering input for the assignments high school students will be working on during their visits.

Library Instruction and High School Students
Instructing high school students has helped KSU librarians to reconsider the assumptions they make about their students' perceptions and knowledge levels. They have learned that the culture of academic libraries is much different from that of school libraries and that part of their mission is to help students understand these differences. The academic library, because it is so much different from what students know in high school, can cause anxiety in students, and this anxiety can block or hinder student access to resources and learning.

The following observations by KSU librarians, although not at all surprising, provide insight into these differences. High school students likely will not:

- Have had previous experiences in a large library.
- Recognize a library's Web page as a starting point for research.
- Be familiar with the concept of *scholarly authority*.
- Be familiar with academic library terms like *reserves desk*, *scholarly journal* or *periodical*.

In respect to information literacy, KSU librarians have recognized that their approaches should be modest. Their instructional encounters with students are truly of the one-shot variety, and librarians have taken a practical "give them what they need" approach. With this said, most instruction for high school students has been focused around standards 1 and 2 of the ACRL's *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (2000).

SHOULD YOU BE DOING IT: KEY QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

In an ideal world of unlimited resources, surely most academic librarians would agree that

reaching out to high schools is a productive and beneficial use of time. But in our not-so-ideal world of limited time and resources and with little research demonstrating the value of such efforts, the answer is not so clear. Should some academic libraries be engaged in reaching out to high schools and others not? How would a library determine its degree of commitment to such programming? The answer to these central questions lies in considering several preliminary questions, questions that KSU librarians admittedly failed to fully consider initially, but have identified and learned through their experiences.

What Is Your Institution Type?

State-supported public institutions usually have an obligation to their state's citizens to provide access to their campuses and resources. This obligation provides significant cause for libraries at these institutions to provide at least a minimal level of access to high school students. Additionally, the public institution likely has a more intimate and collaborative relationship with its surrounding community. KSU, a large, state-supported university, has an obligation to the citizenry of Ohio and recognizes the value in good community relations. Private institutions, on the other hand, may neither have this obligation to the public, nor feel a need to cultivate public relations within the local community.

Is Outreach to High Schools Supported by the Mission and Values of Your Institution?

This is an important question that is easily overlooked. To answer this question, librarians must look at both their institution's and their library's mission statements for a commitment to outreach and/or community engagement. Additionally, because mission statements can be overly broad and sometimes outdated, an examination of institutional and library values is required. A simple way to look at your institution's and your library's values regarding high school outreach is to check for the presence of similar programming already on campus. If other high school to college transition initiatives are underway, such programming is valued on some level. You might also consider existing

strategic plans and the way your institution presents itself to the community through the media and public events.

KSU librarians overlooked this question from the start, yet some would argue that they had assumed a sense of its importance to KSU. Whereas the mission statements of KSU and the KSU Library do not provide direct support for community outreach or engagement, support for such activities is clearly present in the institution's values. Several other colleges and departments on campus have similar initiatives, and recently the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching recognized KSU as one of nine universities nationwide with the classification of Community Engagement, Outreach and Partnerships (2006). So although KSU librarians did not consider the question before initiating the program, they were engaged in programming strongly supported by the values of their institution. Yet, in recognizing this, they also understand how without this support their efforts might have been misguided. Clearly, if a commitment to outreach programming is not found in the mission and values of an institution, academic librarians should be hesitant to launch such efforts.

Do You Have the Resources?

This may be the most difficult question to answer because it is often challenging to predict the demands of new programming. In their initial analysis, KSU librarians felt they had the librarian time, especially with the addition of the FYE librarian, and that their collection was large enough to handle the program's demands. They did worry that their two instructional classrooms could become overtaxed. With the support of ILILE, they were able to add a classroom. Yet, as the program developed, they found that its demands on librarian time and access to instructional facilities were greater than anticipated.

The question of resources concerns the availability of librarian time, facilities and collections. Larger libraries appear to have advantages here. Libraries with a large instructional staff might have more flexibility

and time to serve a high school outreach program. Libraries with a clearly articulated and developed library instruction program might also have an advantage, because these libraries are more likely to know if they are meeting their campus instructional commitment and if they have available instructional resources. Large libraries are also likely to have more instructional classrooms and to be able to meet additional programming demands. The question of collections can be tricky and needs to be considered on an ongoing basis. Large collections are unlikely to be overtaxed by visiting high school groups, but groups working on assignments that focus on specific resources can be a problem.

A consideration of resource levels can also guide the degree to which a library commits to high school programming. A library might have available librarian resources, but not have sufficient access to instructional classrooms. These libraries may decide to allow high school visits only at very select times, like during their spring break, or they may decide to allow their librarians to visit the high schools to provide instruction. Many libraries may not have available librarian time or facilities and may decide to only provide access to the library's physical collection.

The question of funding is not to be overlooked. If additional funding is required to launch a library outreach program to high schools, then the program should probably not be undertaken. On the other hand, grant funding can create the resources, but obviously the funding must come first, not the program. The KSU Library only began the Informed Transitions program after a new instructional classroom supported by funding from ILILE had been constructed. This additional classroom, devoted to high school visits, gave KSU librarians the additional resources they needed.

A final aspect of resource availability relates to resource management. Even with the addition of a classroom devoted to high school visits, KSU librarians found that high school groups could burden their instructional facilities. Even with

an additional instructional librarian available, they found their work schedules stressed. Libraries like KSU that have the resources must continue to reconsider and manage these resources to insure success.

Do You Have a Clear Target Audience?

KSU librarians discovered value in examining how their program reached high schools on KSU's list of top 50 feeder schools. They first called their target audience "local schools," but later refined this to "local schools with an emphasis on those likely to graduate students to KSU." In retrospect, they might have started by examining how many local schools were top feeder schools. A lack of alignment between these lists might have made their program less compelling to administrators and the institution in general by removing recruitment from the program's objectives. Without a strong focus on reaching future KSU students, large high school outreach programs could be unwarranted and could certainly be a target for critics outside the library. Beyond this focus on feeder schools, a clear target audience also provides strong guidance for resource management and program planning. A hands-off, come-as-they-will approach to defining your target audience can lead to scheduling and planning headaches.

Do You Have Administrative Support?

A library at a large, public institution can have the resources and institutional commitment, as well as a well-defined target audience, but still not be a good candidate for a high school outreach program if it doesn't have support from the library director or dean. In the case of the KSU Library, the dean and associate dean provided strong top-down support from the beginning. If this type of support is not evident, be sure to engage library leaders in discussion before committing staff and resources. When the discussion does occur, be prepared to provide answers to the questions above, with pros and cons for your library's proposed program. Of special note might be the value your library leaders place on assessing library programs. Be forewarned that assessing the efficacy of outreach to high schools is rife with challenges (as shall be discussed later).

TABLE 3 — IMPERATIVES FOR OUTREACH PROGRAMMING TO HIGH SCHOOLS

1. Your institution has a public obligation.
2. Outreach is supported by your institution's mission and values.
3. You have sufficient resources available.
4. You have a clearly defined target audience.
5. You have administrative support.

Should You Be Doing It: The Final Analysis

A central assumption of this discussion thus far has been that a need exists for high school outreach. It should be noted that if your library is not receiving inquiries from local high schools, you must strongly question how much of a priority your library should place on such programming. In reviewing the five chief considerations discussed above (summarized in Table 3 as imperatives), if a library finds that it cannot affirm all of these considerations, it likely should not be engaged in outreach to high schools. It does not have the resources, institutional support, or public obligation to devote time to high school outreach. If a library can only affirm the first consideration related to public obligation, it should not be engaged in programming for high schools, but it does have an obligation to provide high school students with access to the library and collections, and should take care to provide clear guidelines. Only libraries that can answer yes to all five considerations should consider formal, active outreach programming for local high schools. Even so, these libraries still must make practical decisions regarding their level of commitment.

If You Should Be Doing It, How Much Should You Do?

As mentioned earlier, decisions about commitment level can be strongly guided by available resource levels and how they are managed. How resources are allocated and monitored is largely a problem for individual libraries to work out. The experiences of KSU librarians presented in this paper offer helpful insight into this process. Another approach to commitment level is to consider the shape and scope of potential outreach programming

structures. In addition to the “school visit” model used by the KSU Library, several other models exist that by their structure limit and help manage resource usage.

The literature provides several examples of innovative program collaborations with high schools. Garcha & Baldwin (1997) report on providing instruction to high school students participating in the Upward Bound program on their campus. Librarians have offered information literacy workshops to high school teachers and school librarians (Martorana et al., 2001; Nichols, 2001). Gresham and Van Tassel (2000) discuss establishing an academic learning community with college-bound high school students. Librarians in Ohio have developed a Web site called *Transitioning to College* (www.transitioning2college.org) that features streaming videos, a glossary of academic terms, worksheets, and activities that focus on helping students transition from high school to college with a focus on information literacy (Burhanna & Jensen, 2006).

Some of the potential structures outreach programs to high schools can take include: (a) high school student borrowing (standalone); (b) Web-based tools and resources; (c) consulting with local school librarians; (d) train-the-trainer outreach to local school librarians; (e) instruction focused on high school students already on campus (Upward Bound, post-secondary option students, etc.); (f) academic librarians visiting high schools; and (g) high school students visiting academic libraries.

If You Should Be Doing It, Will You Assess It?

Instructional outreach programming to high

schools presents numerous research opportunities, but several obstacles can make this type of research and assessment costly and time consuming. The first obstacle is that most high school students will be under 18 years of age and require parental consent to enable their participation. A second obstacle is the difficulty of studying students over time: they are not located on your campus and follow-up can be difficult. This becomes a bigger obstacle if you wish to assess the impact of your programming on college preparation. Then you need to gather home addresses and attempt to reconnect with students after they go to college. A third obstacle is that although school librarians are often enthusiastic collaborators, neither they nor teachers have spare time for additional assessments. They already face heavy burdens of assessment in their schools.

The lack of substantial published research regarding outreach to high schools is largely due to these obstacles. KSU librarians have yet to find the time and resources to plan and carry out assessment of their programming to high schools. Despite these obstacles, a great need exists for academic and school librarians to collaborate in assessing their outreach programs, for a time may come when a lack of assessment spells the end for these opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OUTREACH TO HIGH SCHOOLS

Based on the experiences of librarians at KSU, discussed and developed in this paper, a few important recommendations can be offered for those considering instructional outreach to local high schools.

Make the Best Decision for Your Library and Make It Policy

Most academic librarians will agree that instructional outreach to high schools is necessary and beneficial, but not all academic libraries should be devoting time and resources to it. Be careful not to make a programming decision based solely on perceived needs and benefits. Your library must have the values, resources and administrative support necessary

to successfully commit to such programming.

Equally important is the need to formalize the decision. Even if you've decided that it's not right for your library, record that decision as a policy statement and make sure that all library staff and librarians are aware of it. A library-wide policy will enable libraries to easily handle requests from high schools should they arise. The same applies to libraries that decide to move forward with programs: They need to formalize their intentions and make others aware in order to avoid difficulties and better manage resources. The worst approach may be to not decide or to decide and not formalize your decision, leaving librarians and staff unsure of how to handle requests and what services are or are not offered to high school students.

Pilot Your Program Before Committing

By piloting or testing your programming, you can better evaluate how resources are used and their impact on your library. You can determine what works and what does not. Most importantly, it gives you the opportunity to adjust and redesign aspects of your program so that it is a better fit for your library.

Assign a Central Contact for Your Program

By having a librarian serve as the central contact for your program, you can avoid many headaches. Multiple contacts can create scheduling conflicts and can be confusing for high schools and your library staff. A central contact will allow one person to coordinate scheduling, answer questions and serve as a resource for librarians and library staff.

Carefully Monitor Resource Usage and Conduct an Annual Program Review

This recommendation bears repeating often. Outreach to local high schools can be a perfect match for an academic library, but can still stress resources. Librarians should take steps to keep accurate statistics, and in particular, closely monitor their time on task. See if the estimate by KSU librarians of six hours of librarian time per visit holds true. Note scheduling difficulties, especially any between high school groups and the students on your

campus. Take this information and apply it to an annual review of your program. Regular, systematic, review of programs can curb problems and enable a program to run more smoothly and successfully.

Find Ways to Defend Your Program

This recommendation may apply to any significant program a library administers, but it is especially important to high school outreach programs because of the assessment challenges that come along with it. With assessment being very difficult, how will you defend your program? Librarians should consider all available options. Accurate statistics, with a focus on your institution's feeder schools, can provide a good start. Anecdotal praise and feedback from participating students, teachers, and school librarians can offer powerful support. Another strong indicator can be the absence of strain on library staff and resources; that is, that the program takes nothing away from the other missions and objectives of a library. Also, academic librarians should be ready to collaborate with high schools to conduct assessments if opportunities arise.

Talk with Local School Librarians and Teachers

Whether or not outreach programming to high schools is right for your library, consider having informal discussions with school librarians and teachers at local high schools. Such conversations can be very helpful to both parties, providing insights into how students are prepared for college and what expectations colleges have for their preparation. Also, you can become familiar with college and university libraries near you that do offer programming to high schools and share this with high schools as alternative to your library. Conversations with high schools can happen simply over the phone or via email. Also, many school librarians have local professional groups that meet regularly, and you can meet and talk with them in that context.

CONCLUSIONS

Instructional outreach to high schools is not the right choice for all academic libraries. Yet it

should be considered by all to discover what role, if any, they may play, and just as importantly, to formalize their position and approach to such programming. Outreach to high schools is the right choice for libraries that have an obligation to the local community, strong values for outreach, adequate and available resources, and administrative support. Despite little supporting research and several obstacles to assessment, this type of programming persists exactly because these obligations, values, and resources are perceived as beneficial to libraries and universities. Still, even when it is the right choice for a library, the library needs to pay close attention to its resources in determining its level of commitment and the structure of the program.

Not many academic libraries will commit to high school outreach programming at the level of the KSU Library, but by discussing its experiences, observations and lessons learned, other academic librarians can take guidance from the KSU Library and apply its experiences to their own libraries. Whereas this paper focuses on the internal pros and cons of this type of outreach programming for academic libraries, the ultimate objective of these programs—giving high school students experience in conducting research in academic libraries, which they can carry forward and apply to their future college careers—cannot be overlooked, even if it cannot be readily measured. As long as librarians, educators, and administrators see value in pursuing such objectives, academic librarians, when they have the support and resources, will continue to reach out to local high schools.

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