

Articles

Library Outreach: Introducing Campus Childcare Providers to the Academic Library

By Melissa Maxwell Edwards and Elaine Thornton

Abstract

This case study describes a library outreach effort to university staff members employed by the campus child care center. Authors planned an instructional session to introduce child care staff members to library resources, focusing on the curriculum collection as a source of supplemental materials for classrooms. Surveys were administered before and after the workshop to gauge changes in participants' awareness of library resources and comfort level using the library. Results based on descriptive statistics and qualitative data indicated a significant increase in participants' awareness of and comfort using campus library resources and services. The authors encourage similar efforts within other academic communities and provide examples of potential partnerships.

Introduction

Outreach is a common mission of academic libraries. One of the primary goals of academic public services librarians is to introduce and market library resources and services to a variety of campus and community users. Julie Beth Todaro notes that outreach “has historically meant identifying, locating, and reaching out to serve typically eligible clients or patrons but non-users.” (2005, p. 139) Todaro’s statement succinctly sums up the activity shared in this case study. The authors sought out one such group of University employees, campus childcare center staff. As University employees, they are eligible to use the library resources, but most of the staff was unaware of this benefit and of the relevant resources available.

These childcare workers play a vital role in the lives of the 145 Texas A & M University student, faculty, and staff parents who utilize their services to provide care for their children in the conveniently located on campus childcare facility. Texas A&M University, the sixth-largest university in the United States with over 50,000 students, counts itself as a provider of an on-campus child care and a preschool program. [According to the latest data available, 57% of public four-year postsecondary and 49% of two-year schools have campus-based children’s centers. (Miller, Gault & Thorman, 2011)] Additionally, the Texas A&M University Libraries is one of over 200 college and university libraries to house a curriculum materials center (*Directory of Curriculum Materials Centers*, 2009). This descriptive study explores a library outreach effort to promote the Libraries to the staff members who work at the on-campus child care facility.

Review of the Literature

Providing services and resources to campus child care center workers meets the outreach and instruction missions of the academic library. Yet, a search of the literature revealed few documented examples of outreach efforts in this domain. While the topics of academic library outreach and instruction are often discussed in library literature, the primary recipients of these services are enrolled students, teaching faculty, external or community constituents, and less often general university non-teaching staff and employees.

Student and Faculty Outreach

In a detailed survey based article examining over 20 academic library outreach initiatives staged from 2009-2011, Dennis (2012) found that librarians persisted in a broad range of activities under the outreach umbrella. These activities were aimed at student populations, as well as faculty. At least one of the efforts mentioned focused on collaboration with a student group. Other scholars and practitioners have focused wholly on creating outreach programs on campus by collaborating with student-led groups and organizations and student

affairs divisions (Johnson, Clapp, Ewing, & Buhler, 2011; Swartz, Carlisle, & Uyeki, 2007; Crowe, 2010; Cummings, 2007; Walter & Eodice, 2005; Anderson, 2010; Griffin, 2000; Forrest, 2005). Special populations of students (e.g., student athletes, non-traditional students and adult learners) have also received dedicated outreach attention (Jesudason, 2000; Davidson & Peyton, 2007; Cannady, King, & Blendinger, 2012). Aimed at the university's primary customers, undergraduate and graduate students, outreach efforts seek to both market the library as a valuable service and position it as the best source of useful resources, as well as to instruct students in the use of these resources (Cruickshank & Nowak, 2001).

Other academic library outreach efforts have focused on building relationships with academic teaching faculty. Anthony (2010) points out that outreach efforts are crucial in establishing relationships between the academic library and teaching faculty. Outreach can be used to promote the value of library resources and services. Furthermore, as Stebelman, Siggins, Nutty, & Long (1999) argue, the increasing importance of technology has encouraged the growth of library outreach and the creation of outreach librarians. They found outreach efforts in the late 1990s at one university targeted creating better communication methods to link the library to faculty and focused efforts to connect with University administrators. Workshops that assist faculty in creating effective library assignments and workshops helping faculty learn to use library resources and incorporate them into class assignments have been the focus of some academic libraries, especially during the early rapid initial growth period of electronic library resources (Mosley, 1998; Ontell, 2003). As information literacy became core to the library profession outreach efforts to faculty became focused on buy-in from teaching faculty. Realizing the need for faculty support to improve information literacy efforts aimed at students, librarians at Northwest Vista Community College focused on reaching out to faculty by visiting departments, offering electronic course reserves instruction, and by offering workshops on library resources and services for faculty members (Reeves, Nishimuta, McMillan, & Godin, 2003).

Outreach to Non-Teaching Staff

Literature examining outreach and instruction efforts aimed at internal non-teaching constituents within the college or university is very limited. Hepworth and Smith (2008) strictly focused on information literacy deficits among university administrative staff, and while not approaching the need from an outreach perspective, their study shows that this targeted audience can benefit from academic library outreach programs and instruction aimed at the internal non-student, non-teaching community. Arguello and Green (2012) provide an example of efforts more closely related to outreach initiatives aimed at this market. They describe library instruction classes they created and implemented at the request of the University's Training and Development department. The purpose of the classes was to "help staff discover what the library has to offer." (Arguelo & Green, p. 15)

Community Outreach

Additionally, academic library outreach has also focused on the community outside the university. Tina Schneider (2003) found that this type of outreach is often undertaken as a part of the libraries' overall mission to "promote goodwill in the community." (p. 201) Academic libraries have promoted and explored this type of outreach by focusing on local high schools and other K-12 educational entities and public library patrons (Gresham & Van Tassel, 2000; Kudlay, 2000; Burhanna, 2007; Graham 2005). Some attention has also been paid to academic library efforts to provide outreach to special interest groups such as labor unions (Schmidle, 2002).

It is not unheard of for academic libraries to offer outreach programs to children in the local community. Academic libraries have hosted programs inviting children and their families into the library for special programs (Karle, 2008; Tvaruzka, 2009). Additionally, the Oregon State University Library partners with a campus student association to provide space in the library for a drop-in child care center for use by students while they are studying or conducting research in the building ("Family Values," 2007; "Oregon State

University Opens,” 2008). This partnership, though not initiated, staffed or funded by the library, offers one example of reaching out to parenting students. Of particular interest is the recent outreach program offered at Leonard Lief Library of Lehman College where academic librarians have partnered with the campus child care center to create an academic-year-long reading program. The program involves outreach to children in the center, their parents (some of whom are students at the college), education graduate students, and child care center workers. The Leman program is largely focused on bringing programming, in the form of children’s books and readers, to the center but less so on educating child care center workers about the library’s collections and empowering them to access the resources at will to meet their classroom needs (Lehner-Quam, 2013).

Methodology

The Becky Gates Children’s Center (BGCC) is the on-campus child care facility available to children of faculty, staff and students at Texas A&M University. Established in 1998, the center is administered by the Division of Student Affairs and employs 17 full-time teachers (Becky Gates Children’s Center, 2012a). The center serves approximately 150 children, ages 1-5. (Becky Gates Children’s Center, 2012a). As the center’s Family Handbook states, their philosophy includes a belief that “reading and writing readiness are achieved through experiencing books, stories and language in a variety of meaningful ways.” (Becky Gates Children’s Center, 2012b) The center seeks to begin preparing the children at the earliest stages of development, not only at the 4-5 year old pre-school age. For this reason, all staff members who interact with children in the classroom as leads or assistants are referred to as teachers in this study.

With this philosophy in mind, the researchers devised a library workshop to introduce the center’s staff to the libraries’ Curriculum Collection. The goals of the instructional session were to increase knowledge about the resources available in the Curriculum Collection, encourage library use, and to offer relevant information to the BGCC staff. The Curriculum Collection contains state-adopted textbooks for grades PK-12 and children’s literature that can enhance classroom instruction and early literacy education. While this special collection is primarily designed to support the instructional and educational needs of pre-service teachers in the College of Education, the materials are also used by in-service teachers, faculty, ESL students, those studying children’s literature and the general public. The collection contains over 30,000 items and is divided into two main sections: the Textbook Collection and the Literature Collection. The Textbook Collection includes instructional materials specifically adopted by the Texas State Board of Education and currently in use in the public schools across the state. It includes teacher and student editions, including kits, folios, and (of particular interest to the target group of preschool teachers) big books. The Literature Collection includes both fiction and nonfiction titles that support curriculum objectives and promote individual reading interests. The collection contains award-winning children’s literature, as well as some foreign language reading materials. Additionally, resources on early childhood pedagogy and classroom activity books located in the general library collection were highlighted.

Before the instructional session, the authors decided to investigate the teachers’ prior knowledge of the collection and their comfort level with using the library resources. While there was anecdotal evidence that many teachers did not know about the Curriculum Collection, the authors wanted more empirical data. The investigators also wanted to gauge any change in participants’ understanding and comfort level with using the libraries upon completion of the instructional session. The researchers devised brief surveys that would be administered both before and after the training session, and IRB approval was procured. The purpose of the surveys was to gauge participants’ awareness of the library collections and services and evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional session.

Prior to the instructional session, one of the authors met with the BGCC Director to clarify instructional goals and logistics. The library visit was scheduled on a childcare center staff workday just before the start of the

Fall semester, when teachers could come to the library without the worry of who would be covering their classes. The Director also offered to pay for participants' parking, further reducing barriers to the visit. The librarians offered a one-hour instructional session, followed by a one-hour hands-on browsing session in the Curriculum Collection with the librarians present to assist participants. Following the browsing session, teachers were then able check out any items of interest. Circulation staff was notified of the visit ahead of time so extra staffing could be in place to help with the checkout process.

As part of preparation for the instructional session, the researchers created an online guide especially for this group, focusing on preschool resources and the logistics of finding, borrowing and returning items (Available at <http://guides.library.tamu.edu/bgcc>). The library resources highlighted were the Curriculum Collection, the online catalog, and library item retrieval system (part of the Libraries' Get It for Me services) The guide also included a Google form intended as an easy way for participants to contact the researchers after the workshop. Following the instructional session, the researchers provided a brief tour of the collection and hands-on browsing by the participants.

On the date of the instructional session, a pencil and paper survey was distributed to the 17 participants prior to the presentation. This pre-workshop survey included items to measure previous library usage, awareness of library resources and services, and comfort level related to access library resources and services. There were also questions asking participants about what prevented them from using the campus library more often for classroom resources. A follow-up survey was distributed immediately following the session. The post-workshop survey included the same questions about familiarity and comfort level with library resources and services, as well as a question about intentionality of using the campus library over the course of the next year. Both the pre- and post-survey included opportunities for staff members to include qualitative responses to open-ended questions. Unique codes, rather than names, were used to match pre- and post- surveys to preserve confidentiality for the participants. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis.

Results

Researchers found that while most of the participants were not previously utilizing the Texas A&M University Libraries or its Curriculum Collection, they used other libraries. Seventy-seven percent had visited a public library at least once in the past year (with 65% checking out items for their classroom from one of these other libraries). Seventy-one percent had not visited the University Libraries for any reason in the past 12 months, and 94% had not checked out any items from the University Libraries in the past year.

Most participants were unaware that they could use the university library. Seventy-six percent of the participants did not know they could check out items from the University Libraries, even though 30% of the participants had worked at the BGCC (and therefore been University employees) for 6 or more years (See Table I). Additionally, the majority of participants (88%) had previous experiences in college, and presumably with college libraries (See Table II).

Table I- Years Working at Campus Child Care Center

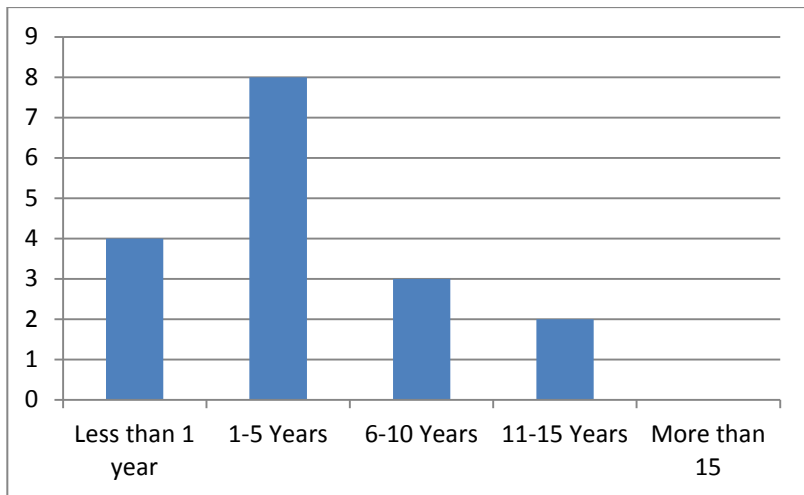
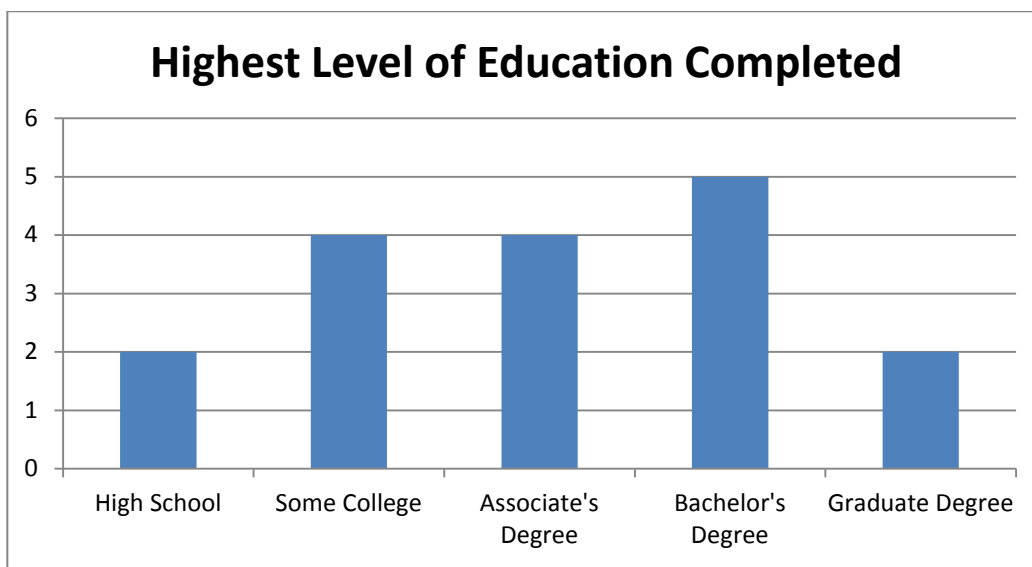


Table II- Education Level of Participants



Participants were asked to indicate comfort level in three areas: visiting the libraries, using the catalog and contacting the libraries for help using a 10 point scale on both the pre- and post- instrument. Prior to the instructional session, participants indicated average values of 4.29-5.18, falling between the “Very Uncomfortable” to “Somewhat Comfortable” range (See Table III). Following the session, the average values for the same questions were 7.65-8.18.

Table III- Change in Comfort Level Using Campus Library

Indicate comfort level with the following	<u>Pre</u>		<u>Post</u>		N
	Mean	Standard Deviation (Range)	Mean	Standard Deviation (Range)	
Visiting the University Libraries	4.29	3.51 (1-10)	7.65	2.26 (3-10)	17
Using the Libraries' online catalog	5.18	3.56 (1-10)	7.82	2.13 (3-10)	17
Contacting the Libraries for help	5.18	3.63 (1-10)	8.18	2.16 (3-10)	17

Not surprisingly, participants were unfamiliar with the library's Curriculum Collection and "Get It for Me" services. In the pre-survey, 14 of the 17 indicated that they were "Not at All Familiar" with the Curriculum Collection. After the session, 13 said they were "Somewhat Familiar" and 4 said "Very Familiar" with the Curriculum Collection (See Table IV).

Table IV- Change in Familiarity with Library Collections and Services

Familiarity with the following	<u>Pre</u>				<u>Post</u>			
	Not At All	Somewhat	Very	N	Not At All	Somewhat	Very	N
Curriculum Collection	14	3	0	17	0	13	4	17
Get It for Me	14	2	1	17	1	9	6	16
Online Catalog	14	1	2	17	1	9	6	16

In the open-ended section of the survey, 16 participants responded to the questions, "What is the most valuable thing you learned about the library in today's session?" Of those responses, 50% focused on the wealth of resources available, and 25% of the responses centered on learning how to find and use the materials. In the post-survey question about how the university library could support participants in their teaching role, 11 people responded. Some of the suggestions were to keep participants informed about new items of interests, to share resource ideas for classroom themes, and to donate surplus Curriculum Collection items to the center.

While the study did not include measuring participants' actual usage of the university library over the next year, the survey did ask participants about their intention to do so. Eighty-eight percent of participants thought they would be "Somewhat" to "Very Likely" to use the Curriculum Collection over the next 12 months. Anecdotally, the researchers noticed that 70% of the participants were observed checking out items immediately following the instructional session.

Conclusion

Based on the data collected, the researchers found the outreach effort to inform university child care staff members about the library's services and collections, with particular emphasis on the Curriculum Collection, to be a success and are considering additional ways to promote the relationship between BGCC and the University Libraries. Researchers noted that participants were interested in donations of surplus materials from the Curriculum Collection and were able to provide such a donation in the Spring of 2013.

While not every campus has a child care center, and not every library has a curriculum materials center, the idea of library outreach to campus groups which may not be aware of services and collections that can benefit them is an applicable one. In this particular case, the researchers were able to match the Curriculum Collection to the staff at the Children's Center. In others, it may be the sharing the art collection with the staff of the University Art Gallery, showing the Study Abroad students the collection of travel guides and maps available, or partnering the Business Librarian with Human Resources to demonstrate the financial resources for employees considering retirement. Librarians may also find they have existing relationship on their campus through interest groups and may be able to make a connection to the library collection. By generating a list of potential campus partners and the existing collections/services to highlight in outreach efforts, librarians may find exciting new cross-campus collaborations and market specialized collections to patrons who currently do not use or underutilize the library.

The small size of the participant group and the unique relationship between this University and child care provider may limit the exact application of lessons learned to other libraries. Finally, the survey asked about the participants' intention to use the Libraries, but the researchers did not gather data to find out if they did or did not check out items from the Curriculum Collection later in the academic year.

Despite these limitations, the researchers suggest that academic library outreach can easily be expanded to benefit non-traditional campus users by thinking broadly about the campus community and identifying library-owned resources that might benefit wider populations of users. This study shows that introducing one overlooked segment of the campus community introduced them to a wealth of resources that they were unaware they could access. Taking a larger view, outreach efforts like these also create new library fans and supporters and help raise campus community awareness of unique and useful resources. In the case of this program, the workshop for early childhood educators not only served the teachers, but also by default the children being served by the center and, in the long run, university staff and students who use the facility to provide care for their children. Outreach to the center also benefits the library by helping to provide another avenue for achieving the organizational mission of satisfying the information needs of the university community, even if on a small scale. The researchers encourage similar efforts within other college and university communities.

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Melissa Maxwell Edwards
Media Specialist
Wake County Public School System
North Carolina
Mme816@gmail.com

Elaine Thornton
Social Sciences and Education Librarian, University Libraries
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX

Appendices

Evaluation of University Library Outreach to Child Care Providers- Part A

Write your birth month and day, plus the first initial of your name.

Example: Birthday of August 16= 0816M

How many years have you been working with children?

Less than 1	1-5	6-10	11-15	More than 15
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How many years have you worked at the Becky Gates Children's Center?

Less than 1	1-5	6-10	11-15	More than 15
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

High School	Some College	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate Degree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Where do you usually go to get supplemental materials for your classroom?

How many times in the past 12 months have you

0 times	1-2 times	3-5 times	More than 5 times
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Visited a Texas A&M

University Library for any reason?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Checked out items for your

classroom from a Texas A&M University Library?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Visited the Texas A&M

University Libraries' website (http://library.tamu.edu)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Visited any other library

(public, school or university)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Checked out items for your

classroom from any other

library (public, school or university)?

Visited any other (public, school or university) library

website?

Which of the following prevents you from using Texas A&M University Libraries more often for your classroom materials? (You may choose more than one answer.)

- I didn't know that I could.
- I don't feel confident enough to use the Texas A&M University Libraries.
- I don't know where to get classroom materials at the Texas A&M University Libraries.
- I am too busy to go to the Texas A&M University Libraries.
- Library staff are not helpful.
- I've used Texas A&M University Library resources in the past and did not find them helpful.
- I'm not interested in using the Texas A&M University Libraries for classroom materials.
- Other

How familiar are you with the following Texas A&M University Libraries' Resources and Services?

	Not at all	Somewhat	Very
Curriculum Collection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Get it for Me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online Catalog	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate your comfort level with the following:

	Very Uncomfortable				Somewhat Comfortable			Very Comfortable		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Visiting the Texas A&M University Libraries										
Using the Texas A&M University Libraries' online catalog										
Contacting the Texas A&M University Libraries for help										

Please use the space below to suggest ways the Texas A&M University Libraries could help you in your role at the Becky Gates Children's Center.

Evaluation of University Library Outreach to Child Care Providers - Part B

Write your birth month (08) and day (16), plus the first initial of your name (M)

Example: Birthday of August 16= 0816M

How familiar are you with the following Texas A&M University Libraries' Resources and Services?

	Not at all	Somewhat	Very
Curriculum Collection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Get it for Me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online Catalog	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate your comfort level with the following:

	Very Uncomfortable					Somewhat Comfortable					Very Comfortable
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Visiting the Texas A&M University Libraries											
Using the Texas A&M University Libraries' online catalog											
Contacting the Texas A&M University Libraries for help											

How likely are you to use the following Texas A&M University Library resources during the next 12 months?

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Undecided	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely
Curriculum Collection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Get it for Me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online Catalog	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

List 3 types of items in the Curriculum Collection that may be helpful to you.

What is the most valuable thing you learned about the Texas A&M University Libraries in today's session?

What are some ways the Texas A&M University Libraries could support you in your teaching role at Becky Gates Children's Center?