



Instructor College

Creating & Sustaining a Strong Community of Practice

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What is Instructor College?

Instructor College is a specially focused staff development initiative of the University Library. Its goal is to strengthen the instructional skills of Library staff. Through excellence in instruction, the Library seeks to help users realize the full value of the resources it provides.

Institutional Context

- Large, decentralized library system
- FY 2016-17 Statistics
 - 1,261 instruction sessions
 - 30,716 participants
 - 90-100 library instructors
- Some instructors teach once a term, some 25 times a term



Why an “Instructor College?”

- Increasing emphasis on instructional role of librarians across campus
- Library instructors with little formal teaching training
- Library leadership identified this as a priority
- Planning task force launched in 1999
- Steering committee appointed and Instructor College began in 2000

Original Formal Structure

- Foundation Sessions (required)
 - Orientation to Instruction at the Library
 - Putting Together a Session: Step by Step
 - Working with Faculty
 - Marketing
- Theme Sessions (optional)
 - Presentation Skills, Content & Planning, Technology, Assessment and Instructional Design
- Certificate of completion

Instructor College Community Then

- Formal structure for several years
- Annual elections for Steering Committee
- Annual registration to IC: Contributing & General members
- Funding for large annual event and guest speakers
- Library office with small book collection, work space, and equipment to record yourself practicing.
- Brochure given to new library instructors at point of hire by Library Human Resources.



About the Instructor College

Instructor College is a specially focused staff development initiative of the University Library. Its goal is to strengthen the instructional skills of Library staff. By giving excellent instruction, the Library seeks to help users realize the full value of the resources it provides.

Cultivating Creativity

Effective teaching requires instructors who are intellectually vigorous and who value learning. Committed to helping others, they appreciate fresh ideas and strive to improve their teaching. Because originality is a key ingredient to the Library's instructional efforts, promoting creativity is a central focus of Instructor College programming.

Curriculum

Developing the Instructor College Curriculum is an iterative process. Topics as well as content evolve to meet members' changing needs. Sessions range from formal instruction and guest lectures to more casual meetings, such as brownbag lunches, discussion groups, and video viewings. To develop the initial curriculum the Instructor College Steering Committee selected two modes: *Foundation Sessions* organized by the Steering Committee and *Thematic Sessions* designed by member task forces. See the Instructor College website for details. Your suggestions are welcome.

College Membership

Instructor College is open to Library staff involved in instructing users. Members may move in and out of the College as their responsibilities warrant. Two types of College membership are available:

General: staff who are exploring aspects of user instruction and attend sessions sponsored by the College.

Contributing: staff who, in addition, agree to contribute at least one special effort to the College during the year *e. g.* conduct a workshop, serve on a task force, lead a discussion group. By sharing their expertise, Contributing Members further develop their leadership skills and extend the reach of the College initiative.

Enrolling in the College

To become a member, staff are asked to enroll annually by completing a brief form available at the Instructor College website (see below). Only staff who enroll will be considered active members for the current year. The roster created by enrollment serves as the College mailing list and pool for any surveys on needs, programming interests etc.

Resource Center

College members have access to the Instructor College Resource Center (ICRC) located at present in 4186 Shapiro Science Library. Facilities include a conference room, small group work areas, study carrels, a PC with network connection, printer, VCR, TV and selected books and articles. A digital video camera is also available. The Center is a place where College instructors can study, plan, experiment and work with colleagues. Some College sessions will also be held here. The Center is available whenever the Shapiro Science Library is open, typically twenty-one hours per day/seven days per week.

Access for members is via key loaned at the Shapiro Science Library Circulation Desk. Your M-card is required.

A Learning Community

Instructor College is devoted to promoting learning. The College seeks to help you develop your instructional skills so that you can better help library users discover the rich trove of resources available. Instructor College invites you to become a member and to participate in this unique initiative. Join your colleagues, share your expertise, and develop your own instructional skills to their fullest.

The Instructor College Community Now

- Regular meetings and events
- Invited speakers
- New instructor breakfast
- End of year event
- <https://www.lib.umich.edu/instructor-college>
- <https://guides.lib.umich.edu/instructorcollege>

Program Planning

Examples of recent programs we have offered:

- Peer observation
- Sizzles and Fizzles
- Framework sessions
- Teaching multi-section sessions
- A session about our credit-bearing courses
- A session about our Fake News course



How did you get buy-in and gain participation

- Initial top down approach
- Librarians knew they had a need
- A wide variety of programs throughout the year that appeal to librarians across our system.
- Survey at end of year for suggested sessions.

Impact on Practice-Sharing

“I think [IC] refreshes what I'm doing on a regular basis. I think it keeps instructors from feeling burned out, because you're going and you get the enthusiasm that people have for what they are doing. It fuels your own enthusiasm.”

“I think having an outsider come in gets you enthused and gets you seeking other, or you know, opening your mind and coming up with other ideas.”

“I think I would definitely miss the intellectual exchange with my colleagues and the structured opportunity to get together and talk about instructional issues.”

Impact on Practice-Confidence

“[IC’s] given me more confidence in what I’m doing as a librarian. They are affirming that, oh yes we do these things in addition to some of these other things that we are suggesting but it’s basically telling me ok I’m on the right track if I do this because my colleagues are doing similar kinds of things.”

“I’m seeing other people develop more confidence as they participate in Instructor College. They’ve developed confidence in both being instructors and in talking to their colleagues about what they are doing that people who are new to instruction think that they don’t know much about what I’m doing but again they find that as they interact with us that, oh I’m doing this part really well. It’s really inspiring confidence in people.”

Impact on Practice-Skill Gains

“...So not only a perspective of other library colleagues of the type of audience, undergrads, initially I was only working with grad students so a better understanding of the undergraduate population...”

“I think something they just started called Lesson Study was the missing piece. Because that accepts the premise that librarians are not comfortable teaching, that you need to not just talk about it and inspire, but you need to practice in front of your peers and get feedback and that has set a wonderful model for the only thing I feel was missing.”

Sustainability and Future Plans

- It's always a challenge for people to find the time to attend sessions. We try to be mindful of this and schedule sessions when we know there's an instruction lull at the end of the semester, or brown bag sessions people might be able to fit in over lunch.

What does an ideal community of practice look like?

- Learning from each other
- Make room for discussion and sharing, this can only strengthen our instruction.
- Help people connect across the library
- Guest speakers from the larger University community or other institutions.