

Library as Salon



Emerging Models of Interdisciplinary Connection in an Experimental Space

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INTRODUCTION

Designs of collaborative academic library spaces often focus on furniture, layout and technology. But what about the role of librarians within these spaces? **How can we utilize space renovations to better engage with our users and build community?** How can we move beyond “help at the desk” forms of user interaction in our library spaces? The following programs at the University of Washington Libraries Research Commons offer examples that serve a much needed role: linking scholars and providing a platform for community engagement through knowledge sharing.

RESEARCH COMMONS VISION

- Foster interdisciplinary conversation
- Provide a hub of research support
- Create flexible and experimental space and programs to help inform UW Libraries as a whole
- Provide space for research display and presentation



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

- Seattle, Bothell and Tacoma, Washington, USA
- 16 Colleges and Schools
- 42,154 Total Full Time Students
- 11,276 Full Time Graduate Students
- 3,841 Teaching Faculty
- 178 Librarians & Professional Staff
- 7 Million print volumes Held
- 16 Libraries
- Reference services available 24/7

SCHOLARS' STUDIO

WHAT: Scholars' Studio is a quarterly event series, sponsored by the Research Commons and the Graduate School, in which graduate students from across the university come together and present **5-minute lightning talks** on their research.

We pick an interdisciplinary theme that will draw in student proposals from the humanities, social and hard sciences.

Past themes include:

- Sustainability
- Citizen
- Disaster
- Predictions



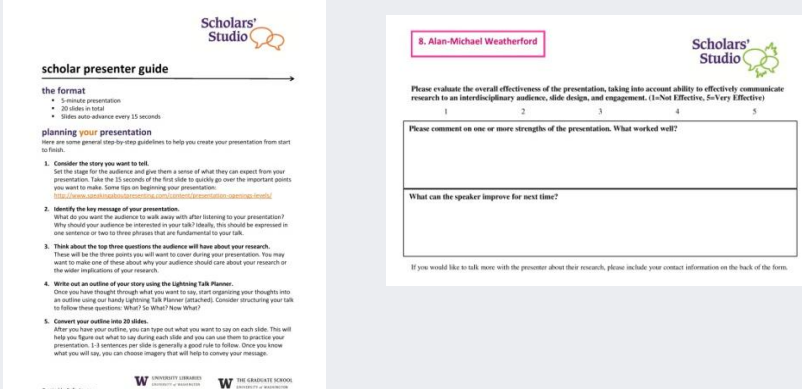
COMMUNICATION:

Research Commons staff tweet about each of the student presenters, to help generate conversation around their research. A graphic design student was hired to produce flyers and a logo.



PRESENTATION SUPPORT:

Students receive guidance on presenting their research to an interdisciplinary audience before the event. Audience members fill out evaluation forms for each presenter.



LIBRARIAN INVOLVEMENT:

For each Scholars' Studio, a librarian is selected to present a 5-minute lightning talk that is also connected to the theme. These presentations highlight research guides, collections and support services of use to graduate students.



“It changed the way I classically thought about my own work.”
- PhD Student, Social Sciences

“Five minutes was really tough. It makes you rethink how to present your material concisely.”
- PhD Student, Humanities



GOALS:

- Foster interdisciplinary community in a library space.
- Build presentation skills for graduate students preparing for dissertation defense, job presentations, etc.
- Highlight the work of librarians in supporting student research.

COLLABORATING WITH STRANGERS

WHAT: Collaborating with Strangers, or “CoLAB” workshops invite students, faculty and staff to come together and participate in **3-minute speed meetings** in which they share their research interests, passions and networks.

Participants fill out a profile sign (pictured below) and wear the sign on their torso during the speed meetings.

2013-2014 themes:

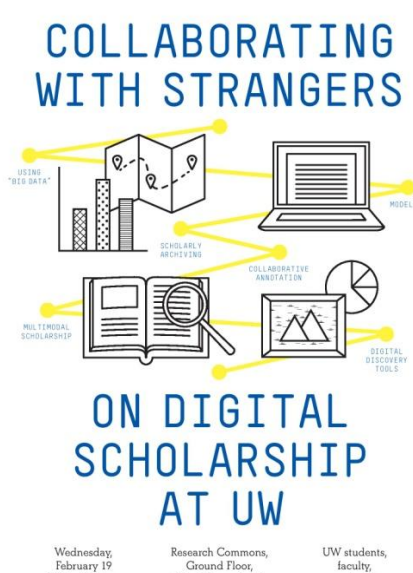
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- Digital Scholarship
- Food Research

The CoLAB Planning Series® was created by Bess de Farber: bddefarber@ufl.edu



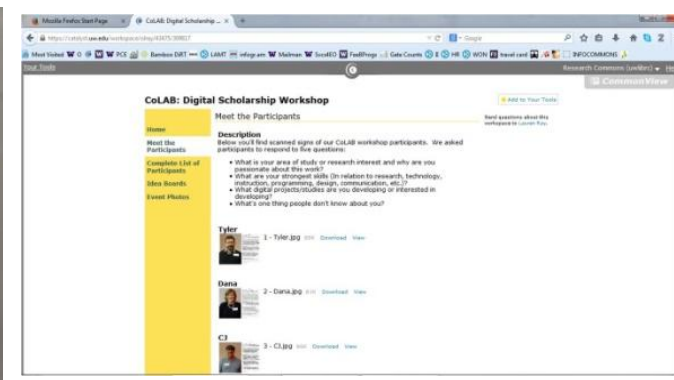
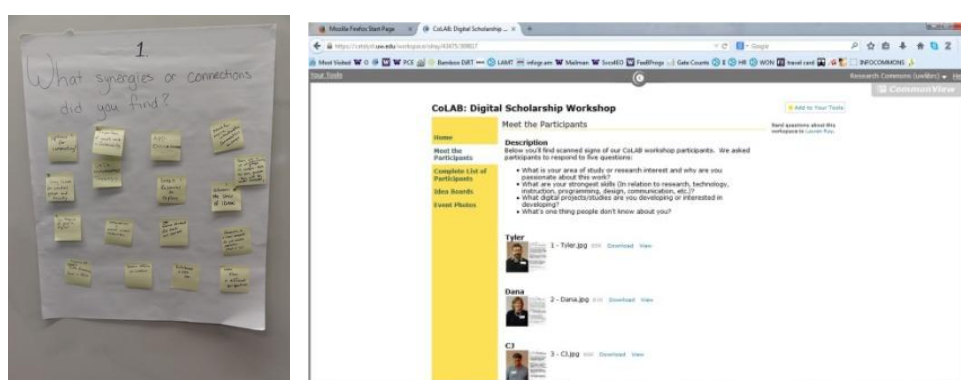
GOALS:

- Foster interdisciplinary community in a library space.
- Build student confidence in speaking about their academic interests and research work.
- Provide a unique way for librarians to engage with their user community.

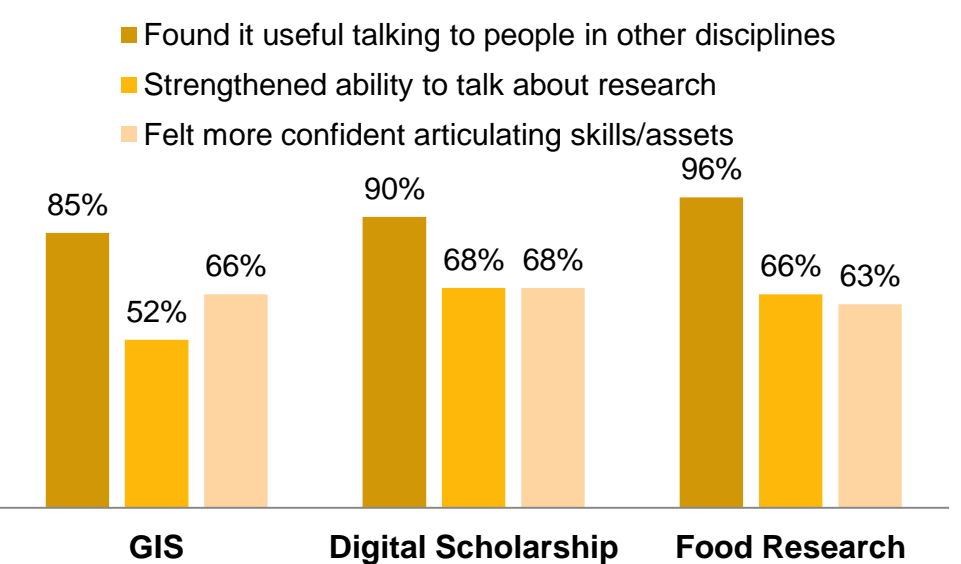


POST SPEED MEETINGS:

After speed meetings, **participants reflect** on the experience by responding to questions about what they learned and their next steps for follow-up. A post-workshop website offers photos, profile signs and contact information of all participants.



96% of participants said they would attend again.



DISSERTATION BOOT CAMP

WHAT: The Dissertation Boot Camp invites doctoral students from across campus to register for a **1-day event** featuring talks and breakout workshops tailored to the needs of dissertation writers. Components include:

- One-on-one time with subject librarian
- Advice on managing citations
- Apps and tools for project management
- Finding research funding
- Open Access Publishing
- Dealing with writer's block
- Electronic Dissertations and Theses (ETD)

WHY:

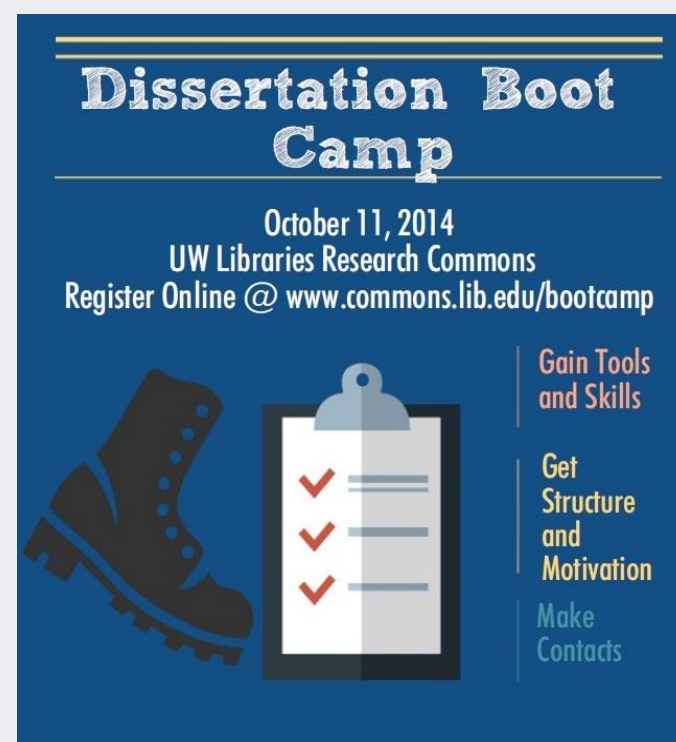
In partnership with the UW Graduate School, the Research Commons has provided drop-in workshops for graduate students on topics like citation management, funding, project management, time management and the literature review.

While these topics reflect the kinds of instruction students want, **drop-in workshop attendance has declined** significantly over the years.

Understanding that graduate students have multiple demands on their time, we chose the dissertation boot camp approach being used at institutions like **Notre Dame** and **Simon Fraser University**.

GOALS:

- Help doctoral students acquire a set of skills, tools, and contacts to foster success in dissertation writing.
- Help students gain structure and motivation from peers and advisors to overcome roadblocks in the dissertation process.
- Promote the role of UW Libraries, the UW Graduate School, and the Odegaard Writing and Research Center as sources of support for dissertation writers.



CONCLUSIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

CHALLENGES

- Effectively marketing event-based programming to busy graduate students and faculty.
- Defining support provided by partners in an ever-changing environment.
- Gaining deeper understanding of how these programs might contribute to the transformation in subject librarians roles.
- Fostering a culture of experimentation for subject librarians in the space.

SUCCESSSES

- Programs have offered subject librarians new ways of engaging with user communities.
- Satellite campus libraries have started using these programs successfully to engage with students and faculty.
- Students and faculty participating in these programs have reported that they have improved their ability to communicate about their research.
- New partnerships have enhanced our ability to promote and assess student-centered programs on campus.

BEST PRACTICES

- Conduct needs assessment prior to developing programs, to understand research needs of user community.
- Leverage new partnerships to market and develop programs.
- Utilize graduate student staff to build programs.
- Capture what is meaningful and useful for students about the programs, using multiple assessment methods.
- Design programs, and space, flexibly and iteratively.