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Going Where Few Librarians Have Gone Before: A Business Librarian's Experience as a Member of an MBA Oral Exam Review Committee.

Academic business librarians have worked extensively over the years to become integrated into business schools as collaborators in learning and in research. Building ongoing liaison partnerships with faculty is what makes being a business librarian so rewarding. Most liaison work is focused on collections, instruction, and research support. It is rare when a librarian is asked to be a member of a master's degree oral exam committee. As a business librarian at Eastern Washington University, I was afforded the opportunity to serve as a third committee of the MBA Oral Exam Review Committee. During my time serving in this committee I was able to gain a new perspective on student learning in the MBA program.

MBA students at Eastern Washington University are required to take a capstone course during their last quarter of their program. The capstone course requires a written case analysis of a real company's issue with a facet of their business (e.g. management of information technology). The case analysis is supposed to include an analysis of the issues the company is facing and possible scenarios for how the company can improve its responses to the challenges posed by these issues. MBA students are expected to write based on their own graduate learning experiences and additionally synthesize best practices in management issues. The students then present their case analysis to a review committee comprised of three faculty members. The committee reviews the students' written and oral components and rates a numerical score using specified criteria.

As a third committee member, it is my job to make sure that the two other committee members are providing a fair and balanced assessment of students' work. I was also given the opportunity to ask questions of students and provide valuable feedback on their presentations and written work. Being a librarian, I tended to lean towards evaluating students' bibliographies. I was surprised at how even at the graduate level a few students cited sources that were outdated. Some of the students struggled to synthesize their argument in their written case analysis and could not verbally argue their case effectively. I could see firsthand that critical thinking skills were lacking in some of the students' work.

Overall, what I gained from this experience was that I could do more as a librarian to provide information literacy instruction for the MBA curriculum. I developed an understanding of what the MBA students were learning and how they were using their knowledge in application of real world company issues. Working collegially with College of Business faculty in this committee setting proved that as a librarian, I can help improve the critical thinking skills of their students and that I am committed to the success of the MBA program.