

Erin Carney

# Let the other departments send you students!

Marketing library services through the tutoring office to increase visibility

As any librarian knows, visibility on campus is an active and ongoing journey.<sup>1</sup> While students might see a library presence at freshmen orientation or remember a one-shot attempt of a total library resource overview from a librarian in a required English course, during the rest of the semester librarians strive to stay at the forefront of students' minds for their research process and curiosities. Even when students come into the library regularly as a community space and see librarians, they might not always know the types of questions that are appropriate to ask, other than printing assistance and bathroom location.<sup>2</sup> Marketing librarians' skills and expertise is integral to establishing our necessity and profile on campus.<sup>3</sup>

Our small university library has found that partnering with our tutoring center more clearly and effectively markets our services to our students, and faculty has increased library services and engagement.

## About our library and students

Holy Family University (HFU) is a private university in Northeast Philadelphia. We enroll about 3,000 students, 92% of whom are commuters. Nearly 40% of our students self-identify as the first generation of their family to attend college. The top two academic programs by enrollment are psychology and nursing, with our nursing students making up 49% of our undergraduate population. Both majors require the use of the American Psychological Association Publication Manual (APA) style of academic writing for most of their college careers. The HFU library maintains a staff of two paraprofessionals, our director, and four full-time librarians. All librarians share hours at the reference desk, and three of us regularly instruct library sessions.

## Recognizing a need

When I started my position as information literacy librarian at HFU's library last year, I was warned to brush up on my APA skills. Indeed, each semester undergraduate senior nursing students would flood the library asking questions about citations for their final paper (notoriously graded rigorously for APA compliance). Doctoral students close to submitting their dissertations would frantically approach us with detailed, winding APA formatting questions. We would get a few other students from disparate majors and classes trickling in with similar reference and citation questions around midterms and finals. By the students' own admission, because they had not initially written their papers with strong APA scaffolding,

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fixing it was often onerous and almost more stressful than writing it.

Students are taught APA and MLA formatting during their foundational English 101 and 102 classes—required courses to graduate for all majors. It is easy to understand how students might not recognize these skills immediately as the building blocks for the rest of their academic careers here at HFU, or how one or two semesters of APA could quickly slip out of memory to make way for other classes. While this has been anecdotally communicated by many students across our campus, nursing students in particular face added challenges of citing gray literature in the manifestation of medical inspection forms, codes, and reports. Education majors frequently must cite complicated laws and sanctions. Who better to guide the categorization and citation than a librarian?

Our tutoring center, the Center for Academic Enhancement (CAE), collaborates once a semester with the library to teach APA workshops before finals, but apart from what instructors review in class, this is all the support the students typically get. There have

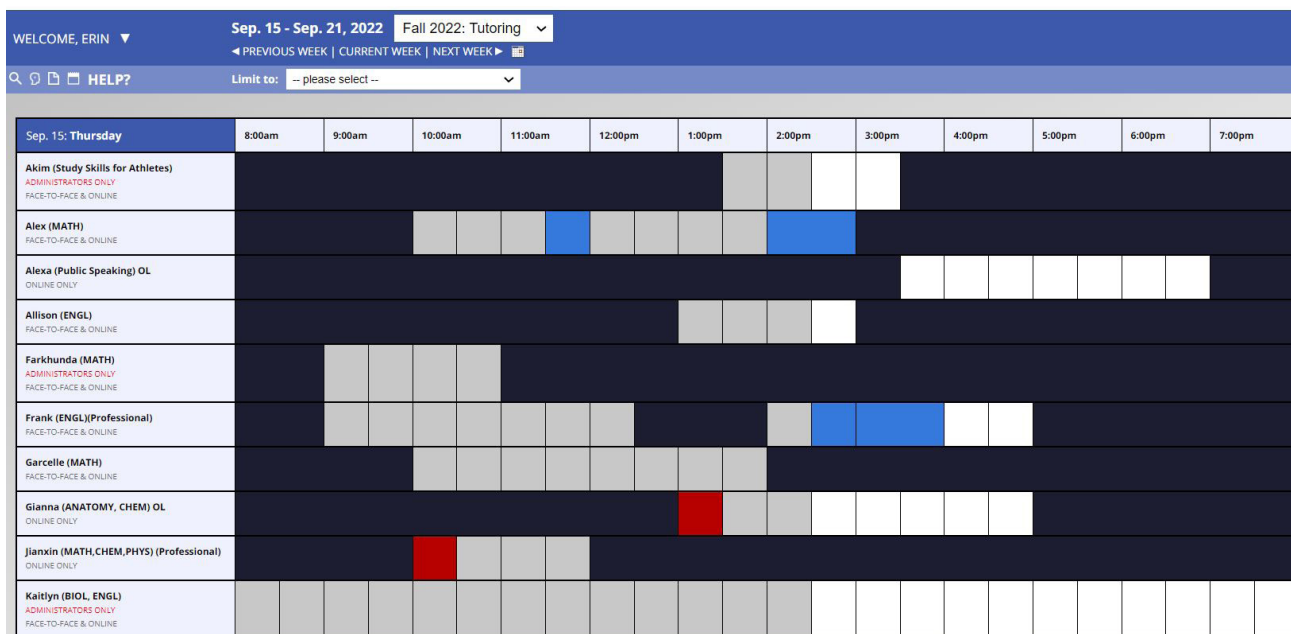
been many articles detailing academic libraries' efforts of conducting citation workshops supported by tutoring services.<sup>4</sup> Frequently, libraries and tutoring services combine forces to share academic resources and cross-promote each other's services.<sup>5</sup> While our university's CAE has excellent tutors, many of whom are very versed to spot APA intricacies, we felt that the librarian needed to be a "resident expert" in the unintuitive language of citation.<sup>6</sup>

My idea to create one-on-one librarian/student citing and reference counseling stemmed from the obvious need for a campus authority on the style, as well as an eagerness to upgrade our reference meetings, our workshop requests, and our general profile on the campus. One of the main ways we got more students in the door was advertising specifically through the tutoring center's resources.

## Partnering with the tutoring office—organizing and scheduling

When students need reference assistance, they usually come into the library in person or virtually contact us to address a specific query (often through email or our website's chat feature). If necessary, we sometimes schedule appointments after our initial reference interaction. Because many students want to check in about APA and citation compliance before a large paper is due, I arranged for librarians to be booked specifically for citation review through the CAE's scheduler (the WOnline interface). We also linked to the CAE's scheduler for citation-specific appointments on our own library website. While all other CAE-employed tutors competent in references and citations are listed as "English tutors,"

Screenshot of the tutoring form.



Screenshot of the tutoring interface.

we are the only profile students can book for APA/MLA reference support. We have weekly hours that we adjust if needed. We only have one profile, and I divvy up appointments between the librarians.

Occasionally, if a student wants to continue their work with the individual librarian they met, they will schedule another appointment directly with the librarian, though we encourage them to use the scheduler during peak assignment crunch times. We track these privately booked sessions through our references and services tracker. The CAE tracks our sessions through their own software and can give that data to us for our own assessment purposes.

We saw an immediate and sharp increase in library engagement once we were on the CAE's scheduler. Our reference questions and consultations increased by 144% from the 2020–2021 to 2021–2022 academic years.<sup>7</sup> We had an increase of 304% in reference questions and consultations specifically centered around citations.<sup>8</sup> Our presence on an interface that students used when they were already actively seeking help further alerted students that we are a resource for them when they are hunting for one-on-one assistance. If they were unable to book an appointment, they would email us, engage with our web chat feature, or come in with questions. Oftentimes, these questions shot beyond APA, venturing into locating sources and search strategies.

## What citation and reference counseling can look like

We felt that setting boundaries of what the librarian can provide (as opposed to the tutor) is very important. Librarians looking over citations should make a point to tell the students that they are not reading their papers for content, grammar, style, or quality of writing as an English tutor would.

Our librarians check that the basic framework, formatting, and citations are in order. They review with the student how to create references and in-text citations, and together will look at websites from their reference pages to glean authorship and discern which information is relevant to include and cite. If necessary, librarians will review when it is appropriate to cite and what accidental plagiarism looks like.

Most importantly, we can use these consultations to build a bridge to our other services. If the student doesn't feel they have enough sources to support their paper, the librarian will collaborate with them to discover more sources, working with them to brainstorm key terms and modes of inquiry. Because we see many students in the same culminating seminars, we can familiarize ourselves with which websites and sources can be most helpful for them. This is usually several steps beyond what a regular English and writing tutoring session offers.

## Resulting projects and partnerships

As a result of assisting so many students on assignments, I collaborated with the CAE and other librarians to create faculty-approved templates for assignments and departments: blank text is structured and formatted correctly with a handful of example reference entries that students frequently use. Students have cried (from relief) when I have shown them these, as having a skeleton structure highly alleviates stress.

Because of our heavy involvement in nursing students' classes, more opportunities were requested by the students for intensive search strategy workshops and presentations by the librarians. As our reputation among the students grew, we started getting more instructors lauding the librarians' help at the time they were assigning large projects, and we now get sent more students at the beginning of their research process.

Because of our emerging prominence as citation experts, we have been given the opportunity to conduct APA and citation workshops with undergraduate classes in which we create reference entries and in-text citations from their sources or focus on activities that hone their ability to paraphrase. As a result, these students will also seek us out when they have difficulty figuring out the proper citation for a source, increasing our reference appointments. For masters and doctoral students, I have been invited to have hands-on workshops with them in their classes, putting up their papers on the projection board and going through the rules and guidelines together, along with reviewing how to cite trickier sources (our education majors frequently cite legal and government sources).

Most rewarding, however, is the amount of relationship-building this has established with our students and faculty. So many more students and instructors know us by name now

## Suggestions for collaborating with your tutoring office

- Sniff out the need. What are students most crazy-eyed about during midterms and finals? Talk to faculty about what is most frustrating for them. For our nursing undergrads and education doctorates, it was APA. For my psychology undergraduates, it was plagiarism. Identify the biggest headaches for the instructors and students.
- Work with the tutoring office on defining what services you're marketing. It could be "research support," "search term refinement," or your liaison subject. What will draw the students' eyes that you can realistically provide?
- However you market yourself, make sure that the students will have clear expectations about what you are able to help them with, and where the boundary lies between you and a tutor.

and will request specific librarians when they have reference questions, or at the very least understand that librarians are ready and available to help them with even the smallest questions. Faculty have been consulting librarians more for assistance in their own scholarship as well, and there has been more embedded librarianship for certain classes as a result of our outreach through this program.

## Lessons learned

One of the surprising things to me was how much this initiative took off. We initially had two librarians staffing this project, but as bookings started flooding in, we increased that to all four available librarians.

We made mistakes. Because we were still learning, we had a couple of faculty members contact us to double-check about the advice we had given students only to discover we had incorrectly instructed them. While embarrassing, it was a good learning experience, and it was part of the process of coordinating with professors on assignment expectations so we can better assist students.

Some of our ongoing challenges are defining the students' expectations and our boundaries. At what point do we refer them to a different tutor? What language do we use with students who want us to do their papers for them? How do we make sure they're learning and not just using us as an editing service? Collaborating with the tutoring service for guidance was greatly helpful.

## Go forth and collaborate!

We continue to see positive results from this endeavor a year and a half after its implementation. It has engendered a closer relationship with our tutoring center, which not only helps point us to classes and academic areas that might need our help, but also encourages cohesion in our two departments' approaches to assisting students. We believe strongly that this model can benefit other small universities and colleges in the effort of advancing visibility and services. ♪

## Notes

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2. Jody Condit Fagan, Hillary Ostermiller, Elizabeth Price, and Sara Sapp, "Librarian, Faculty, and Student Perceptions of Academic Librarians: Study Introduction and Literature Review," *New Review of Academic Librarianship* 27, no. 1 (2021): 38–75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13614533.2019.1691026>.
3. Karen Sobel, "Promoting Library Reference Services to First-Year Undergraduate Students What Works?," *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (2009): 362–71; J. M. Y. Shane, "Formal and Informal Structures for Collaboration on a Campus-wide Information Literacy Program," *Resource Sharing & Information Networks* 17 (2004): 85–110.
4. Pauline S. Swartz, Brian A. Carlisle, and E. Chisato Uyeki, "Libraries and Student Affairs: Partners for Student Success," *Reference Services Review* 35, no. 1 (2007): 109–22; Lyda F. McCartin, Stephanie Evers, and Brianne Markowski, "Student Perceptions of Information

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5. Elise Ferer, “Working Together: Library and Writing Center Collaboration,” *Reference Services Review* 40, no. 4 (2012): 543–57.

6. Wendy K. Magesa, and Deborah S. Garson, “Get the Cite Right: Design and Evaluation of a High-Quality Online Citation Tutorial,” *Library & Information Science Research* 32, no. 2 (April 2010): 138–46; S. Park, L. A. Mardis, and C. Jo Ury, “I’ve Lost My Identity—Oh, There It Is . . . in a Style Manual: Teaching Citation Styles and Academic Honesty,” *Reference Services Review* 39, no. 1 (2011): 42–57.

7. 486 reference interactions during the 2020–2021 school year and 700 reference interactions during the 2021–2022 school year.

8. 99 APA and citation queries made in the 2020–2021 school year and 301 made in the 2021–2022 school year.

## Further reading on library partnerships with departments

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