2012

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Recommended Citation

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Abstract

Liaison librarians and faculty in chemistry, English, and psychology departments at colleges and universities in the United States were surveyed. They answered questions about services provided by the liaison and satisfaction. Liaisons' satisfaction with their performance was associated with active liaison service, such as recent contact with the department and more time spent on liaison work. Faculty satisfaction with liaisons was associated with contact with their liaisons. We did not find associations between liaisons' descriptions of their work and faculty satisfaction their liaisons for the pairs of faculty and their liaisons that we were able to match.

Introduction

Ideally, libraries and faculty at colleges and universities should work together so that the library can provide the best and most appropriate resources for the research, teaching, and services needs of a campus. Academic libraries have used liaison programs as one way to develop cooperation and collaboration between faculty and the library. A liaison librarian is one who is assigned to a specific department(s). The liaison serves as the main point of contact between library and faculty of that department. Commons tasks for a liaison can include outreach to a department, responses to concerns about the library, selection of books and journals, research consultations for faculty and students, and in-class instruction, to name a few. With our study, we investigate the services provided by liaisons, especially as they relate to the importance that faculty and liaisons place on these services.

Previous studies conducted at individual colleges and universities have suggested that some liaison characteristics and activities are associated with faculty satisfaction and liaisons' perceptions of their own success. We examine whether these factors hold true across institutions. By surveying both liaisons and their faculty, we hope to get a better understanding of what services liaisons provide and how, if at all, these are related to the satisfaction of their faculty. By linking responses from liaisons to the responses from their faculty, we also hope to get a better idea of what is happening within the liaison-faculty relationship and how liaisons can strengthen these bonds.

Literature Review

Liaison Role

Institutions have differing expectations about the exact purpose of their liaison programs. Depending on the emphasis, the liaison librarian may have various titles, such as bibliographer, selector, subject specialist, subject librarian, or liaison. For this paper, we refer to the librarian who is assigned to a department as a liaison.

Laurence Miller stated that liaison work is one of the few effective methods to make an impact on the problem of the non-user or inefficient user.[1] It can also serve other purposes such as maintaining the library's visibility as the primary campus information agency.[2] According to Marta Davis and Kathleen Cook, "Many such programs have been established to improve communication between academic librarians and teaching faculty, to increase awareness of faculty needs for teaching and research, and to share information about constantly changing library technology and collections."[3] Liaison programs give academic departments a "go to" person in the library.

Although this model of service delivery has been in practice since the end of World War II in the United States and Great Britain, recently the concept of an "embedded librarian" has gained visibility.[4] Rather than working solely in the library, the librarian is embedded within the department and participates in its research and teaching. Emmbedded librarians promote active and assertive outreach with collaboration between liaisons, department faculty, and students. Lynne Marie Rudasill states that the driving factors for this service model include providing improved access to resources, changing environments for pedagogy, budget issues, and innovation or experimentation with new models of librarianship.[5] Embedded librarians are available to students at their points of need rather than expecting them to come to the library.[6]

Liaisons try to achieve a cooperative, collaborative relationship through both traditional liaison programs and newer methods such as embedding. These efforts do not guarantee that faculty will welcome liaisons. Lars Christiansen, Mindy Stombler and Lyn Thaxton characterized the relationship between librarians and faculty as an "asymmetrical disconnection." In this disconnection, librarians find the lack of close connection or collaboration between the two groups troubling, but faculty do not.[7] William Badke presents a harsher view and writes, "Faculty do not respect the roles of librarians, and librarians view faculty as arrogantly ignorant of the functioning of the library, its personnel and its tools."[8]

Studies of Liaisons

Advice for liaisons on how to create successful relationships with academic departments is plentiful. Terri Holtze has assembled a list of a hundred ways to reach faculty.[9] Case studies provide many examples of things liaisons could do and how to do them. Although these case studies provide ideas, they typically describe what a specific liaison or small number of liaisons

did in a specific environment. Of the hundred or more things a liaison could do, it is hard to glean which are the most important or most effective.

A few surveys of liaisons or liaison programs have looked beyond a single liaison or institution. Two SPEC Kits have described the characteristics and services of liaison programs at ARL libraries. They described liaisons at the program level and had information about the work of individual liaisons.[10] A survey of new liaisons across many institutions found that education in at least one of the liaison's subject area and more years of experience were associated with greater activity and confidence as a liaison.[11]

Surveys of Faculty about Liaisons

Surveys of faculty regarding liaisons generally have focused on the liaison programs at single institutions. In some cases, the responses of faculty have differed widely depending on the survey and the institution.

These studies have shown different levels of awareness among faculty regarding liaison programs at different institutions. In a survey at Baylor University, teaching faculty who were departmental liaisons to the library were asked whether they had met with their liaison librarians, and eighteen out of thirty (60%) indicated that they did not know that they had one.[12] James Thull and Mary Anne Hansen at Montana State University surveyed the faculty in the departments to which they liaised. In their survey, they found a higher level of awareness, with twenty-one out of twenty-four faculty (87.5%) aware of the liaison.[13]

Even the results at a single institution can be contradictory. In a survey of liaisons and faculty representatives to the library at Kent State University, faculty representatives indicated that the liaison program had improved communication between the library and the department. Nevertheless, the majority of the liaisons indicated that they were not "kept aware of current

curriculum changes, faculty research and new programmes." A majority of the faculty responses indicated that they did not inform the liaisons of such changes.[14] In a survey of academic faculty who were departmental representatives to the library at Texas A & M University, most of the faculty were supportive of the liaison program, but they did not see liaisons as research consults or instructors. They saw the liaisons' role as one of ordering materials, updating faculty on library services, and responding to problems with the library.[15]

What Makes for Satisfaction with Liaisons

The studies at different institutions also have included a variety of ideas about what makes liaisons successful or unsuccessful. John Ochola and Phillip Jones suggested several possible reasons for the lack of success in the liaison program at Baylor University. The list of causes included ambiguous roles for liaisons, limited time spent on liaison activities, and lack of subject knowledge by liaisons.[16] Some studies have found that faculty who have contact with their liaison are more supportive of liaison programs than those who do not have contact. A study at the University of North Carolina Charlotte found, "The respondents in departments with the most liaison interaction indicated the highest satisfaction level in the most areas."[17] At University of Florida Health Science Center Library, students and faculty who had contact with their liaisons supported continuation of the liaison program at a higher rate than students and faculty who had not had contact.[18]

Methods

Selection Process

We contacted librarians and faculty at colleges and universities across the United States for the survey. The colleges and universities were identified through the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System's 2008 data. We limited the survey

to degree-granting colleges and universities that qualified for Title IV financial assistance, had at least five thousand students, and offered bachelor's or higher degrees.[19] We chose these limits because we assumed that libraries at smaller institutions or community colleges would be less likely to have liaison programs. Altogether 602 institutions were included in the survey.

To include diverse academic disciplines, while simplifying the matching of liaisons and faculty, faculty from departments of chemistry, English, and psychology were contacted. A faculty member from chemistry was contact for one third of the institutions; a faculty member from English was contacted for another third; and a faculty member from psychology was contacted for the final third. The departments were randomly assigned.

We consulted the Web site for the selected department at each college or university to find a list of department faculty. When the college or university did not have a department named "chemistry", "English", or "psychology", the nearest match was used. For example, a "Department of English and American Literature" was used in place of "English." From each department list, we randomly selected a faculty member for the survey and noted that person's name and email address. We included assistant, associate and full professors; chairs and other administrators; and lecturers and instructors as faculty.

We also browsed colleges and university libraries' Web sites to locate lists of liaisons. When we located such a list, we noted the name and email address of the liaison to the discipline assigned for that institution. These librarians were referred to as the "Matched Group." When a list of liaisons could not be located, another librarian, located through the library's online staff directory, was randomly selected for the survey. Failing that, the college or university's online directory was used to locate and randomly select a librarian. Occasionally these directories did not include informative job titles, and a staff member of the library was selected at random for

the survey. These librarians and library staff members were referred to as the "Unmatched Group." The Matched Group had 416 libraries, and the Unmatched Group had 186 libraries.

Each person selected for the survey was assigned an identification number. We assigned the numbers in a way that allowed us to pair the response from the faculty member with the response from that institution's library, while maintaining participants' confidentiality.

Questionnaires

We wrote three versions of the questionnaire for the three groups of participants: faculty, Matched Group librarians, and Unmatched Group librarians. After drafting the questionnaires, we asked librarians and faculty at our own institution to review and comment on them. We edited the questionnaires to their final versions based on these comments. Copies of the final questionnaires and other survey materials are available on the Web in Southern Illinois University Carbondale's institutional repository.[20]

Data Collection

The SIUC Human Subjects committee granted approval to contact participants for this study. We sent emails to librarians and faculty inviting them to participate in a survey about cooperation between librarians and faculty.[21] The email provided a unique Web link for each participant to access the questionnaire online in LimeSurvey.[22] People who neither responded to the survey nor asked to be removed from our list received up to two reminder emails. Responses were collected from early April to mid May of 2010.

Response Rates

In total, 354 librarians and 140 faculty members participated in the survey. The overall response rate was 58.8% for librarians, 23.3% for faculty, and 41.0% for the two groups combined. In the Matched Group, we received 266 library responses (63.9% response rate) and

110 faculty responses (24.6% response rate). In the Unmatched Group, we received 88 library responses (47.3% response rate) and 30 faculty responses (16.1% response rate).

We expected that the libraries in the Unmatched Group would not have liaisons, but this expectation did not hold true. In the Unmatched Group, 61 of the 88 library participants (69.3%) indicated that their libraries had liaisons. Of those, 45 were liaisons themselves. We expected that libraries in the Matched Group would have liaisons, and this expectation generally held true. In the Matched Group, 265 of the 266 librarians reported that their college or university had liaisons. Of those, 259 were liaisons, and 246 were liaisons to the specified department.

For most of the data analysis, all 304 liaisons from both groups were included in the results. Only the 246 correctly matched liaisons were included for questions about the relationship with the specific department. In the faculty survey, 86 of the 110 participants (78.2%) in the Matched Group and 18 of the 30 participants (60.0%) in the Unmatched Group indicated that their college or university had liaisons. All 104 of these responses were included in the analysis of faculty responses about liaisons.

For the Matched Group, we could analyze the relationship in more detail. We associated faculty responses with the responses of their liaisons. We received sixty-six pairs of responses in which both the faculty member and the librarian at the same institution completed the questionnaire. Of these pairs, there were forty-nine in which the faculty member knew that their library provided liaisons. Those forty-nine pairs amounted to 11.8% of the 416 possible pairs in the Matched Group.

Data Analysis

For data analysis, we exported the responses from LimeSurvey to SPSS version 16.0. For some questions, we used statistical tests to explore whether there were associations between

responses to different questions or between liaison and faculty responses. Because most of the questions supplied a small number of ordinal categories, Goodman - Kruskal gamma was used as the measure of association. These tests were against a null hypothesis of *gamma* = 0 with an alpha level of .05 as the cutoff for statistical significance.[23] Except where noted, whenever this article states that there was no relationship, *gamma* was less than .20, and the alpha level of .05 was exceeded.

Results

Liaison Responses

Liaisons' Job Responsibilities

Collection development was a responsibility for almost all of the liaisons (96.1%). Instruction and reference were slightly less common responsibilities, at 87.2% and 82.6% respectively. Most of the liaisons (76.3%) indicated that they had responsibilities in all three of the areas. Liaisons reported serving as few as one department or as many as thirty departments. On average, they served about four departments ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 2.98$, *median* = 3.5, $N = 300$).

Liaisons, on average, reported spending about ten hours per week on liaison responsibilities ($M = 10.36$, $SD = 9.68$, *median* = 7.5, $N = 296$). At the extremes, three liaisons reported spending forty hours per week, and three liaisons reported that they spent zero hours per week.

Liaisons: Services Provided

Liaisons also were asked a series of thirteen questions about specific services that they offered. Each question began with, "Do you or your library provide the following?" Librarians could indicate that they provided the service, that someone else in the library provided the service, that the library did not provide the service, or indicate some other answer. If liaisons

selected *other* and indicated that the service was provided by a combination of themselves and someone else, we coded it as the liaison providing the service. As shown in table 1, some of the services were more commonly offered by liaisons than other services. Liaisons typically provided about eight of the services on the list ($M = 7.88$, $SD = 2.91$, *median* = 8, $N = 304$).

<table 1 here>

Liaisons' Perceptions of Own Performance

The liaisons were asked, on a five-category scale, from *very unsuccessful* to *very successful*, how successful they were as a liaison. They also were asked, on a five-category scale from *very dissatisfied* to *very satisfied*, how satisfied they were with the liaison relationship with their departments. The majority of the liaisons described themselves as *successful* (62.5%) or *very successful* (13.8%) as liaisons. The majority described themselves as *satisfied* (50.7%) or *very satisfied* (12.2%) with the liaison relationship with their departments. Liaisons who described themselves as successful also tended to describe themselves as satisfied with the liaison relationship (*gamma* =.933, $N = 301$).

Matched Group Liaisons: Contact with Specified Departments

If a participant in the Matched Group was the liaison to the specified department (chemistry, English, or psychology), the liaison was asked about his or her contact and relationship with that department. These liaisons were given a list of nine methods of communication and could mark all that they used with that department. Email was the most frequently used means of communication, with 97.2% of these liaisons using it. The majority of the liaisons also used individual face-to-face communication (86.2%) and telephone (67.9%).

In the next question, these liaisons were asked which method of communication they typically used with the department and could select only one response. Email again was the

primary mode of communication, with 68.7% indicating that it was the method they typically used with that department. Only 11.4% typically communicated individually face-to face, and only 2.0% typically communicated by telephone.

Liaisons also were asked how recently they had contact with the department and how recently they had spoken with someone from the department. A majority of the liaisons in the Matched Group (62.2%) indicated that they had some form of contact with the department within the past week. Of the liaisons in the Matched Group, 43.5% indicated that they had spoken with someone from the department within the past week, and 29.7% indicated that they had spoken with someone from the department within the past month.

Matched Group Liaisons: Perceptions of Own Performance

In addition to the questions about how successful they were as liaisons or how satisfied they were with their liaison relationships overall, liaisons in the Matched Group were asked similar questions about the specified department. Most of the liaisons indicated that they were *successful* (55.3%) or *very successful* (17.5%) as the liaison to the specified department. Most also were *satisfied* (45.9%) or *very satisfied* (17.1%) with their liaison relationship with that department.

Previous research has suggested that several characteristics are associated with liaison success. These characteristics include things the liaison does, such as contact between the faculty and the liaison,[24] time spent by the liaison on liaison activities,[25] and collection development activities.[26] Aspects of the liaison's background, such as education in the appropriate subject area[27] and years of experience,[28] also have been suggested. Matched Group liaisons were asked several questions about these characteristics to examine whether they were associated with liaisons' perceptions of their own performance.

As shown in table 2, most of these liaison characteristics were found to be related to liaisons' perceptions of their own performance. Of the factors we tested, contact with the department had the strongest and most consistent relationship with liaisons' perceptions of their performance. More recent contact with a member of the department and more services provided to the department were associated with higher levels of perceived success and satisfaction with the liaison relationship. Other factors also were related to liaisons' perceptions. Greater time spent on liaison activities and longer experience at the institution generally were associated with reports of success and satisfaction. Education in the subject area had a weak relationship with liaisons' reported success but did not have a relationship with liaisons' reported satisfaction. Finally, job responsibilities in collection development had weak to moderate but not statistically significant associations with how successful liaisons believed they were and how satisfied they were with their liaison relationships.

<table 2 here>

Faculty Responses

<u>Faculty Satisfaction with Library</u>

Of the 140 faculty who responded, 104 (74.3%) indicated that their college or university library had liaisons. Twenty-four faculty (17.1%) indicated that they did not know if the library had liaisons. Twelve (8.6%) indicated that their institutions did not have liaisons.

Regardless of whether faculty indicated that their library provided liaisons, they reported being satisfied with their libraries. Of the faculty who reported that they had a liaison, 89.4% indicated that they were *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with the services provided by their college or university library. Among the faculty who did not know whether their library had liaisons, 79.2%

indicated that they were *satisfied* or *very satisfied*. All twelve of the faculty who reported that they did not have a liaison indicated that they were *satisfied* or *very satisfied*.

Faculty Awareness of Liaisons

We received 83 pairs of responses from both the faculty member and the library, 66 pairs in the Matched Group and 17 pairs in the Unmatched Group. Faculty were not always aware that their libraries provided liaisons. In the 83 pairs of responses, 79 responses from the librarians indicated that the library had liaisons. Only 59 (74.7%) of the 79 faculty in those pairs indicated that the library had liaisons. Of the four faculty for whom the library response indicated that they did not have liaisons, two faculty (50.0%) nevertheless indicated that they had liaisons.

Among the 59 faculty whose responses agreed with the library response that their library had liaisons, 48 (81.4%) also indicated that they knew the names of their liaisons. In other words, 60.8% of the 79 faculty at institutions with libraries that had liaisons indicated they knew the name of their liaison. To make it easier to protect participants' confidentiality, the survey did not include a question to ask for the name of the liaison. It is possible that the fraction of faculty who could correctly name their liaison was even lower.

Faculty Contact with Liaisons

All 104 faculty who indicated that their college or university had liaisons were asked recently they had contact with the liaison. About two thirds (66.3%) of them indicated that they had some form of contact with the liaison within the last six months, and half (50.0%) reported speaking with the liaison within the last six months. Four faculty (3.8%) indicated that they never had any kind of contact with the liaison, and thirteen faculty (12.5%) indicated that they had never spoken with their liaison.

Like the liaisons, faculty were asked about the mode of communication between the liaison and the department. The majority of faculty who responded to this question (58.4%) indicated that the liaison typically communicated via email. When asked how they would prefer that the liaison communicate, seventy-one faculty (70.3%) indicated that email was their preferred method of communication.

Faculty: Services Received from Liaisons

Faculty were asked what services they had received from their liaisons within the last year. These questions had the same thirteen services that were listed in the liaison survey. On average faculty reported receiving about five ($M = 4.87$, $SD = 3.13$, *median* = 5, $N = 104$) of the services. Table 3 lists the percentages of faculty that reported receiving each of the services. The percentages of faculty reporting that they received particular services was somewhat lower than the percentage of liaisons who reported providing them, but the pattern of most- and least-received services was similar to the liaisons' responses of most- and least-provided services.

<table 3 here>

Faculty Satisfaction with Liaison and Library

Faculty were asked two questions to evaluate their liaison. They were asked, on a five-category scale from *very dissatisfied* to *very satisfied*, how satisfied they were with the service provided by the liaison. They also were asked, on a five-category scale from *very dissatisfied* to *very satisfied*, how satisfied they were with the liaison relationship with their departments. The majority of the faculty indicated that they were *satisfied* (31.7%) or *very satisfied* (49.0%) with the services provided by their liaison. The majority also described themselves as *satisfied* (31.7%) or *very satisfied* (42.3%) with the liaison relationship with their departments.

Satisfaction with liaison services was associated with contact with the liaison and number of services received from the liaison. Faculty who indicated they knew the name of their liaisons were more satisfied with the services provided by the liaison than those who did not (*gamma* = 0.668, *N* = 102). Faculty who had recent contact of any kind with the liaison were more satisfied with the liaison services than those whose contact was long ago (*gamma* = -.482, *N* = 100). Recently speaking with the liaison also was associated with satisfaction with services provided by the liaison (*gamma* = -.552, *N* = 97). Faculty who reported receiving many services from the liaison within the past year also reported greater satisfaction with the services provided by the liaison than faculty who reported receiving few services (*gamma* = .521, *N* = 103).

Satisfaction with the liaison relationship with the department similarly was associated with contact with the liaison. Faculty who indicated they knew the liaison's name (*gamma* = .601, *N* = 101) were more satisfied with the relationship than those who did not. Faculty who had recent contact of any kind with the liaison were more satisfied with the relationship than those whose contact was longer ago (*gamma* = -.310, *N* = 99). Faculty who spoke with the liaison recently were more satisfied with the relationship than faculty who had had not (*gamma* = -.379, *N* = 96). Faculty who reported receiving many services from the liaison within the past year were more satisfied with the liaison relationship with the department than faculty who received few (*gamma* = .490, *N* = 102).

Satisfaction with the liaison was associated with satisfaction with the library (*gamma* = .558, *N* = 103). However, we could not find a link between what the liaison did and satisfaction with the library. Satisfaction with services provided by the library had little association with how long ago the faculty member had any contact with the liaison or spoke with the liaison. The number of services faculty reported receiving from the liaison was not associated with

satisfaction with the library either. Reporting to know the liaison's name also fell short of a statistically significant relationship with faculty satisfaction with library services (*gamma* = .379, *p* = .100, *N* = 102).

General Comparison of Faculty and Liaison Responses

Liaisons and Faculty: Most Important Thing for Liaisons to Do

Near the end of the questionnaire, liaisons and faculty who said that they had liaisons were asked the open-ended question, "What is the most important thing for a liaison to do to be successful in this role?" Responses were provided by 272 liaisons and 66 faculty members.

We created categories based on their responses, and coded the responses into the categories. If a liaison or a faculty member listed multiple things, only the first thing listed was coded. Both authors coded all responses. When the two codes disagreed, we discussed the codes to come up with a final code.

Many of the liaisons' responses emphasized communication and relationship building. Seventy-three of the liaisons (26.8%) indicated that the most important thing to do was to communicate. The next most common recommendation from liaisons was to know the department and the individuals in it; 61 liaisons (22.4%) suggested it. The third most common response from liaisons was to be visible, with 35 liaisons (12.9%) suggesting it.

Communication also was the most common recommendation from faculty, with nineteen of the sixty-six (28.8%) indicating that communicating was the most important thing for a liaison to do to be successful. The next most common recommendations were about the librarian's ability to provide services. Nine faculty (13.6%) wrote that the most important thing was to be responsive to requests, and nine faculty (13.6%) wrote that the most important thing was to have expertise in the discipline and its publications. The fourth most common response from the

faculty was about collection development and making good collection decisions, with seven faculty (10.6%) mentioning it. Knowing the department and being visible were the fifth and sixth most common responses from faculty, with six faculty members (9.1%) listing each.

Although the responses to this question generally were neutral, a few liaisons wrote emotionally charged answers. One liaison wrote, "Thick skin! I am offering many services and lots of information, but I feel like each email is sent out and dropped into a deep well..." Altogether three liaisons used the phrase "thick skin" in their suggestions.

On the faculty side, there were fewer emotionally charged messages, but a handful of faculty expressed concern about lack of communication. For example, one faculty member wrote, "I wish she would call the department chair and attend a faculty meeting to introduce herself."

Liaisons and Faculty: Importance of Services

Early in the questionnaire, before liaisons were mentioned, both librarians and faculty were asked to indicate how important it was that the college or university library offer various services to academic departments. These services were the same service that, later in the survey, participants were asked if the liaison provided. Participants indicated the importance on a scale of *not important*, *not too important*, *important*, or *very important*. The percentages of faculty and liaisons rating each service as *very important* or *important* are shown in figure 1.

For most of the services, both librarians and faculty indicated that they were important. The only services that the majority of faculty and library participants did not indicate were *important* or *very important* were representation on department committees or task forces and representation at department functions.

Despite agreement between liaisons and faculty that most of the services were important, there were differences in some areas. For ten of the thirteen services, the percentage of librarians who rated the service as *very important* or *important* was higher than the percentage of faculty. The three exceptions were faculty participation in collection development and cancellation decisions, notices of new publications in the discipline, and information about copyright. In the case of notices of new publications in the discipline, the percentage of faculty who rated it as *very important* or *important* was more than twenty points higher than the percentage of liaisons.

Two of the questions pertaining to information literacy had fairly large differences between liaison and faculty ratings. There was more than a twenty-point difference between the percentages of liaisons and faculty who indicated that in-class library instruction for students was very important or important. Nearly all of the liaisons indicated that in-class library instruction was *very important* or *important*. About three fourths of the faculty indicated that it was *very important* or *important*. Similarly, more than eighty-five percent of the liaisons indicated that consultation between faculty and librarians to discuss strategies to integrate library instruction into the curriculum was *very important* or *important*. Less than seventy percent of the faculty indicated it was *very important* or *important*.

<figure 1 here>

Comparison of Matched Group Faculty and Liaison Pairs

Liaison - Faculty Pairs' Reports of Services Provided and Received

For forty-nine pairs of faculty and liaisons, it was possible to compare the information provided by the faculty member about the liaison with the information provided by that liaison. These pairs came from responses in the Matched Group in which we received a response from

the liaison to a department and from a faculty member in that department who was aware of the liaison.

We compared the liaisons' answers regarding services provided to the department with their faculty members' answers regarding services received. If a liaison's responses to previous questions suggested that the liaison provided or partly provide the service at all, the liaison also was asked if he or she provided that service to the specific department within the last year. Similarly, faculty were asked which services they had received from the liaison within the last year. For the thirteen services in the survey, the number of faculty who reported receiving a service was lower than the number of their liaisons who reported providing the service to the department. On average, liaisons reported providing between six and seven services ($M = 6.41$, $SD = 2.59$, *median* $= 7$, $n = 49$) to the department in the last year. On average, faculty reported receiving five services ($M = 5.00$ $SD = 2.94$, *median* $= 5$, $n = 49$) from the liaison in the past year. Logically, this difference is reasonable because the liaison may have provided a service to someone in the department other than the faculty member who responded to the survey. For example, thirty-nine liaisons reported providing in-class library instruction for students in the department within the last year, and only fifteen faculty members reported receiving it from the liaison within the last year. Similarly, thirty-eight liaisons reported that they provided research consultations for faculty and students in the department within the last year, and twenty-three faculty reported receiving that service from the liaison within the last year.

The discrepancy between the services provided and received went beyond this logical difference. The number of services that liaisons reported providing to the department did not correlate with the number of services faculty members reported receiving. For example, ten

faculty reported receiving information about copyright, but none of those ten faculty members' liaisons indicated that they provided it to the department.

Liaison – Faculty Pairs' Perceptions of Liaison Performance

In the forty-nine pairs of Matched Group responses, we could compare how satisfied liaisons were with the liaison relationship with the department and how satisfied the faculty were with that relationship. We also could compare how successful liaisons said they were with the department and how satisfied faculty were with the liaison services. We did not find relationships between liaisons' responses and faculty members' responses. There was a weak relationship between how satisfied liaisons were with the liaison relationship with the department and how satisfied faculty were with that relationship, but it was not statistically significant ($gamma = .268$, $p = .082$, $n = 49$). Liaisons who gave themselves high ratings for their success as liaisons to the department had no higher satisfaction from their faculty than those who gave themselves low ratings.

Even if liaisons' perceptions of their own performance did not show much of a relationship with faculty satisfaction, other characteristics of the liaison nevertheless may have been associated with greater faculty satisfaction. The questions, noted earlier, that were used to see if they predicted liaisons' reports of their own performance, again were used to see if they related to faculty satisfaction. These include the responses from the liaisons about time spent on liaison activities, contact with the department, and amount of service to the department. Collection development was not included because only one liaison in the forty-nine pairs did not have collection development responsibilities. The liaisons' responses were compared to the responses from their faculty regarding how satisfied the faculty were with the services from the library, with the services from the liaison, and with the liaison relationship with the department.

We looked for relationships between seven questions from the liaison survey and three measures of faculty satisfaction. Altogether we made twenty-one comparisons between faculty and liaison responses. None of the twenty-one tests showed a statistically significant association between the liaisons' responses and the faculty members' satisfaction (absolute value of *gamma* $< .20, p > .30$). Even though the liaison survey showed that many of these characteristics were associated with liaisons believing that they were more successful or feeling more satisfied with the liaison relationship, for the forty-nine matched faculty, the same could not be said.

We found a couple relationships between liaison and faculty responses when we looked at a larger group of faculty-liaison pairs. This larger group included all of the pairs in which both the faculty member and the department's liaison responded. The additional pairs were pairs in which the faculty member was not aware of the liaison. As faculty awareness moved from 1) not knowing of the liaison to 2) knowing of the liaison but not knowing the name to 3) knowing the liaison's name, the liaison's rating of how successful he or she was with the department increased (*gamma* $= .537, n = 62$). This awareness also was related to how satisfied the liaison was with his or her liaison relationship with the department (*gamma* $= .443, n = 62$).

Discussion

Relationship of Results to Previous Studies

The results of the current study provide descriptions of the work done by liaisons and the services liaisons provide to faculty across many institutions. Half of the liaisons surveyed here spent under eight hours per week on liaison activities, but this amount of time is still higher than that found by John Ochola and Phillip Jones at Baylor University.[29] In the current study, at institutions where the libraries' surveys indicated that the library had liaisons, nearly three fourths of the faculty were aware of the liaisons. The awareness extended to reporting that they

knew the liaisons' names for over sixty percent of the faculty. This awareness is higher than has

what been found in some studies.[30] However, it is not as high as that found in at least one

study.[31]

Our survey of faculty generally confirms the results of previous studies in that faculty

who have more contact with or received more services from their liaison are more satisfied with

the liaison than those who have less.[32] In our survey, more recent contact with the librarian was

not associated with greater satisfaction with the library overall, unlike what had been found in a

study at nine New England colleges.[33]

Challenges for liaisons that have been documented in previous surveys also were

confirmed in this survey. In the current survey, information literacy services were not near the

top in terms of the number of faculty who rated them as very important or important. In contrast,

liaisons in this study generally rated the information literacy areas as important or very

important. Lack of faculty interest in information literacy has been seen before in surveys at

individual universities.[34] Liaisons may face a challenge in finding faculty who believe in the

importance of information literacy enough to take the time to incorporate the library into the

classroom.

Conversely, this study suggests that faculty are interested in services, such as notices of

new publications in the discipline, that liaisons do not routinely provide. This result sheds light

on opportunities for liaisons to provide services that faculty believe are important.

Liaisons' views of how successful they were as liaisons and how satisfied they were with

their liaison departments related to several things that previous studies have proposed would

contribute to their success. These factors include contact with faculty,[35] time spent on liaison

activities,[36] experience,[37] and subject background.[38] In particular, active liaison service, such as

contact with a member of the department and services provided to the department, showed a moderate but consistent relationship with liaisons' satisfaction and perceived success. Liaisons who gave high ratings in those areas also tended to give themselves high ratings for their success as liaisons and their satisfaction with their liaison relationships. The measures of time spent on liaison activities and experience at their college or university also showed a weaker but consistent relationship with reported success and reported satisfaction. The questions used to assess liaisons' education in the subject area showed a weak relationship with liaisons' reports of their own success and did not show an association with liaisons' satisfaction with the liaison relationship.

One goal of this survey was to extend beyond previous studies by linking the responses of faculty members to the responses from their liaisons. When it came to faculty satisfaction, we could not find a relationship with those characteristics that we expected would contribute to liaison success. We tried to see if the liaisons with more satisfied faculty do more for the department, offer more services, spend more time on their liaison responsibilities, spend more time per department, or have more education or experience. We did not find any of these things. We did not even find that liaisons who thought they were more successful had faculty who were more satisfied than liaisons who gave lower ratings to their own success. For that matter, we did not find a relationship between the number of services the faculty member reported receiving and the number of services that the liaison reported providing to that faculty member's department. We did manage to find at least one relationship between liaisons' responses and the responses of their faculty. Liaisons with faculty who were not aware of the liaison gave themselves lower ratings for their own success than liaisons whose faculty were aware.

Possible Reasons for Lack of Results Associating Faculty and Liaison Responses

Flaws in this survey's design and implementation could have caused us to be unable to find much of relationship between faculty satisfaction and their liaisons' survey responses. There may not have been enough statistical power to detect how liaisons contributed to greater satisfaction among faculty. The survey's questions may not have been sensitive enough, especially since they had just a few answer choices. With such a small sample of just 49 pairs of faculty and their liaisons, we may have missed differences that could have been seen with a larger sample.

The typical liaison divides about ten hours per week of liaison activities among about four departments, so it may be overly optimistic to expect that liaison could affect a random faculty member from one department much beyond basic awareness. More than a quarter of the faculty were unaware of their liaisons. Diffusion of service could partly explain the lack of correlation between the number of services the faculty member reported receiving and the number the liaison reported providing to the department.

It is also possible that we did not find a relationship because the faculty member's satisfaction with the liaison has little to do with the liaison. It could be that faculty who like the library extend some of this good will to liaisons and in turn use liaisons for more services, rather than the converse.

Another possibility is that faculty expectations limited what we found in this study. The survey only examined people's perceptions of the services the liaisons provided, rather than objectively what services were provides and received. The responses were filtered through participants' prior experiences with college and university libraries and with liaisons. It is possible that faculty expected just a limited range of services from their liaisons, and liaisons

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who provided more services beyond that level did not produce more satisfaction. Faculty placed importance on collections and communication, but they also preferred communication by email. Their expectation seemed to be for the librarian to be a conduit for information or materials but otherwise to stay at arm's length.

For liaisons who try to offer more active service, they may notice a preference for distance, thus some liaisons recommended that liaisons should be thick skinned and able to handle rejection. This interpretation of our results fits the "asymmetrical disconnect" framework described by Lars Christiansen, Mindy Stombler, and Lyn Thaxton.[39] Liaisons, by virtue of their jobs, are expected to create connections with faculty who do not expect close connections. The question of how to create these connections, especially given limited time spread among several departments, does not have an easy answer.

Perhaps our study suggests that liaisons need to focus more on the needs and wants of their faculty and to put their own agendas as liaisons aside. If liaisons can begin by establishing solid connections and providing the specific services that faculty believe are important, then perhaps faculty members will be more receptive to the areas that liaisons believe are important.

Areas for Future Research

An important area for future research is to establish a better understanding of what faculty want from their libraries and their liaisons. In particular, given the limitations in this survey, a qualitative approach that allows faculty to express wishes that librarians may not have thought of may be a better way to explore this topic.

A qualitative approach might also uncover differences in ways that liaisons do their jobs and think about their roles that influence liaisons' success. For example, Jean Major's qualitative interviews with "mature" librarians, who were accepted by faculty, states, "It is notable that

every interview subject in this study expressed confidence in his or her role, contributions, or acceptance by colleagues on the teaching faculty."[40]

Ideally, the research would cut across different institutions and different disciplines, to help figure out what desires are common, regardless of these differences. If we don't have a good handle on what faculty want, how will we know if we are making decisions that lead us toward stronger partnerships with them to advance the teaching, research, and service missions of our colleges and universities?

Conclusion

This study had contradictory findings. On one hand, liaisons who did more believed that they were more successful and had better relationships with their departments than those who did less. Similarly, faculty who reported that they received more from their liaisons also reported that they were more satisfied with their liaisons. On the other hand, this study was unable to show that characteristics and actions that the liaison reported were connected to the satisfaction of their faculty. Nevertheless, this study hints at possible answers of what faculty might want.

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23. The results presented here do not reflect a true random sample of liaisons and faculty because of the purposeful selection of subject areas for liaisons and because nonresponse strongly affected which liaisons and faculty were part of the study. The tests of significance are included to help readers put the values of *gamma* in context with the number of responses received.

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30. Ibid., 35-36; Tennant et al., 404.

31. Thull and Hansen, 538.

32. Mozenter, Sanders, and Welch, 439; Tennant et al., 405.

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34. Ibid., 125-126; Ochola and Jones, 35.

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36. Ochola and Jones, 39.

37. Attebury and Holder.

38. Ryans, Suresh, and Zhang, 19 & 21; Ochola and Jones, 39; Attebury and Holder.

39. Christiansen, Stombler, and Thaxton, 117-118.

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Table 1 Percentage of liaisons who provided services to their liaison departments

Service	All liaisons: least partly provided[a]	Matched Group liaisons: at least partly provided[b]	Matched Group liaisons: provided to specific department within the last year[c]
Responses to department requests made to the library	87.5%	93.1%	87.9%
Librarian selection of books and journals in the discipline	87.2%	91.5%	85.0%
Research consultations for faculty and students	85.9%	92.7%	79.7%
In-class library instruction for students	82.2%	89.4%	75.2%
Faculty participation in collection development and cancellation decisions	77.3%	80.9%	74.0%
Updates to the department about library services and future plans	67.4%	74.0%	71.1%
Workshops on library resources	61.8%	67.5%	41.1%
Consultation between faculty and librarians to discuss	59.5%	64.2%	41.5%

strategies to integrate library instruction into the

curriculum

Representation at department functions	57.2%	63.4%	30.9%
Notices of new publications in the discipline	42.7%	47.6%	41.5%
Representation on department committees or task forces	31.6%	33.3%	6.1%
Information about scholarly communication and open access	27.6%	30.9%	17.9%
Information about copyright	20.4%	21.1%	8.1%

[a] $N = 304$, from both the Matched Group and the Unmatched Group

[b] $n = 246$

[c] Percentage is out of all 246 Matched Group liaisons, but the question was not asked of liaisons who indicated earlier in the survey that they did not provide the service.

Table 2 Relationships between Matched Group liaisons' reports of their success and satisfaction with other characteristics of the liaisons

Question	How successful are you as a liaison?		How successful are you as a liaison to this department?[a]		How satisfied are you with the liaison relationship with your departments?		How satisfied are you with the liaison relationship with the department?[a]	
	gamma	*n*	*gamma*	*n*	*gamma*	*n*	*gamma*	*n*
When was the last time you had any kind of contact (phone, in person, email, etc.) with a member of this department?[a,b]	-.413*	241	-.567*	241	-.263*	241	-.457*	242
When was the last time you spoke with a member of this department?[a]	-.339*	241	-.438*	241	-.202*	241	-.402*	242
Have you provided the following to this department within the last year?[a,c]	.404*	245	.502*	245	.319*	245	.431*	246

Does your liaison assignment include the following responsibilities? [Collection Development][d]	.346	245	.483	245	.307	245	.384	246
On average, how many hours per week do you spend on liaison responsibilities?	.372*	240	.241*	240	.212*	240	.143*	241
On average, how many hours per week do you spend on liaison responsibilities? *divided by* How many departments do you serve as a liaison to?	.311*	238	.242*	237	.241*	238	.159*	238
What is your academic background in [fill for subject area - chemistry, English or psychology as appropriate]?	.202*	239	.239*	239	.139	239	.109	240
How many years have you worked at your college or	.259*	239	.184*	239	.294*	239	.226*	240

university?

Table 3 Services faculty received from liaisons within the last year (*N* = 104)

Service	Number of faculty	Percentage
Librarian selection of books and journals in the discipline	62	69.7%
Faculty participation in collection development and cancellation decisions	63	60.6%
Updates to the department about library services and future plans	60	57.7%
Responses to department requests made to the library	55	52.9%
Research consultations for faculty and students	55	52.9%
Workshops on library resources	39	37.5%
In-class library instruction for students	38	36.5%
Notices of new publications in the discipline	33	31.7%
Information about scholarly communication and open access	28	26.9%
Consultation between faculty and librarians to discuss strategies to integrate library instruction into the curriculum	26	25.0%
Information about copyright	19	18.3%
Representation at department functions	14	13.5%
Representation on department committees or task forces	14	13.5%

Percentage of faculty and liaisons indicating that it was *very important* or *important* that their college or university library provide the service to academic departments

Responses to department requests made to the library?

Faculty participation in collection development and cancellation decisions?

Updates to the department about library services and future plans?

Research consultations for faculty and students?

Information about scholarly communication and open access?

Workshops on library resources?

Librarian selection of books and journals in the discipline?

Notices of new publications in the discipline?

Information about copyright?

In-class library instruction for students?

Consultation between faculty and librarians to discuss strategies to integrate library instruction into the curriculum?

Representation on department committees or task forces?

Representation at department functions?

Liaisons (N = 304)
Faculty (N = 140)

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%