

Academic BRASS

Published by the
BRASS Business Reference in Academic Libraries Committee

Vol 8 (2), Fall 2013

LuMarie Guth
Assistant Professor of Library Science
Business Liaison Librarian
Schwob Memorial Library
Columbus State University

A Part of Your World: Transferring Experiences as an Evening MBA Student to Business Librarianship

As the Government Documents Coordinator & Business Liaison Librarian at Columbus State University, I was hired because of my government documents experience. Like many librarians I came from a humanities background, but my library was happy to know that I was eager to take business classes. After getting settled I applied to the MBA program at Columbus State and began my journey of discovery in the social sciences.

My first experience as a prospective student was making the choice between the Online MBA and the evening MBA classes. The online program was attractive because of its accelerated schedule, but I ultimately decided on the evening classes because they would allow more flexibility and give the additional advantage of building relationships with business faculty as their student. I was worried at first that this dual role of student and colleague might be uncomfortable, but soon found that several employees at our university were taking advantage of the opportunity to get a business degree and the additional face-time in the business school, which is not always close to the library and can become a silo on some campuses, was invaluable in building familiarity. These relationships helped my presentations and communications with the department and the increased subject expertise and inside look at class assignments gave me confidence that I understood and was tailoring my services and the library resources to the needs of the department.

Taking night classes as an adult student was an additional discovery. I dislike the term non-traditional students. The demographics of the national student body have changed so much that on-campus high school-to-college students are not necessarily the norm. Most of the students in my classes were professionals like me who were managing night classes, and often weekend group project meetings, with full-time jobs and families. Scheduling in time to visit the library is often impossible and they need online resource guides that are easily navigable and

to-the-point. Their most likely mode of contact with the library was email, so it was important for me as the librarian to respond with a helpful and comprehensive answer in a timely manner. The students who did come in to see me seemed to breathe a sigh of relief when I told them that I'd "done that assignment."

My experiences as a business student revolutionized my Libguide. I soon realized the value of Google-able sources like Yahoo Finance and company websites, but also found where the gaps were with company, industry and market research and endeavored to market library resources that could easily fill those gaps. Instead of just providing links to databases I now provide direct links to the most useful publications or, when direct links aren't an option, give instruction under the database link on how to navigate from the main search page to the company profiles portal. Links that were not being used were either removed or re-organized within the Libguide. The most used resources were moved to the home page while research tips and library tasks that students could get assistance with from the main library website were shifted to a different tab. Tutorial videos became shorter and more task focused—company research, industry research, and statistics.

While I realize that going back to school for an MBA is not a realistic concept for all librarians, I found it greatly beneficial to my work as a business librarian. The subject expertise can be gained through business librarian webinars, database tutorials and some of the great business librarian instructional books on the market. However, the understanding of the business student culture was something I could not have gotten without immersing myself. Finally, as an unanticipated bonus, my finance major mother is thrilled that at least one of her children is now managing their IRA!