EVOLUTION OF A SUMMER RESEARCH/WRITING WORKSHOP FOR FIRST-YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Janneka L. Guise, Janet Goosney, Shannon Gordon, Heather Pretty

Case Study

ABSTRACT

Purpose

To describe a framework for a summer research/writing workshop for new university students, and its evolution over time and across institutions.

Design/Methodology/Approach

The University of Toronto at Scarborough (UTSC) has successfully offered its award-winning two-day Summer Learning Institute on Research, Writing and Presentation Skills for four years (2004-2007), to increasing enrollments. Memorial University of Newfoundland (Memorial) adapted the UTSC model and successfully piloted its four-day workshop, SPARC (Summer Programme in Academic Research and Communication), in August 2006. Both programmes were low-cost, non-credit summer workshops for new students to help them prepare for university-level research and writing. Memorial offered its programme a second time in August 2007. This paper focuses on the Memorial experience.

Findings

The success of these programmes is attributed to a common framework used in each case: programme planning, marketing, and delivery and assessment.

Practical implications

The framework described in this paper could be adapted by other institutions wishing to implement such a programme. In addition, the SPARC team will continually improve the programme by reflecting on each part of the framework.

Originality/value

Much research has been done to identify and address the specific needs of first-year university students. For example, some institutions offer "first year experience" courses for credit, while others place first year students into Interest Groups. Most academic libraries offer information literacy sessions to groups of undergraduate students during the regular semester. This paper presents a model for reaching first year students *before* they take their first class at university.

Keywords: information literacy, collaboration, marketing, writing skills

INTRODUCTION

The University of Toronto at Scarborough (UTSC - Toronto, Canada) has offered its Summer Learning Institute (SLI) in Research, Writing, and Presenting for three years to increasing audiences.[1] The SLI model is designed as an intensive, 2-day session to help students make the transition from high school to university. In Canada, high school ends at the end of June, and university classes start at the beginning of September.

UTSC is a medium-sized campus with approximately 8,500 students. The library employs 10 librarians, two of whom were involved in planning and delivering the SLI. The SLI was piloted in 2004 to 140 students divided into 4 classes of 35 students each. Student feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and the SLI was subsequently offered in 2005 and 2006 to increasing enrollments. Maximum enrollment was 280 students in 8 classes of 35 students each. These enrollments are impressive given that students receive no credit for participating, and must give up valuable summer days to do so.

In the Spring of 2005 instruction librarians at the Queen Elizabeth II (QEII) Library at Memorial University of Newfoundland (St. John's, Canada) were seeking new ways to teach research skills to first year students. Memorial University (Memorial) has 17,000 students, and the QEII Library employs 28 librarians (10 of whom are responsible for library instruction). After hearing about the success of the SLI model at UTSC, a smaller school with fewer librarian resources, we wondered whether it could also be successful at Memorial. The Coordinators of Library Instruction at the QEII Library with the help of other

collaborators (described below) adapted the SLI model and offered a pilot program in August 2006, called SPARC: Summer Programme in Academic Research and Communication. SPARC was also deemed a success, so in August 2007 it was modified slightly and offered again.

Although the programmes at UTSC and Memorial were necessarily unique, they followed a similar framework: programme planning (identification of appropriate collaborators, examination of environmental factors, and clear goal setting), marketing (to administrators, colleagues, parents, and students), and delivery (using theories of adult learning and incorporating a variety of teaching strategies). This paper reviews various literatures on first-year university students' research and writing needs, as well as the models institutions have developed to address those needs. There follows an outline of the SLI framework as adapted by Memorial University, and the evolution of SPARC between 2006 and 2007.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is evidence in the literature to suggest that first year students are entering university largely unprepared to meet the research and writing expectations of their new professors. Fitzgerald (2004) offers a concise background on what skills first year university students need to succeed, including "research skills, including the ability to conduct disciplined, planned inquiry…reading skills that include criticism, analysis, and follow-up inquiry…[and] argument skills and [the ability] to formulate, communicate, and argue an assertion supported by carefully weighed evidence" (20). Hartmann (2001) compared first-year students' expectations of research skills required at university to their actual experiences and discovered that, prior to entering university, students expect that "the skills they have learned in secondary school will be adequate at university. It would appear that their first encounter with the library works towards eroding this confidence" (118).

While there are several models for helping students make the transition from high school to university-level research and writing skills, there seem to be no published examples of summer intensive research and writing instruction for incoming first year students. Some librarians use a "train the trainers"

approach, and offer workshops to high school teachers and librarians in order to help prepare students for the university library (Martorana et al., 2001; Nichols, 1999). Librarians at Hampshire College in Massachusetts, USA offer new students one-on-one meetings with librarians in their first week of school (Brown and Vigeland, 2001). Online tutorials are used to reach a large number of students without the time restrictions of a class period (Parang, Raine and Stevenson, 2000; Van Scoyoc, 2003). At Colgate University in New York, USA, a science librarian and a biology professor co-teach a course in scientific writing for beginning students (Huerta and McMillan, 2000). Jacobson and Mark (2000) provide an excellent discussion of other models (258-262).

Many scholars recognize a natural connection between the teaching of research skills and writing skills. "Though one focuses on finding and using information and the other on composing written knowledge, they both engage students in performing a basic activity of academia—scholarly inquiry" (Fister, 1995, 34). This connection may be especially important when teaching first year students. Kautzman (1996) argues that "the process of researching background material and the subsequent arrangement and presentation of this material is seldom taught…a student is expected to come to the class with specific skills and abilities in hand" (62). Professors who assign research papers to first year classes are often disappointed in the quality of the students' work. They fail to recognize that "academic discourse is baffling to many students, that modes of knowledge production and dissemination are mysterious social constructions that are not transparent to the uninitiated, however obvious they seem to the faculty" (Fister, 1995, 33).

The primary goal of the SLI should be to de-mystify the notion of academic discourse and introduce students to the kinds of research and writing expected at university.

PROGRAMME PLANNING

In 2005, instruction coordinators at the QEII Library saw a need for a programme that would introduce new students to university-level research and writing expectations and help them prepare for first-year

studies. The SLI model was attractive because it targeted similar goals and could potentially be adapted to the Memorial University context.

The resulting programme, SPARC, fits well into the goals and objectives of the QEII Library Instruction Programme Plan. A primary goal of the Plan is to "provide students of Memorial University with opportunities to develop information literacy skills and to become competent, critical users of information", with a corresponding objective to "provide effective and meaningful information literacy instruction for first-year students." Another goal is to "foster an awareness of and an appreciation for the role of information literacy relevant to the educational and research needs of the university, and beyond", in part by working to "collaborate with other support groups at Memorial who are in the business of teaching information literacy" [2].

These goals and objectives are echoed in the three key elements of the SPARC programme planning strategy: examination of the environmental factors that provided evidence of a need for such an initiative; identification of appropriate partners within the institution, who were invited to work collaboratively on the development and delivery of the programme; and articulation of the SPARC goals and objectives, upon which the curriculum was built.

Examining environmental factors

> *Key question: is there evidence supporting an SLI-type programme for first-years at your institution?*

In 2005/2006, several environmental factors suggested the need for such a programme. In the past the QEII Library had participated in a university-wide bridging programme, designed for students who had missed the university admissions requirement by five percent or less. Through that experience, the library instruction coordinators came to believe that a programme exploring information literacy (IL) as a continuous process would be valuable to in-coming students at any level of academic achievement.

At the same time, a number of institutional documents pointed to the need for an increased first-year focus. Memorial's 2005 first-year experience survey revealed that "library skills" was the area in which students felt most unprepared for university. It was also one of the most commonly identified areas in which students felt they needed to develop their skills further (Pippy, 2005, 7-8). Also in 2005, University Senate produced a report on the future of Memorial Libraries. Instruction figured significantly in this report, which recommended that the library "should make LIP [library instruction programming] or its equivalent available to all the university students in their first year at Memorial" (4).[3]

Further evidence of a programme targeting first-year students emerged following the SPARC 2006. That fall the QEII Library participated in Project SAILS, a standardized information literacy (IL) test.[4] The SAILS test was administered to first-year students who had not received any form of IL instruction at Memorial. The results indicated that first-year students lack a high level of information literacy skills when they arrive at Memorial and need introductory IL support (Project SAILS, 2006).

Finally, Memorial adopted a new strategic plan in January 2007. Student-centered goals focused on "Foster[ing] Student Success and Retention", "Programme Innovation and Development", and "Student Support" (Memorial University, 2007 p.6-7,10). SPARC has helped to address these goals.

Identify appropriate collaborators:

> *Key question: who else at your institution is in the business of supporting information literacy?*

In Fall 2005, the QEII Library Instruction Coordinators approached two potential partners based on past collaborations and overlapping spheres of interest: the Director of the Writing Centre and the Director of the Instructional Development Office (IDO). Both agreed enthusiastically to participate,, and brought unique strengths and expertise to the project.

i.   The Writing Centre

Although the phrase "information literacy" exists primarily in the language and literature of librarianship, it is clearly relevant to writing instruction, and points to the research and writing connection. At Memorial, both the library and the Writing Centre aim to help students form meaningful research questions, and develop strategies for thinking critically about information. Both units see the development of critical thinking as central to their mandate. Elmborg (2003) writes the following about the relationship of research to writing:

> For most students, the research process exists in the context of the larger process of writing. When the search process is defined as an isolated, discrete process…it is easy to lose sight of the way students experience the larger development of ideas that takes place in the college writing process, the way searching and finding function in the process of composing (72).

The Director of the Writing Centre has expertise in teaching writing as process, and like the QEII Library offers in-class tutorials based on specific assignments. By fall 2006, the Library and Writing Centre had already started building on this connection by developing team-taught sessions for first-year English classes, designed to take students through the entire research and writing process.   Collaborating with the writing centre on SPARC was a natural, even necessary extension of common goals: because of the fundamental research and writing connection, it was essential to develop SPARC within this broader, collaborative framework.

ii. The Instructional Development Office

The Instructional Development Office (IDO) provides faculty members with leadership and support services for teaching and learning, and promotes instructional excellence at Memorial. Among its key goals, it works to, "advocate effective teaching practices and exemplary course design", and to "provide group process support and leadership to instructional leaders".[5] The IDO works collaboratively on teaching and learning initiatives at the individual, programmatic, and institutional levels.

The Director of the IDO is a former high school principal and has knowledge of student attitudes, particularly at the age of most intended SPARC participants. With a Ph.D. in higher education, she also has expertise in teaching and learning theory, strategies and assessment. Furthermore, she has experience developing and coordinating a first-year experience course designed to enhance student success.

Because of this combination of instructional and project planning expertise, experience in the area of first-year student success programming, and successful past collaborations, the IDO was a valuable third contributor to SPARC.

Setting Clear Goals and Objectives

Key question: what do you want your programme to accomplish, and what objectives will achieve those goals?

A key step in any collaborative learning project is to define high-level goals and concrete learning objectives. The IDO Director, a trained facilitator with expertise in teaching and learning project management, was instrumental in guiding the team through developing goals and objectives. The resulting broad programme goals were articulated as follows:

- To improve student readiness for university
- To foster critical thinking about what students read and write
- To introduce students to university level research, writing and the expectations thereof
- To introduce facilities/resources that will assist them in research and writing
- To offer a program that has a first-year focus and eases first-year transition

These goals led to a series of learning objectives that articulated the knowledge, skills, and values that the team hoped students would acquire through SPARC. The goals and objectives together formed the structure upon which the programme content was developed. Using this structure, the team was able to prioritize potential content and identify which skills needed to be addressed in order to satisfy the learning

objectives. It helped team members achieve a better overall understanding of how the individual pieces

of the research and writing puzzle fit together, and to plan each lesson collaboratively so that students

would learn the skills in "gradual stages of complexity" (Cheney, 2004, 502). The programme was also

designed to model the experiences and expectations students would encounter during their first year of

studies. Although the team initially intended to follow UTSC's 2-day model, once the content was

developed it was realized that SPARC would be four days in length.

Following the first, successful SPARC pilot in summer 2006, the collaborative team reconvened to identify

directions for 2007. Evaluation of the initial pilot suggested the need for some programme revision. One

key issue was the presentation-oriented research assignment. Student feedback indicated that this was

the least popular part of SPARC, and student performance was somewhat disappointing, particularly

regarding the quality of their research. At the same time, the team realized that this exercise did not

actually model the first-year experience very well. As a result, the learning objectives relating to group

presentation were reconsidered, and it was decided that a new assignment should be developed. The

team also decided to integrate strategies to scaffold independent research, to help students to use that

time effectively while maintaining the integrity of the independent exercise. These two changes, though

minor, lead to considerable reorganization of the four-day programme.

MARKETING

Having a meaningful, memorable name was the first step in marketing the programme. The team decided

to call the programme SPARC: Summer Programme in Academic Research and Communication. Both

institutions charged a small enrollment fee (equivalent to the cost of a nice dinner for one) in order to

ensure registrants were serious about participating, and to give a small budget with which to enhance the

programme. In 2006 and 2007, the registration fee at Memorial University was twenty-five Canadian

dollars.

Initially, the team had several reasons for *not* publicizing the SPARC programme. Due to the size of the library instruction classroom, enrollment was limited to 30 students. The team wanted to restrict enrollment to students within the St. John's area in order to avoid arranging accommodations for students from outside the city. The idea of sending paper or electronic mail to potential students was rejected because new students receive so much correspondence from the University that information about SPARC would likely be lost.

Regardless of the marketing venue, the following criteria were used in both years to identify the type of student the team hoped to attract to SPARC:

- Students must have been accepted to Memorial University, and planning to attend in the upcoming Fall Semester.
- Students will take the program seriously.
- Students may or may not be high academic achievers, but could benefit from an introduction to academic research and writing expectations at Memorial.

Marketing Method 1: High School Principals & Guidance Counselors

In 2006, the team chose to contact high school principals directly. There are a total of thirteen high schools in the St. John's area, and in late April, 2006, an e-mail was sent to each high school principal asking him or her to nominate 2 or 3 graduating students who met the SPARC criteria. Three days later, each principal was contacted via a follow-up telephone call. Principals were asked to submit names by June 1. The team expected that if the principal hand-selected specific students, the students would take the programme seriously. This methodology had several problems: it was difficult to find an accurate list of principals, and several messages went to the wrong people; it was also difficult to reach the principals by telephone, and because they are very busy, most of the principals forwarded the message to the guidance counselor.

As a result, the team chose to contact the guidance counselors directly by e-mail in the last week of May. It was discovered that, rather than approaching specific students directly, most were making the information available to everyone and waiting for the students to self-nominate. This approach did not attract many students to SPARC, perhaps because at that time of year students are very busy trying to complete graduation requirements. The registration deadline was extended, but by June 18, only ten students had registered for SPARC.

In 2007, the team decided not to rely on principals and guidance counselors as a primary marketing strategy. At the same time, however, the team did not want to exclude them. In early June 2007, an email promoting SPARC was delivered via a listserv for principals within the province's Eastern School District. The major problem associated with this was that the listserv was for *all school principals*; no listserv existed specifically for high school principals. One week later, Memorial University's Faculty of Arts faxed a promotional piece to high school guidance counselors in the St. John's area. A poster promoting SPARC was included in the fax, with a request to let students know about the programme. While marketing directly to high schools proved to be unfruitful in 2006, the team felt that the listserv and fax were simple ways to promote the programme to the target audience. As in 2006, the team had problems getting reliable contact information, and questioned whether the information was being passed on. By the end of June, only seven registrants had emerged.

Marketing Method 2: University Communications Coordinator

In 2006, SPARC hit a stroke of luck when the acting Dean of Arts heard about SPARC's low enrollment. As a result, he offered the assistance of his Faculty's Communications Coordinator, who worked with the team to select appropriate marketing strategies. Fortunately for SPARC, she offered her services again in 2007.

Because students are more difficult to reach once they are out of school for the summer, the team decided to market SPARC to their parents. Based on the Communications Coordinator's

recommendation, SPARC was advertised in the local newspaper, *The Telegram*. She designed the advertisement, collected price quotes, and recommended the best days of the week for maximum readership. The team soon discovered that such an advertisement is quite expensive. While additional funding was necessary, the team agreed that they did not want to increase the registration fee. It was therefore necessary to seek funding from both the Library and the Faculty of Arts.

A marketing challenge specific to 2007 was that the programme was no longer new. The Communications Coordinator therefore advised the team to begin marketing the program early, and this accounts for why two ads were placed in May. Furthermore, she reasoned that if enrollment numbers remained low as the registration deadline approached, another ad could be placed. By the first week of July only twelve of the thirty spots were filled and these numbers justified running a third ad. The third ad resulted in a substantial increase in registration numbers, likely due to a variety of factors. First, this ad was placed very close to the registration deadline, creating a sense of urgency to register. Second, the ad underwent a major makeover. Following the first two ads, the team questioned their text-heavy nature. The ad was redesigned and in addition to having less text, it was larger, included an image, and more prominently displayed the university logo.

The Communications Coordinator also wrote a press release in both years. In 2006, the press release captured the attention of a local newspaper reporter and the local Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) radio station. *The Telegram* published an interview with a team member on July 23, and the radio interview was aired later that week. In June 2007, the Communications Coordinator sent a press release to 52 provincial media outlets. This press release generated three interviews: an article on an online Memorial news source, a new *Telegram* interview entitled 'Creating a SPARC for University Research'; and a fifteen minute interview with the campus radio station.

In both years, the majority of advertising and media coverage took place in July. Interest increased following this publicity, and all thirty spots were filled by the end of the month. Demand for the program exceeded the thirty spots in each year and required the team to begin a waitlist. Six students were

waitlisted in 2006, and ten names appeared in 2007. In 2007, the waitlist eventually decreased as some

original registrants withdrew. Despite the differences in publicity for both years, Figure 1 shows that the

majority of received forms took place in the third and fourth weeks of July. This clearly shows the positive

result of this publicity.

Figure 1. Enrollment By Week
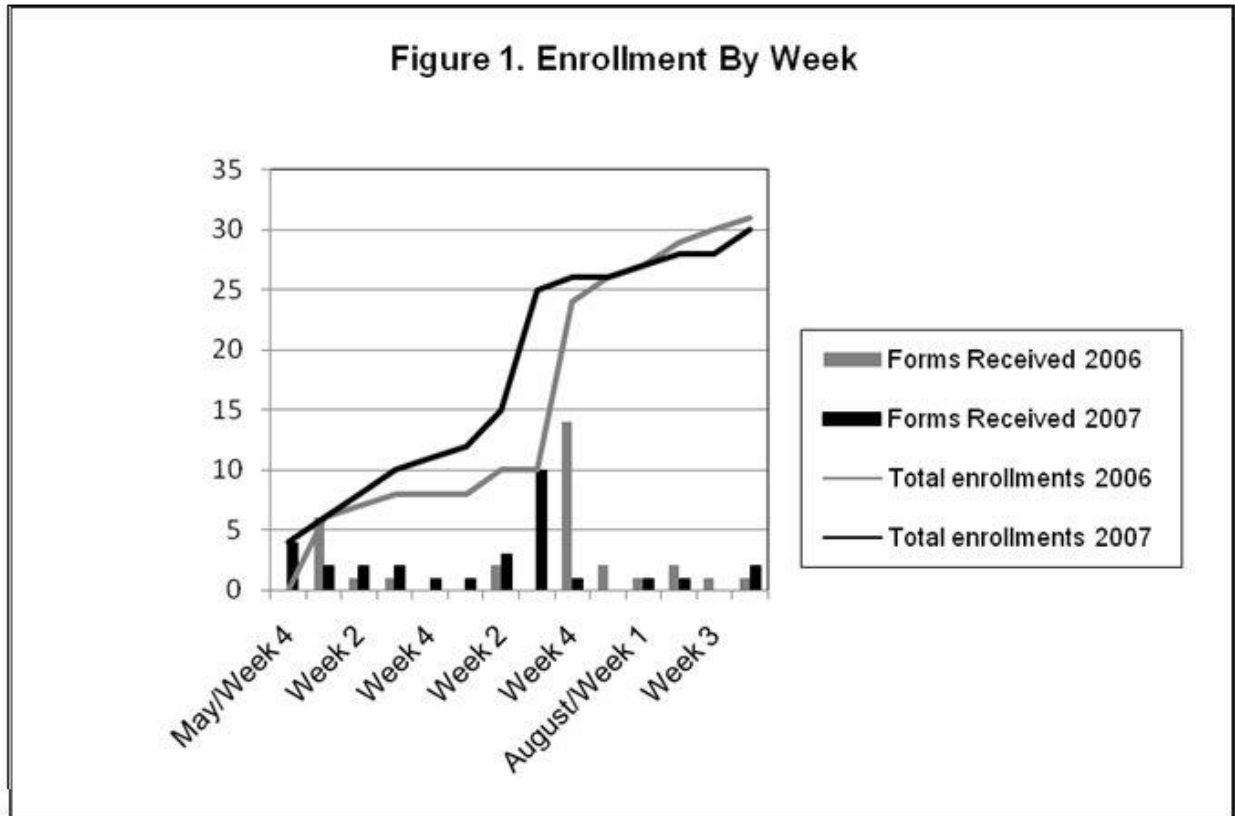
These numbers suggest that the newly revised ad was more effective, and that registrants were more

interested in the programme closer to the event. This was contrary to what the team initially expected.

Effective Marketing Venues

With a substantial amount of human and financial resources dedicated to promoting the programme, it is

worthwhile to consider which marketing tactics worked and which did not. In both years, registration

increased following publicity via the local newspaper. It is worth noting that as parents or incoming

students contacted the SPARC team regarding registration in 2007, certain trends emerged. It was

common for parents and students to mention having discovered SPARC through the ad or interview in

The Telegram. Clearly, the local newspaper proved to be a very effective way to reach a large audience. It would be valuable to know whether they are referring to the ad or to the interview, because the ads cost money while the interviews did not. If interviews were deemed to be more effective, the team could save money in future by actively seeking media coverage and not placing as many ads. However, gaining media attention in the form of an interview may become a challenge as the programme loses its 'new factor'. For the meantime, however, the interviews have proved to be an excellent promotional source. Students also indicated that their parents played a large role in informing them about the programme. At the same time, very few mentioned hearing about SPARC from their high school, or via the radio or public services announcements. These results surprised the team, who predicted these to be valuable marketing tools.

DELIVERY AND ASSESSMENT

In order to make SPARC as relevant as possible to students, the programme aimed to mimic actual first-year experiences, both in the structure of the 4 days, and in the assignments. Each day began at 9:00AM and ended at 4:00PM, and included a mixture of lectures, group discussions, activities, independent work time, as well as a one-hour lunch break and a 20-minute morning break. Thirty students were accepted into both the 2006 and 2007 pilots. Both years a few students either did not show up on the first day or dropped out over the course of the programme.

Programme Structure

Two primary changes were made to the programme from 2006 to 2007 that affected the structure of the four days. First, the 15-minute library tour used in 2006 was replaced by a 90-minute "library mystery tour" on the first day of SPARC 2007, which had the students independently problem-solve basic reference and library tasks. This caused a domino-effect of teaching modules getting moved to the next morning or the next afternoon. Second, the main research project for SPARC students was changed from a group presentation (2006) to an annotated bibliography (2007). The latter change caused a more

radical shift in the structure of SPARC. The mind mapping exercise, for example, introduced on the first day in 2006, was now more appropriate on the fourth day in 2007.[6] As the programme structure in 2007 required that the annotated bibliographies be handed in at the beginning of the fourth day, the rest of that day was freed up for teaching other concepts: mind mapping, the next steps that might be taken with an annotated bibliography, discussion about plagiarism and academic integrity, scholarly reactions to Web 2.0, and an introduction to the bibliographic manager RefWorks.

Research Assignment

In SPARC 2006, the research assignment was a 3-person group presentation, supported by individual bibliographies. Each group chose a topic from a list of two-sided issues pre-searched by the SPARC team. Group members researched a particular aspect of the topic and defended their individual positions in a group presentation. In addition, each group member compiled a bibliography of at least 3 resources used in defence of their position. Four hours of independent study time was provided for the groups to conduct research, compile the bibliographies, and prepare for the group presentation.

Group presentations were assessed by peer and instructor review based on the level of scholarship and the quality of communication. Level of scholarship was comprised of the following qualities: the speakers' knowledge of the subject, scholarly support for the opinions expressed, and evidence that multiple perspectives had been considered. Quality of communication considered engagement with the audience, distribution of time among speakers, familiarity with materials, and overall organization. Feedback from the students in 2006 regarding the group presentations was generally negative; comments dealt with not having enough time to prepare, the amount of work necessary in the last two days and nights, and not being sure what was expected from the oral presentation.

The SPARC team was disappointed in the quality of the bibliographies in 2006. While the students did meet the criteria for finding at least one book, one journal article, and one web site, and followed the citation style correctly, few went beyond the minimum requirements and quality of sources suffered. In

addition, the team found that students did not refer to books or articles to support their arguments in the oral presentations. When students did use a source to support an argument, it was a web site.

Upon reflection, the team realized that students at Memorial are rarely required to do oral presentations in first year, so the research assignment for 2007 was changed to individual annotated bibliographies as this type of assignment is regularly given to first year students at Memorial. The bibliography was to contain at least 8 items: 2 books, 2 articles, no more than 1 web site, and 3 items of choice. Some students complained about the workload, claiming that 8 citations for an annotated bibliography to be completed over 3 nights in addition to working on an article critique was too much. The SPARC team, and some other students, felt it was appropriate to a 'university-level' work expectation.

The bibliographies were graded out of 100 points: 10 points for each of the 8 annotations, looking specifically for a shorter descriptive and longer evaluative element; and 20 points for overall presentation, adherence to the citation style, credibility and balance of the sources, and the clarity of the writing. The 5 members of the SPARC team and a QEII librarian graded the annotated bibliographies and found that the students were generally good at following the required citation style, but the annotations relied heavily upon descriptive elements and lacked much evaluation. In future, reducing the number of annotations and increasing instructional emphasis on critical thinking and reflection would allow students more time to concentrate on evaluation, and better prepare students for the task.

Article Critique

In both years the students were required to write an article critique for which they received two one-on-one feedback sessions with a Writing Centre tutor. In SPARC 2006, students researched and located their own article for the critique. In 2007, articles for the critiques were pre-selected based on 20 topics pre-determined by the SPARC team to ensure that the articles would be an appropriate length and reading level. Pre-selecting the articles for the critiques also made it possible for the students to focus on reading and processing the information in the article the first night, and to then approach writing the first

draft of the article critique the second night, thus having a 24-hour period to process what they had read before writing.

Excellent feedback was received from the students both years regarding the article critiques. Students found the process of writing the article critiques directly relevant to what they expected in their first year at university. Feedback from Writing Centre tutors was considered especially valuable, as well as the knowledge that the Writing Centre is available to help at all stages of the writing process.

Active Learning

To learn names and get acquainted, the SPARC team developed a name game which was conducted at the beginning of the programme. Students were given a sheet of descriptions (e.g. "doesn't have wisdom teeth") they had to match to someone in the programme.

The QEII Library mystery tour at the end of the first day was adapted from Kasbohm, Schoen, and Dubaj (2006). The mystery tour consisted of a series of clues about a particular author that led the student teams to use the catalogue, the reference section, the bookstacks, the older periodical collection, course reserves, and the reference desk. The team that returned first with all the clues correctly answered received prizes.

A Library Jeopardy game developed by a QEII librarian was played each year on the third day of SPARC as a reflective review exercise. The students were split into teams and competed to answer review questions about research and library resources. The winning team received prizes.

To summarize and bring their experiences to a conclusion, a Chiji card activity was conducted at the end of the fourth day. Chiji is a Chinese word which means "important moment or significant opportunity."[7] Students selected a card from a deck of symbolic pictures and described to the group how the picture related to their four-day experience.

Overall Feedback

SPARC students' overall satisfaction with the programme did not significantly change from 2006 to 2007; the students were overwhelmingly satisfied with their experience both years. There were some comments from students in both years of the programme about having to work during the last week of summer, or having to work during holidays, but missing part of the last week of summer did not ultimately have an impact to reduce students' satisfaction with the program.

Overall, the majority of students in both years indicated that the speed of the programme was challenging but manageable or just right. Students appreciated the independent research/writing periods on days 2, 3, and 4, when they had time to either work on group research and presentations or the individual annotated bibliographies (4 hours in 2006, 4.5 hours in 2007). The majority of students in both years felt that the independent research/writing periods were really useful, and only a few indicated that they could have used more time.

Inevitably, some students felt each year that there was too much information packed into the four days while others indicated the opposite, that the information covered over the four days was repetitive. The SPARC team felt in both years that if anything, some content had been held back for the sake of containing the programme to four days.

The majority of students found the mystery tour to be useful and fun. The SPARC team felt that the mystery tour was successful because it not only provided a tour of the library, but also introduced the students to parts of the library they might not otherwise have used during the programme, and responded to the requests from SPARC 2006 students for more activity-based learning. The name game, Chiji cards, and especially Library Jeopardy were popular with the students both years.

There were unique trends each year as to why students decided to participate in SPARC. In 2006, there was emphasis from the students that SPARC would be a way to meet people and new friends. In 2007, the emphasis was that parents had told the students to participate. Themes shared across both years were that students wanted an introduction or help with writing or research, or wanted an introduction to a university-level experience.

Feedback from both years of the programme were similar regarding what students liked most about SPARC and what they learned during SPARC that they didn't know before. Students especially enjoyed receiving help with writing, and interaction with the Writing Centre and Writing Centre tutors. Both years, a few students made positive comments about learning citation styles. Most students both years felt it was valuable to become acquainted with the library, the catalogue, the article indexes, and research resources in general.

Both years, comments regarding what students liked least about the programme centred on the research assignments. In 2006, students did not like the oral presentations in general, did not feel they had enough time to prepare, and did not feel they were representative of a first-year assignment. In 2007, students either commented that they did not like the annotated bibliography assignment or the amount of homework in general. As with the 2006 students, the 2007 students did not feel there was sufficient time to accomplish the assignments.

An unexpected theme in both years was that students highly valued the opportunity to meet people, make new friends, and become acquainted with librarians and Writing Centre staff. Instructors observed an exchange of contact information at the end of the 2006 programme, and librarians often see SPARC 2006 students together in the Library. SPARC 2007 students are also seen together in the Library on occasion, and one student mentioned that they have created a group on www.facebook.com (a popular social networking utility) and plan to help each other with research throughout university.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Despite the differences between Memorial University and UTSC, the SLI framework was readily adapted to another Canadian institutional context. Collaboration (with librarians at UTSC as well as non-library colleagues at Memorial) was integral to the process.

Having completed two pilots (2006 and 2007), the team believes that SPARC is a sound model for introductory, short-term instruction in the research and writing process. The programme accomplishes the intended goals and objectives, while actively engaging students and providing them with tools to ease their transition to university. The question that arises now is this: what is next for SPARC?

Up until now, SPARC has been delivered to small groups of approximately 30 students per year. In order to widen its impact, the team is investigating ways to reach larger numbers of students. During initial brainstorming we have identified two potential directions for SPARC that might accomplish this goal: an expanded, extracurricular programme, and integration into a credit course model.

There are several extracurricular directions in which a programme like SPARC might be expanded. A simple approach would be to offer more sections to accommodate more students. However, there is also the possibility of developing customized sections for particular target groups with unique needs. For example, two potential target populations at Memorial are mature students and English as second language students. Similarly, sections with a disciplinary focus might be developed, for example in the Arts and Sciences. The team has also considered adapting SPARC to a different timeline: evening or weekend sections might better accommodate some students. In order to expand the SPARC programme, whether with larger classes or more sections, the team will have to consider the affect on staff time.

Another possibility would be to develop a for-credit, student success-oriented first-year course, in which the SPARC model would be an integral part. The process-oriented structure of SPARC could easily be adapted to this context, and in fact a full-course model would create opportunities to address some

limitations of the four-day format. For example, a full semester course could introduce process elements not presently introduced to SPARC students, such as developing their own research topics and producing final, full-length research papers. Again, availability of human resources would need to be examined if this direction was pursued. For SPARC to continue as an affordable programme, it will be necessary for the team to investigate alternatives to high-cost promotional strategies.

Based on these ideas, the next step for the SPARC team is to engage in evidence-based evaluation to determine which approach best suits the Memorial University context. It may be most appropriate to adopt a combination of strategies; it is not necessarily true that any one of these directions should be taken to the exclusion of the others.

NOTES

1. For more information, see http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/~tlsweb/students/SLI_RW&P/default.htm
2. Queen Elizabeth II Library. (2007) Library Instruction Program: Mission & Goals, St. John's, NL, Memorial University. Available http://www.library.mun.ca/qeii/instruction/mission.php
3. Senate, Memorial University. (2005) The Library of the Future: A Report from the Senate Advisory Committee on the Library Concerning the Future of the Memorial Library System, St. John's, NL, Memorial University. Available
   http://staff.library.mun.ca/staff/staffdir/future/Report%20to%20Senate%20from%20SACL.pdf
4. http://www.projectsails.org
5. Instructional Development Office, Distance Education and Learning Technologies. Available http://www.distance.mun.ca/faculty
6. The mind mapping exercise involved having the students make a graphical representation of known information on their topics.
7. http://www.chiji.com

REFERENCES

Brown, S. W. and Vigeland, B. (2001) "An innovative first-year instruction programme at Hampshire College", College and Research Libraries News, Vol 62 No 7, pp. 717-719, 727.

Cheney, D. (2004) "Problem-based learning: librarians as collaborators and consultants", Portal: Libraries and the Academy, Vol 4 No 4, pp. 495-508.

Elmborg, J. K. (2003) "Information literacy and writing across the curriculum: sharing the vision", Reference Services Review, Vol 31 No 1, pp.68-80. Available http://www.emeraldinsight.com.

Fister, B. (1995) "Connected communities: encouraging dialogue between composition and bibliographic instruction", in Sheridan, J. (Ed.), Writing-Across-the-Curriculum and the Academic Library: A Guide for Librarians, Instructors, and Writing Program Directors, Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, pp. 33-51.

Fitzgerald, M. A. (2004) "Making the leap from high school to college: three new studies about information literacy skills of first-year college students", Knowledge Quest, Vol 32 No 4, pp. 19-24.

Hartmann, E. (2001) "Understandings of information literacy: the perceptions of first year undergraduate students at the University of Ballarat", Australian Academic and Research Libraries, Vol 32 No 2, pp. 110-22.

Huerta, D. and McMillan, V. E. (2000) "Collaborative instruction by writing and library faculty: a two-tiered approach to the teaching of scientific writing", Issues in Science & Technology Librarianship, Vol 28, Available http://www.istl.org/00-fall/article1.html

Jacobson, T. and Mark, B. L. (2000) "Separating wheat from chaff: helping first-year students become information savvy", Journal of General Education, Vol 49 No 4, pp. 256-78.

Kasbohm, K. E., Schoen, D., and Dubaj, M. (2006) "Launching the library mystery tour: a library component for the 'first-year experience'", College & Undergraduate Libraries, Vol 13 No 2, pp. 35-46.

Kautzman, A. M. (1996) "Teaching critical thinking: the alliance of composition studies and research instruction", Reference Services Review, Vol 24 No 3, pp. 61-5.

Martorana, J., Curtis, S., DeDecker, S., and Edgerton, S. (2001) "Bridging the gap: information literacy workshops for high school teachers", Research Strategies, Vol 18 No 2, pp. 113-20.

Memorial University. (2007) Strategic Plan. St. John's, NL, Memorial University.

Nichols, J. (1999) "Building bridges: high school and university partnerships for information literacy", NASSP Bulletin, Vol 83 No 605, pp. 75-81.

Parang, E., Raine, M. and Stevenson, T. (2000) "Redesigning freshman seminar library instruction based on information competencies", Research Strategies, Vol 17 No 4, pp. 269-80.

Pippy, S. (2005) The first year experience of new students at Memorial University: report of the 2005 survey. CIAP Report 2005-05. St. John's, Memorial University, Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning. Available http://www.mun.ca/ciap/fyerep05.pdf

Project SAILS, Kent State University. (2006) Results of the Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (SAILS) for Memorial University of Newfoundland. Administration: 2006 Fall First Year. Unpublished report.

Van Scoyoc, A. M. (2003) "Reducing library anxiety in first-year students: the impact of computer-assisted instruction and bibliographic instruction", Reference and User Services Quarterly, Vol 42 No 4, pp. 329-41.