

# Academic BRASS

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## **The Language of a Liaison Librarian: Building Skills and Relationships with Library Resources**

As the business librarian at the University of Arkansas, I work closely with the Sam M. Walton College of Business (WCOB). In March of 2013, I began collaborating with the Global Engagement Office (GEO) in the WCOB. The dean of the WCOB expressed interest in creating a program that would expose students who were planning to travel abroad to the language of their destination country. I began working with the GEO to create a program that would make use of the Mango Language Learning tool provided through the University Libraries. This tool gives users the opportunity to build language skills through activities that include listening, reading, and speaking in the language of their choice.

The collaboration between the GEO and the business librarian resulted in the creation of a non-credit bearing Certificate of Completion Program that required students to spend a minimum of fifteen hours learning a language using the Mango tool. In addition to the fifteen hour requirement, students were also required to complete a survey that was used to gather information about their major, study abroad plans, and use of the Mango tool. This information will be analyzed once the pilot program has been completed to determine what changes need to be made to the program.

Since the program was targeted at study abroad students, promotion was limited and focused on the faculty study abroad coordinators and the students who were planning to study abroad. Two presentations were conducted to present this program to the WCOB study abroad community, one for the faculty coordinators, and one for the students. There was a significant amount of interest on the part of both groups, and this resulted in twenty-two students starting the program. In May of 2013, the program had its first two participants complete the program. There are currently no time restrictions on when the program must be completed, so many of the students who signed up in March are still working to complete it.

Over the summer of 2013, eleven more study abroad students started the program. Given the enthusiastic response to the program so far, we are preparing to launch it to the entire WCOB in September of 2013. As this program expands to the entire college, more promotional events will be held. Four information sessions about the program have been scheduled, two at the main campus library and two at the WCOB. I will also be working with the GEO to provide information at the campus-wide study abroad fair and job fair about the certificate program. One major goal we have for this program is to expand it to the entire campus. The student feedback about the program will be helpful as we move to make this goal a reality. In an effort to make campus-wide expansion easier, I have also begun conversations with other college library liaisons about implementing the program in their respective areas.

This experience has been extremely valuable to me as a liaison librarian. I am always looking for new ways to engage students and faculty in my subject areas. This program has allowed me to work closely with faculty members to ensure that students are aware of the program. The faculty members have also been supportive of our message to the students that building language skills prior to studying abroad will lead to a richer experience. I have also had the opportunity to get to know many of the students in the WCOB that I had not previously met. I communicate with them in person and through electronic communication methods. Many of the students in this program used their certificate-related interactions with me to get assistance with other projects they are working on. I have answered many reference questions and provided research consultations. I think a large obstacle we face as liaison librarians is awareness among our constituents of the support we can provide. Liaison librarians can and should look at any interaction with students and faculty as an opportunity to build relationships with those they support, and the Mango Certificate of Completion Program is one example of how I am striving to do just that.