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Help Your Students Land a Job with Career Services

Nothing is more relevant for students than the job search. It is also an area where business librarians can easily add value with their broad knowledge of company and industry resources and research strategies. With this in mind, a business librarian and career adviser partnered to create and promote research guides to help students land a job.

My work as a business research librarian at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) is outreach focused, so it is important to find themes and topics that resonate with students and faculty as well as support university values and initiatives. The advisers for Career Services have similar goals, and I was pleased to meet Kim Hanneman in the summer of 2013. She came by the library to see what resources were available for career research, and by the time she left, we had planned the [How Do I Use Company and Industry Information to Land a Job](#) guide.

We met periodically over the course of the academic year to discuss employer expectations and the best resources and strategies. It was a traditional partnership in that I managed the actual guide creation in LibGuides, but the content and revision process was collaborative. We also worked together to develop a creative promotional strategy that both units could use (see poster) for outreach.

Kim works with mass communication students, but she recognized the value of company and industry information for all job searchers, and I welcomed the opportunity to talk about business information more broadly. In fact, this kind of guide is more important for students not exposed to business research as part of their coursework. We also included information about the nonprofit and government sectors to represent the full spectrum of employment possibilities. In the end, we developed content that works for almost all VCU students.

After a year, the guide has received only a modest number of page views, but it led to additional connections with other units and departments across campus, and more importantly, to further collaboration. I was invited to lead instruction sessions for both undergraduate and graduate courses taught by Career Services. The Schools of Business and Engineering have their own career center, and the guide provided opportunity for some renewed outreach and resulted in new interactions and consultations with their counselors. I am currently collaborating with our engineering research librarians on a company research workshop that will be integrated into their “Engineer Your Career Workshop” series. There has been interest from student groups as well, and I presented at a meeting of a professional engineering fraternity on campus. At the School of the Arts, the guide was added to the syllabus for a fashion seminar focused on career development. Other liaisons have also used and promoted the guide in instruction sessions and at outreach events targeted at a wide range of disciplines and audiences.

Kim and I have since wrapped up a second guide, [How Do I Build a Digital Portfolio to Land a Job](#). Digital Portfolios are of growing interest across campus as schools and departments are increasingly addressing career readiness in their curriculum. However, we were not able to find a lot of existing resources that spoke to the specific challenges VCU students face, and it required a higher level of collaboration to develop the content. Both Kim and I served as authors. I was able to designate her as an editor in LibGuides with full editing privileges. This cut down on the writing and revision time, and in the end we had a true partnership. The reviews from faculty have been overwhelmingly positive, and the guide was widely distributed--to over 1,200 students. It has only been available for a couple of months, and the page views have already far outpaced the previous guide. While I had to move well beyond business with this guide, it actually led back to areas more closely aligned with my liaison responsibilities, and we are planning to customize the content for additional departments including Public Relations.

Any account of a collaborative project would be incomplete without considering the impact from both sides. We were both able to avoid duplicating efforts around an important university theme, and our partnership allowed Career Services access to the LibGuides platform to create current and relevant content that they can use when working with faculty to support curriculum and students to achieve career goals. Kim has received positive feedback directly from students indicating the guide has helped them stand out during their job searches, and she has met with faculty to discuss how these tools work in their syllabus and classroom. In general, we both feel the collaboration itself was a professionally invigorating experience, and it enhanced our outreach efforts.

The collaboration came from a realization that the library and career center shared outreach goals, but also a recognition that we bring different expertise and resources to the table. The library offers a flexible web content platform and experience building research guides, as well as a library collection and knowledge of how to best search those resources. The career center has experience working with employers and students during the job search, as well as their own set of resources and a very motivated audience.

I focused on a specific partnership here, but this project also serves as a potential model for future research guide work. Co-authorship lends credibility especially if you are moving into a new area. Furthermore, there are many other units around campus that could benefit from business information. Financial literacy is a growing concern on campuses, entrepreneurs are everywhere, and these are just two ideas. You can probably think of many more places where a business librarian can offer value (and maybe even lead you back to your School of Business).

How Do I Build a Digital Portfolio to Land a Job

<http://guides.library.vcu.edu/portfolio>

How to Use Company and Industry Information to Land a Job

<http://guides.library.vcu.edu/career>