Let’s Hear It!
Reimagining the Library’s Teaching and Learning Program Through Cross-Campus Conversations

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Background
When Dartmouth College Library’s Education & Outreach program (E&O) was launched in 2002, the role of teaching was moving to a more central position in academic librarians’ job responsibilities. E&O guided the Library and its staff into this evolving professional realm. Dartmouth librarians now are experienced teachers who work in both traditional and innovative ways with students and faculty. Teaching is at the core of the Library’s identity as demonstrated, in part, by its prominence in the Library’s strategic objectives which were developed in 2017:

- Partners in Research
- Co-Educators in Teaching and Learning
- Inspiring Environments for Inspiring Ideas

While the program had shifted over the years, responding to staff needs and changes in the profession, in late 2017, the program’s staff determined that a comprehensive program review was needed. This decision was based on the need for the program to evolve to meet current challenges and set new directions for the Library’s role in teaching and learning.

Since its inception, 17 years ago, the Education & Outreach program employed an atypical staffing model consisting of several staff members, some of whom reported 25% to the program with their primary appointments in other library departments. In early 2017, the program had 3.25 FTE comprised of six staff members: two full-time, one half-time, and three quarter-time reports. By late 2017, staff departures and reassignments resulted in two staff vacancies totaling 1.25 FTE. Simultaneously, the College was in the middle of a budget reallocation process in which units throughout campus, including the Library, were required to make substantial budget cuts in order to fund faculty research initiatives. As a result, each vacancy within the Library went through a review process to determine if the position should be filled or eliminated to contribute to the Library’s budget reduction goal. The budget pressures and the requirement to critically examine vacancies furthered the need for a comprehensive program review.

Planning the Program Review
The goal for the program review was to gather input from people who have worked closely with the Education & Outreach program in the past to help us develop a new mission, vision, purpose, title, and staff roles for our program. We wanted to know what work was having the greatest impact, what could fall away, and what could

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be built upon to further support our library’s goals in teaching and learning. We recognized an opportunity to re-energize our work and to make our program more responsive to the needs of our campus.

At the start of our program review, we sought the expertise of someone with deep knowledge of teaching and learning who would be able to help us to facilitate conversations with stakeholders, and who works outside the Library. We invited the Learning Initiatives Program Manager in the Dartmouth Center for the Advancement of Learning (DCAL), to fulfill this role, and she was a critical part of our team. She has worked with the Library in the past and understands the type of work we do, but she still has enough distance from our daily work that she could ask us strategic questions and help us consider perspectives of external stakeholders. The Learning Initiatives Program Manager also acted as a neutral party who could facilitate focus groups.

We developed a list of stakeholders whose input we wanted to include in our program review. These included colleagues from within the Library and colleagues from other campus departments. Within the Library, we felt it was important to hear from library leadership, librarians who are engaged in teaching, current and past members of the Education & Outreach program, and from any other library staff who were interested in sharing their perspectives with us. Beyond the Library, we were interested in hearing from faculty and from various departments who work with the Library (though not necessarily with the E&O program directly), such as the Institute for Writing and Rhetoric, the Academic Skills Center, Student Accessibility Services, Educational Technologies, and the Dartmouth Center for the Advancement of Learning.

We considered a variety of methodologies that we might use to seek feedback from each stakeholder group. These included surveys, focus groups, and discussions in small group meetings. In many cases, we opted to hold informal meetings with individuals or small groups in another department. In cases where we felt that our presence might deter participants from speaking openly, the Learning Initiatives Program Manager hosted focus groups and anonymized the results before sharing them with us. In situations where face-to-face meetings were unrealistic (e.g. soliciting feedback from all library staff, of which there are over 160), we distributed a survey.

If you are considering a program review or a similar project for a program at your library, here are some questions that you might consider.

- Who would be involved in conducting this program review?
- How much time do my colleagues and I have to devote to a program review at this time?
- What other projects might be affected by staff time devoted to a program review?
- Who at our institution might we consult for guidance and support?
- Is the current library environment one in which we can change to meet the needs that we discover?
- Will a program review be supported by library leadership?
- What stakeholders would we want to seek input from?
- What methodologies might we consider?
- What challenges might we encounter when conducting a program review?

Who We Heard From

We were able to set up meetings with all the library staff, library administrators, and campus partners who we intended to meet with. Within the Library, we held individual interviews with past and present members of E&O and with each associate university librarian. We met with liaison librarians from across the Library system. We held focus groups with additional library staff (by invitation) and invited all library staff to participate in an online survey.

We met in small groups or individually with the following campus partners: Academic Skills Center, Dartmouth Center for the Advancement of Learning (DCAL), Digital Humanities, Educational Technologies, First
Year Student Experience Program, Graduate and Advanced Studies, Institute for Writing and Rhetoric, Research Computing, and Student Accessibility Services.

We were interested in hearing from faculty who had experience in collaborating with the Library in their teaching, but we had difficulty in connecting with them. This is likely due, in part, to the timing of our review, which was done between terms when we hoped more faculty would be available but found that many of them were away from campus. We initially tried to schedule focus groups but, ultimately, we sent out a short online survey to a list of faculty who had experience in working with the Library in their teaching.

**What We Learned**

In the process of completing this program review, we received an incredible amount of data from a variety of stakeholders about their experiences working with the Education & Outreach program and their desires for the future of the program. Once we collected feedback from all our stakeholders, we scheduled a half-day retreat to take a close look at the feedback received and to create a detailed proposal for the program’s future. In advance of the retreat, each staff member did a close reading and wrote a summary of select portions of the feedback. We also summarized data across interviews, focus groups, and surveys using some of the guiding questions of our review. This enabled the group to consider efficiently all the input received through surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Each staff member presented their findings, and together they made note of the prevalence of issues raised among all groups and those particular to specific groups. Here we summarize some of the data which was common to several our stakeholders, but this description of our program review’s results is by no means complete.

One of the primary areas of the Education & Outreach program’s work before the program review was in providing professional development to all library staff related to teaching and learning. The focus groups with library staff and the survey we distributed allowed us to hear from our colleagues about which programs they found the most valuable, how they preferred to experience professional development programming, and what areas they were interested in learning more about. Our library administrators told us about their vision for our program and what they think we can do to support the entire library staff in new ways. Many of the library staff surveyed expressed satisfaction with the programming that we offer and especially for E&O workshops and other structured programming with concrete takeaways. A few comments reflected the difficulty that E&O staff grapple with regularly in providing programming that is relevant to people across the Library working with different audiences and in a variety of roles.

Some of the challenges for the E&O program that arose in this process were focused on communication. There is a desire for greater communication about the Library and its role in teaching both within the Library and across campus. One noteworthy finding was that many of our campus partners feel uncertain about who they should contact when they need a librarian to work with them. In one case, the recent move of the E&O director’s office from one location to another meant that some people she had worked closely with before now felt that the connection between their department and the Library was weakening. Some individuals inside the Library and some campus partners expressed confusion about what E&O does and therefore about how they might work with us.

Campus partners also had many suggestions for ways in which they might like to collaborate with the Library in the future. Many described a desire for increased collaboration with the Library and listed a variety of new workshops and training sessions we might offer together. Some of the barriers to collaboration that they identified included the issue noted above of not knowing who to contact, but also other structural issues that slow down projects. For example, it was repeatedly noted that library staff can be slow to commit to new projects.
due to a shortage of librarian time and to Library norms that assume staff will seek permission from management and/or leadership first.

Overall, faculty indicated that they were satisfied with library services, and they identified as strengths the Library’s strong service orientation and willingness to help students. Some suggestions for improvement included that sessions with librarians could be more engaging, that librarians might develop a common set of research skills to cover in first-year writing classes for the sake of consistency, and that some classes might benefit from having a librarian who worked with them over the course of a term rather than in a one-shot session.

Outcomes
During the retreat, we used the input we received together with our knowledge of the program, and the Library and College context in which it exists, to develop a proposal consisting of a new name, mission, vision, scope, and staffing model for the program. In addition to revised responsibilities, we proposed a shift in our staffing model from our FTE being divided among multiple staff members to fewer staff who report full time to the program. We proposed:

Name: Library Teaching & Learning

Mission: Cultivates and advances the Library’s role in teaching and learning at Dartmouth. Partners with faculty, staff, and students to foster critical information literacy and lifelong learning.

Vision: Dartmouth College Library is a vital partner in teaching and learning at Dartmouth and a leader in the field of teaching and learning nationally.

Roles: In addition to the responsibilities listed below, all staff will actively stay apprised of new directions in teaching and learning and will lead the Library in strategic new directions.

**Director of Library Teaching and Learning**

- **Communication**: Develop and implement a communications strategy for Library Teaching and Learning; Raise campus-wide awareness of Library staff’s role in teaching; Be the voice of DCL Teaching and Learning regionally and nationally.
- **Educational Consultant**: Consult with other Library departments as they develop professional development programming and user education.
- **Exhibits**: Manage the exhibits program for the Baker and Berry exhibit cases. Oversee the scheduling and use of the Berry Brickway.
- **Library T&L liaison**: Represent Library Teaching and Learning on Library and campus initiatives/programs; Be a clear and consistent point of contact for existing and potential campus partners.
- **Professional Development**: Manage a comprehensive professional development program for Library staff; Coordinate local and national offerings of the Librarians Active Learning Institute and related programs.

**Teaching and Learning Librarian**

- **Assessment**: Participate in educational assessment activities and initiatives.
- **Communications**: Communicate Library teaching and learning activities to the Library and campus community.
- **Institute for Writing and Rhetoric and RWIT Liaison**: Liaise with faculty, coordinate library instruction
for first-year writing classes, maintain expertise in tutoring pedagogies, create professional development opportunities for writing faculty and for Library staff.

- **Professional Development**: Coordinate a peer-coaching program including peer review of teaching, peer support, and peer mentoring. Provide one-on-one support for librarians on instructional design and teaching strategies.
- **Student Body Liaison**: Serve as the Teaching and Learning liaison to the Dartmouth student body. Formalize Library connections with the undergraduate curriculum and with student-centered departments, programs, and events.
- **Student Manager**: Manage the Teaching and Learning student assistant.

**Teaching and Learning Librarian**

- **Departmental Liaison**: Serve as Library liaison to one or more academic departments.
- **Exhibits**: Coordinate with faculty to display student academic work in the Library.
- **Faculty Support Liaison**: Liaise with departments, programs, and initiatives that support faculty in teaching and learning including DCAL, Educational Technologies, and digital learning initiatives.
- **Graduate/Professional Liaison**: Support Library Teaching and Learning with graduate and professional schools. Liaise with the school of Graduate and Advanced Studies and with librarians who work with graduate and professional communities at Dartmouth.
- **Professional Development**: Develop and coordinate professional development programming for library staff on topics related to teaching and learning.
- **During our program review, we became acutely aware of the mission creep that our program had experienced. In our program plan proposal, we noted that the new program plan would necessitate the elimination of some projects we had previously handled.**

When we completed our proposal in February 2018, we submitted it to the Associate Librarian for Research and Learning, to whom the program reports. She responded positively to our process and ideas, and she asked us to share the proposal with the other program managers who report to her; these include the head of other public service units in the Library. Again, the feedback was positive. Despite the positive feedback and the program staff’s readiness to move forward, the plan remained under consideration by library administration for most of the remainder of the calendar year. This delay was due, in part, to the uncertainties created by the budget reallocation process, described above, and to the implications of our staffing proposal on other library departments.

While waiting for a response to the entire proposal, pieces of the proposal did shift and move forward. The first movement was that the program’s name was changed from Education & Outreach to Teaching & Learning. Next, one of the proposed positions was modified from a permanent, salaried librarian position to an eighteen-month term support staff position. The library administrators made this change in an effort to explore new staffing models and shift reliance for some duties from professional to support staff positions. The position description was modified, and a successful search was completed with the Program Assistant beginning work in December 2018. Simultaneously, shifts occurred among the staff who had been reporting quarter-time to the program. Two of those staff members’ appointments were shifted entirely to their primary departments, relinquishing their reporting to the E&O/T&L program. The third member was temporarily assigned first 50% and then 100% to the program. By January 2019, that position was made a permanent, 100% report to the program. 2018 started with the creation of a plan for a new program, and the year ended with the implementation of a revised version of that plan.

**Conclusion**
Now that our program is fully staffed and our new mission and vision are official, we are focusing on meeting current challenges and setting new directions for the Library’s role in teaching and learning. We are defining new positions and redefining ongoing positions by updating position descriptions to reflect our new priorities. We are taking a more active role in supporting other library departments with customized professional development offerings. We are developing a communications strategy to raise awareness of who we are and what we do, promote our workshops, exhibits, and events, and conduct outreach to students. We are increasing our support for open educational resources and practices.

This program review was an intensive process that was conducted over a relatively short time period (less than three months) and required a significant time commitment. This project did not require a large team of staff as it was done by a small group of three librarians with support from a knowledgeable colleague outside the Library. Overall, our program review provided us with a wide range of feedback and other data that could help us to determine future directions for our program. The input we received served a variety of functions including affirming our beliefs, adding details and contexts that helped us make sense of past experiences, identifying challenges faced by our partners, learning program history that pre-dated the present staff, and inspiring us to take the program in new and improved directions. Most importantly, our constituents’ input sparked our discussions and fueled our thinking about the program’s role in the Library and the profession. The feedback was especially valuable when presented as evidence to library leadership and our colleagues in support of our program proposal.

As we held conversations about our program review, colleagues repeatedly commented at the novelty of this approach. While our organization values discussion and reflection, systematic program reviews are not common practice here. Since we completed our review, another functional area, the Digital Library Program, has launched its own program review. The Library has made a commitment to applying user-centered design approaches to meet its strategic objectives, and so we are optimistic that the approach taken in our program review will become more common in our institution.