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# A Reference-Intensive Embedded Librarian Program: Kresge Business Administration Library's Program to Support Action-Based Learning at the Ross School of Business

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# A Reference-Intensive Embedded Librarian Program: Kresge Business Administration Library's Program to Support Action-Based Learning at the Ross School of Business

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*While a great deal of literature on embedded librarians in academic libraries is focused on the role of instructor, there are many other services that could be provided by librarians working closely with students. The Kresge Business Administration Library (Stephen M. Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan) has created a unique approach to the embedded librarian model by having librarians work directly with in-residence student teams charged with solving "real world" problems through Michigan's signature action-based learning program, MAP (Multidisciplinary Action Program). MAP teams work directly with corporate and nonprofit organizations, and are charged with solving a problem or providing recommendations on very specific aspects of the sponsor's work. This article will describe the Kresge Library's support of MAP and other action-based learning programs at the Ross School of Business, how we work and communicate with MAP teams, examples of research and reference requests from the students, how the program changes the librarian relationship with students in their second year of study, and how we view and measure the success of an embedded librarian program.*

*KEYWORDS academic libraries, business libraries, customer services, embedded librarians, library services, reference*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Embedded Librarian Program at the Kresge Library is an innovative entry among these types of services in academic libraries. While many academic libraries' embedded librarian programs are focused on providing instruction and assignments, the program at Kresge Library is quite different. In our program, it is relevant and timely reference service that is first and foremost the goal.

MAP (Multidisciplinary Action Program) is Michigan's signature action-based learning program for full-time first-year MBA students. Students participating in the MAP program are working on complex business issues in unfamiliar markets and will require help from the library. We work very closely with students at the Kresge Library when their work requires them to conduct research to which they are unaccustomed. MAP also comes at a time when most have not had full exposure to the resources available to them at the Kresge Library. The MBA curriculum at the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan has its traditional elements, but this keystone program involves the working in teams and exploring subjects in a deeper way than students have done in their previous coursework. MAP is often the first instance in an MBA's time at Michigan where he or she needs a guide to help span the "dark waters of information." To facilitate this process, the Kresge Library has developed a program that connects librarians with these student groups throughout the course of the project, to help them gather information for their projects.

The result has been a creative "embedded librarian" program that has developed over the past six to eight years. Embedded librarian programs have traditionally made connections between libraries and distance learners, teaching faculty, and lab researchers. The Kresge Business Administration Library's approach is fairly unique and connects the librarian with the in-residence student teams that are charged with solving real world problems. The librarian's work varies greatly from team to team but almost always involves supporting research both within Kresge Library resources and beyond. The clear and stated goal from the library is to ensure that each team can find the information that it needs, with help from a team member who has been helping all along.

This article will describe the Kresge Library program to support MAP and other action-based learning programs at the Ross School of Business. Topics will include the program's development, the basic elements of the program as it stands today, how it has been expanded to other programs at the Ross School of Business, and, most importantly, how reference, not instruction, plays a central role in this program. We will also discuss how participating in the MAP program has showcased the talents of the Kresge

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Library staff and changed the relationship that students have with the library during their second (and final) year of study. This unique program offers an exciting challenge to Kresge librarians as they connect the resources and services of the library with the students and faculty participating in MAP.

## ABOUT THE KRESGE BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION LIBRARY

The Kresge Business Administration Library is an independent library at the University of Michigan, reporting to and receiving funding from the Ross School of Business, mirroring the reporting structure of most law libraries. A leading business school, Ross appears near the top of some of the most prestigious rankings, including number 5 in Business Week, number 7 in the Wall Street Journal, number 12 in both *The Economist* and *U.S. News and World Report*.[1] In addition, the school has done very well with specialized rankings, including number 2 (number 1 in the United States) in the Beyond Grey Pinstripes' ranking that explores "innovative full-time MBA programs leading the way in the integration of issues concerning social and environmental stewardship in to the curriculum."[2]

Despite being at one of the largest universities in the United States, the population of students, faculty, and staff at the Ross School of Business is relatively small. As of fall 2009, there are approximately 3,100 students at the Ross School (BBAs, MBAs, Evening MBAs, Global MBAs, Executive MBAs, Ph.Ds, and Masters of Accounting Students) and an additional 500 faculty and staff. This population of 3,600 is far less than the comparable population of the university's main campus (approximately 39,000 plus faculty and staff) or the system-wide count (approximately 49,000 plus faculty and staff). By virtue of having a relatively small number of students, we are able to provide more support.

To support the business curriculum at the Ross School, the Kresge Library has acquired and licensed an extensive collection of print and electronic resources. Since we are an independent library and the school maintains a separate Information Technology Department, we are able to purchase specialized resources just for the students, faculty, and staff at the Ross School of Business. This allows us to create a body of resources that few schools can offer. In most ways, however, it is during MAP season when we rely most heavily on the resources made available through the university library at the University of Michigan. This is especially true when people are working in developing countries, seeking specific information about new engineering technology, discovering the implications and practicality about a new form of renewable energy, and need to understand the science and medical applications behind the drug discovery that they are hoping

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to support. During the MAP projects, students will find needs in every corner of the information universe at Michigan, and that will most certainly be unchartered territory.

## TRADITIONAL EMBEDDED LIBRARIAN PROGRAMS IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

There are many models in academic libraries of embedded librarian programs. One of the most critical elements is to be visible to the students and the faculty, something that might be lost in a system where the classroom is across campus from the library. Most of the articles on embedded librarianship focus on providing instruction and guidance for students during a particular course (Kesselman & Watstein, 2009). Many instances also document the librarian's unique position in the course as someone who creates and grades assignments that test the student's knowledge of information resources in a particular area. Ferrer-Vinent and Carello (2008) outline their work in this manner with a first-year biology laboratory course where the embedded librarians are not only there to help but also to prepare assignments. Manus also outlines this approach as it relates to being embedded to assist with assessing the information literacy skills of students during introductory music classes at Vanderbilt University (Manus, 2009). The focus might also be on providing a visible library support mechanism for an online class that is conducted far from the library, as was the case at Athens State University (Herring, Burkhardt, & Wolfe, 2009).

Our focus is more directed to reference and research support. This is similar to the programs that have been effectively used in special libraries to bring librarians and librarian services to the employees who require it. This is especially critical in corporate settings where teams and groups will often span the globe or work in far corners of vast complexes. The special library model for embedded librarianship is well documented from the model used by Fairfax Media (Australia) (Brown & Leith, 2007). Another similar account showcased a program at the Arizona Health Sciences Library, which has placed embedded librarians in academic departments to work closely with faculty on research projects (Freiburger & Kramer, 2009). The special library mission is one more set on service than instruction, so the way that these librarians operate within a team environment is very different than the academic setting.

While our focus is more directed to reference and research support, it is clear that there are some consistent prerequisites for an embedded librarian program to be successful in an academic setting. First, there must be a demonstrated information need. This can take place in many different ways, including the creation of tests, identification of resources, or even the assistance with resources used by students to complete an assignment.

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Second, there must be a real need for the librarian to be embedded with the class teams, rather than a resource used at very specific and limited times during the coursework. In a traditional business school class where students are working with a series of cases or maybe strictly through a textbook, there is little need for library support and an embedded librarian for these classes would serve no real function. However, in action-based learning classes, there is a great opportunity for the librarian to be associated with the group to assist with the particular needs of their project.

Third, there must be a willingness and interest in having the embedded librarian participate in the program. If the faculty member is not interested in having a librarian participate in the program, an embedded librarian will not have the freedom and flexibility to participate and assist in the project.

Instruction-based embedded librarian programs are useful when the course or program follows a rather traditional path. If students are required to use resources to document a particular issue for an assignment, the embedded librarian might be useful in showing what databases are ideal for that work. While we started our embedded librarian program with a similar focus, it became clear that the scope of what our students were being asked to accomplish in seven weeks was not something that we could support by instruction alone. From our work with these MAP teams, we developed this hybrid system that focuses more on the reference needs of the teams, rather than strictly instruction.

## MAP PROGRAM AND ACTION-BASED LEARNING

The Ross School of Business has adopted the Action Based Learning (ABL) approach for its curriculum. This is sometimes referred to as "experience-based" or "work-based" learning. It is an alternative to the case approach that is used at many schools, including the Harvard Business School and the Darden School at the University of Virginia. The case method is a far more common method of teaching the business curriculum in the United States. It allows the professor to present the students with teaching tools that document an issue or a process and provides the students with a good deal of information to participate in the discussion of the case. Columbia has adopted a method that is a modification of the case approach—where students are presented with much of the information but not all (Gloeckler, 2008).

The ABL approach taken by the Ross School of Business is a differentiating characteristic that provides a different educational experience for business students. "Action Learning is based on the premise that there is no learning without action and no sober and deliberate action without learning."[3] This instructional method has its origins and greatest adoption among

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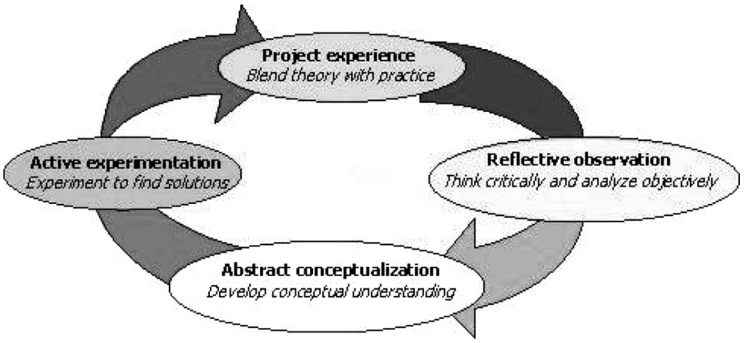


**FIGURE 1** The practice of action-based learning at the Ross School of Business (University of Michigan).[4]

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European business schools (Antunes & Thomas, 2007). ABL has been adopted by some schools within certain programs, but few have placed it on the mantle like Ross. While this method is not incorporated into every class (Ross faculty still use many cases in their courses), the method is being used in more and more classes. This program is being expanded to include undergraduate business majors (BBAs) and evening MBA students, who before did not have an opportunity to participate with MAP. For the school, and in turn the library, the pinnacle Action-based experience for the MBA students happens at the end of their first year. Figure 1 showcases how the school conceptualizes ABL.

Michigan's signature action-based learning program for full-time first-year MBAs is MAP (Multidisciplinary Action Program). Corporate and nonprofit organizations (e.g., Microsoft, Ford Motor Company, Habitat for Humanity) work with teams of four to six students charged with solving a problem or providing recommendations on specific aspects of the sponsor's work. To support these students, they are assigned a faculty advisor, a faculty communications coach, and a librarian. The role of the librarian is to guide students through resources available at Kresge Library, the University of Michigan, and also those available elsewhere. This role is crucial to the students' success and is supported by the school because the areas of exploration are often narrow or in emerging fields, where information is harder to find. Since 1992, Ross students have undertaken more than 1,400 MAP projects.

One of the most interesting and important aspects of MAP is that each project offers some level of ambiguity in the mission and objective that students set out to solve. When students bid on projects, there is a general sense and understanding from the sponsor of what the project will entail. That being the case, sponsors could change projects at a moments' notice. This might happen before the project starts or during the first meeting

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with the students. This is where flexibility (especially on the part of the students and the librarian) is critical. This also is where we see one of the true distinguishing characteristics of MAP and action-based learning. Unlike a traditional course, where the professor has laid out a path that the class will need to complete, MAP teams have few certainties, save a final report and presentation that all teams must do. Because these changes can take place at any time, having a librarian that can be counted on to assist with the new demands for information has been seen as a critical part of the program.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE KRESGE LIBRARY MAP PROGRAM

The Kresge Library embedded librarian program was fairly slow to evolve, developing quite naturally over a period of four to five years. At its core, this program started life as an instruction endeavor to train MBA students on how to find resources that would help with their individual projects. The primary issue was that the students, who have been working with fairly consistently packaged class material (e.g., textbooks, course packs, cases), had difficulty finding resources in very narrow subject areas that were commonplace with MAP projects. While the sponsoring agency or company might provide some reports and data to the students, they are often asked to seek out new directions for the company or organization and may be working in an area where there is no clear understanding from the company; there are no packaged reports to obtain. As this became a bigger and bigger issue for the students, it became clear that creating a formal relationship between MAP teams and Kresge librarians was a critical way to proceed. This instruction focus for the early days of our embedded librarian program matches what many programs are doing across the academy.

The initial impetus for the relationship between the MAP teams and the library was to provide instruction on how to use library resources. This is similar to the most common embedded librarian programs that are operating now in academic circles. The original coordinator and sole participant was the library's instruction coordinator, who provided library instruction to these students as they attempted to tackle large research projects. While the program had a dedicated librarian, the sheer size of the student body (more than 400 MBA students participating) did not mesh well with but a single librarian. It was determined that these needs could not be met with conventional reference services. So the Kresge Library adapted and changed their participation from a classroom instruction focus to a presentation during the MAP orientation for all MBAs. The notion was that the librarian working with these students could create specialized training to help the students find the research materials that would support their study.

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However, as the program continued to expand, it became clear that this was more than an instruction opportunity. This did change the dynamic of the assigned librarian by asking him or her to do more work than had previously been done. In fact, the instruction librarian who presented the instruction materials was approached personally by all of the teams requiring research assistance.

The structure of the program changed around 2002, when the library's reference desk was swamped by all of the additional work required by the MAP teams. The library director at the time decided that each team would work with a specific librarian to assist with their information needs during the projects. This connection would allow the library to provide instruction but, more importantly, would allow a single person to have a far better understanding of each team's research needs. That person would not only be able to understand the project but also would supply students with resources and suggestions on an ongoing basis, without requiring students to repeatedly explain what they were doing. In this regard, the librarian became the information specialist on the team, allowing for more efficient interaction with the library. Originally, participation as a MAP librarian was limited to the four reference and instruction librarians. By 2006, it was expanded to include all of the librarians at Kresge, making this an important core activity. By 2007, in the last major change to the program, the library director participated in MAP as a team librarian for a number of student teams. By having the director participate as one of the eight librarians from Kresge working on MAP, it reduced the number of teams that the others had to cover. This was critical in 2010 as the size of the MBA class increased, increasing the number of MAP teams from 80 to 96.

## LIBRARY MANAGEMENT OF TEAMS

Librarian assignments to MAP Teams are an important undertaking that provides for an excellent launch of our participation in the program. From a library administrative point of view, the process of assigning MAP teams had long been established before the article's authors arrived at the Kresge Library. The system is fundamentally the same as it has been over the course of the past few years, with some minor tweaks and more participation from the library director. What is critical, from an administrative point of view, is that all eight librarians have a common understanding of what is expected of them and how the process will evolve over the course of the term. We have developed and adapted the process to fit other action-based learning programs that are not as large as MAP (now 96 teams in 2010). These include Global MAP (5–8 teams during the spring/summer terms), Executive MBA MAP (8–12 teams during the spring/summer and

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fall terms), and other programs. As the school develops more group action-based learning projects in the curriculum, we are adapting the MAP mechanism to ensure that these groups are supported. In 2009, we started a formal embedded librarian program with Strategy 659 (an elective for second-year MBA students commonly known as MAP2). This ABL class is similar to MAP but had been supported in an ad hoc manner, with teams reaching out to the librarians who they might have worked with during MAP the year before. By assigning the teams to librarians, we are able to ensure that the work is balanced among the librarians.

While originally, this program was split between the three primary reference librarians and the instruction librarian, it has been expanded to include all seven librarians and the library director. While all librarians participate, the number of teams they support depends on the additional workload that they have during the term. The reference and instruction librarians take the larger number of teams (typically 14–16 teams), and those with other responsibilities (the digital services librarian, technical services librarian, collection development librarian and the library director) all take a smaller number of teams. In 2010, with the expansion to 96 teams, the reference and instruction librarians worked with 15 teams and the others took 9 teams. This expansion luckily coincided with the first year since 2006 that we approached MAP with all eight librarian positions filled, allowing us to meet the needs of the increased team population. As we expect to be at full staffing for MAP 2009, we expect these numbers to change a bit but with the same basic parameters.

## MAP TEAM SELECTION AND WORKLOAD BALANCING

Critical to the success of this embedded librarian program is the ability to ensure that the reference load does not overwhelm the librarian's schedule. Workload balance was identified as a common pitfall for embedded librarian programs (Shumaker, 2009). While MAP is the primary responsibility during the months of March and April, we need to ensure that other tasks of the library are maintained. The reference and instruction librarians take the lion's share of MAP teams. The librarians with less than the average number of teams all have important administrative needs that cannot be ignored for seven weeks while we are working with the student teams. These include the library director, the digital services librarian, the head of technical services, and the collection development librarian. All these positions have day-to-day responsibilities that need to be continued during the MAP season.

By knowing when MAP "season" is, we are able to preemptively curtail our project activity during the time periods when we are busiest with the students. While we cannot completely cut off our regular work, we can ensure

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that we take on few big projects during the time when our reference demand is the greatest. Occasionally, there are factors that are beyond our control, and we need to adjust accordingly by giving people fewer teams or reassigning them as needed. Also, during MAP season we alleviate some of the job responsibilities that would normally fall onto the librarians by not scheduling library instruction sessions, scaling back on promotion of other services offered by the library, the Faculty Research Service activities, and by using part-time staff (including graduate students from the Michigan School of Information) at the reference desk. This all allows librarians to focus on meeting the needs of the MAP teams.

Fundamentally, MAP program support is one of the core functions of the librarians at Kresge Library. Central among these core responsibilities is engagement with the community. This manifests itself in many fashions:

- Reference services (each librarian will work one or two shifts at the library's reference desk and serve as a backup for questions that come in before the desk opens).
- MAP assignments (each librarian will work with a proportional number of teams for MAP and other team-based projects).
- Liaison relationships with academic departments and Ross School of Business institutes and centers.
- Participation in the selection of library resources.
- Instruction (classroom or library focused).

Our involvement with MAP starts once the sponsors have been indentified and students have been grouped into teams. We have a liaison with the School's MAP office who coordinates the assignments of librarians to the teams. The number of teams that any single librarian gets is essentially a workload balance decision made by the library director, after consultation with the librarians. The Kresge Library librarian responsible for MAP coordination then receives the list of available projects, including the sponsor, the team members, and a project description. Kresge librarians choose the teams they would like to work with (often based on an interest in a particular area, or possibly because they worked on a similar project in a previous year). Depending on the timing and the available of librarians to meet, we have followed a few different mechanisms. Often, we will all select at a meeting, with each person selecting a team until all are chosen. If time is of the essence, we ask librarians to identify their preferred teams and then the librarian responsible for MAP assigns the teams. Over the past few years, the process has been a great team-building exercise with trading of teams and numerous attempted "power grabs," such as the director attempting to choose all his teams before others could select! This has been a great opportunity for the librarians to "let their hair down" and relax before the 'impending storm.'

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## WORKING WITH STUDENTS

Once the Kresge librarians have chosen their MAP teams, the librarians will typically reach out to the teams. This usually takes the form of an introductory e-mail, including contact information and some information about the use of Kresge database resources for MAP reports to sponsoring companies. Some librarians also include some information on how they would like to work with the teams or a picture of how the work will proceed throughout the course of the MAP project. We work with students in many different ways; the MAP projects reflect the range of work styles and workload balancing efforts that exist among the librarians in the Kresge Library.

Some librarians may choose to do some preliminary reference legwork on some or all of the MAP corporate sponsors and industries. This can be particularly useful when dealing with areas that are unfamiliar. Others prefer to let the inquiries guide the work and will wait until the requests come in to do any reading or preparation. The success of the MAP team approach relies on a good deal of flexibility from the librarians, which needs to be reflected in the general management of the projects from a Kresge perspective.

Librarians find that each group may be very different in terms of the types of information they need, how much involvement they may request from the librarian at various stages of the project, or even how much they will rely on the librarian for their research and information needs. We see a wide range of both research needs and information skill levels throughout the MBA class; the amount of direction needed and type of assistance required varies accordingly.

Most groups will request an initial meeting with the team librarian to get some background research on their company, industry, competitive landscape, and market environment. This is a great opportunity for the librarian as well to meet the team, get some clarification on the project goals, and generally open the lines of communication for the duration of the project. This meeting tends to be more fruitful if the groups have already had the first meeting with the company sponsors; some librarians actually request that the teams do that meeting before sitting down with the team librarian, though this is not always possible, especially with international site visits which can take up five of the seven weeks for the program. Often the stated project goals or boundaries change dramatically from the sponsors' project proposals, and some librarians consider these meetings to be a waste of time if that meeting has not yet taken place. Also, the research issue that the student team might require might have nothing to do with the industry that they are exploring. A computer software firm might be looking at new opportunities in a different field altogether; an airline might be looking at more efficient workflow; and an automotive company might be looking at means to engage the workforce. In addition, many nonprofit organizations

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and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) might want to replicate business models (especially franchising) to help extend their reach to broader communities. So in looking at the project from a company or organization name and brief description, it is not always clear what resources would be useful to support the team.

MAP teams that are scheduled for travel to sponsor sites or project-based geographies may want help preparing for travel. Sponsor company profile information, product, or service offerings, and examples of current customers and projects can be helpful for these meetings, both in providing a source of confidence for the team and in showing the sponsor how smart the teams are about their business and market. Teams traveling overseas can be well-armed with information about the country they will be visiting, as well as business culture and customs, and basic information about the weather, time zones, and so forth. While this does not have a direct connection to their research subject, librarians will often point out resources that can help the students better learn a geographic location, especially when it is in the developing world.

The wealth of Kresge resources creates an excellent environment in which the MAP teams can work; it also creates a need for some initial guidance from the Kresge team librarians so that the teams are not feeling completely overwhelmed at the start of their project research. A good practice for the team is an overview of the 100-plus databases and other reference and research resources in the Kresge Library, as they relate to individual project plans. A "resource mapping" exercise is extremely useful and almost necessary at the outset—the librarian needs to point the team to those resources that are most useful to the project and help them ignore those resources that will not yield relevant information. To this end, it is critical that the librarian provide a subjective evaluation of library resources to better direct the students. If we have six different reports on a certain topic, the students are definitely hoping to tap our expertise and understanding of the resources to find the ones that have been well received over time. This is where the reference role of the librarian is very important. It is also important when students are working in developing countries and the resources are not consistently available, especially as it relates to country reports.

The librarian's role as guide also needs to include some advice as to what the group will likely be able to find, as well as what they most likely will not be able to get from the Kresge resources. This might take the form of a discussion of the difficulty in obtaining information about private companies or start-ups; a guide to other University of Michigan libraries or departments (i.e., how to work with the medical library and librarians, databases available from the university library); or a conversation about the process and guidelines for requesting research reports or other materials that Kresge does not currently own.

The physical location of the MAP teams will often dictate communication with the team librarian. Some teams may be at a remote location for

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the duration of the seven weeks, in areas where database access is not always reliable or where time zones increase the difficulty of actual conversations. Others may be working with sponsors who are located in or near Ann Arbor and may want to meet with their MAP librarian several times throughout the project. Most teams are away for at least some part of the first weeks of the project and reappear at the end with research needs related to completing the final recommendations or plans to present to their sponsors. Some librarians attempt to put some parameters around the nature of communication with their team and request that inquiries be passed to them via e-mail if at all possible, for example. Or the team will designate a librarian liaison to communicate research requests to avoid the problems of multiple, identical requests from the team members, with the knowledge that they need to remain flexible when dealing with the groups at the different points of their projects.

Sharing research reports and other resources can be a problem when dealing with the MAP teams. Kresge librarians report several issues with team members asking the same questions or for the same research materials, with no knowledge of what the other team members have been researching or what others may have requested from their team librarian. It is one of the more difficult aspects of the team librarian function and can be particularly frustrating when dealing with 15 or 16 MAP teams.

## PROJECT EXAMPLES AND RESEARCH NEEDS

The MAP program sponsors represent a wide variety of industries and companies. Companies in the global automotive, construction, information technology, medical devices, and pharmaceuticals markets, as well as nonprofits, participate in the program. Project goals include assistance with marketing plans and strategic planning, recommendations for new markets and geographies, and evaluation of current company processes and practices. Students are immersed in an intensive, real world business environment that requires that they quickly learn about and understand their industry's market, competitive players, and products or services; within seven weeks, students are required to deliver aggressive project plans to their sponsors.

Kresge librarians field a wide variety of reference and research questions to assist with this learning process. Most groups will require a substantial amount of general information on their market and the industry; as the teams work through their projects, requests will become more specific and challenging):

- "We need to know ad spending in local markets for a variety of industries."
- "Can you help us find Peruvian government bond rates?"

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- "I'm having a hard time finding German lung cancer/lung biopsy data to size the market."
- "We are looking to learn anything recent on what companies are doing to engage customers when they register for baby showers."
- "We've heard that there are regulations in India that require only trained, certified clinicians can administer eye drops, but we haven't been able to verify this."
- "Please help us find information on the waterfall software development method—general information, best practices, and alternatives."
- "I am looking for influential figures to young people in Ghana."
- "I need to find the uses and size of the passion fruit pulp market in the United States."

Invariably, the questions that we receive during MAP season are some of the most complicated ones we receive all year. While we are able to get answers to a great many questions, there are some that are truly too difficult or narrow to answer. Furthermore, some of the questions that the teams pose have no real answers, and the way that we communicate this to the team can sometimes lead to dissatisfaction. Since the questions do not have easy answers and often do not have easy strategies, the focus for the librarian is to work with the team on finding a solution. In some instances, that involves identifying a series of databases to explore in hopes of finding the answer. But in more cases, it involves the librarian working with some of these resources to find where the data might lie. Since the students are being judged on how they use information, not how they found it, this approach makes perfect sense from everyone's perspective.

## WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED WITH OUR EMBEDDED LIBRARIAN PROGRAM

Working with MAP teams not only involves the Kresge librarians in a highly visible, challenging, and interesting process with the Ross School of Business, but it also provides guidance on a wide variety of Kresge Library functions. From suggestions for how to catalog previous MAP project reports as examples for future MAP teams, to how to staff the reference desk during the MAP season, to additional budget for specific market research reports, MAP influences every department and most every employee at Kresge.

Reference services are also positively affected by the work we do with the MAP teams. As the teams move on to the second year of their MBA program, they are much more aware of the role that the library and the library staff can play in their studies; most of us have experienced the instances of "repeat customers" and can name a new group of "library

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ambassadors''—not only returning when they need research assistance for coursework, internships, and project work but also advising their fellow students and even some faculty that they need to come to Kresge to take advantage of the library resources and staff.

The embedded librarian program we have at Kresge serves many functions.

First, it puts us with the group, be it literally or intellectually. We are seeing the project unfold in all its glory and acting accordingly. By being embedded with these teams, we are able to better understand what their needs are at different times during the term. This is critical to any embedded librarian program—the need to match the services that the library would like to provide with the desire and the need demonstrated by the patrons.

Second, it provides students with someone who knows where they are, where they have been, and where they are going. This is critical, especially for a reference-based program. Were students working on a MAP project or any detailed research project strictly to go to the reference desk every time for assistance, they would have to explain what they are looking for, what they have already used, and what they are missing. In an embedded librarian program, especially one focused on reference, the first two steps can be avoided. Students do not have to explain their research projects or what they have used because the librarian has been there, helping find material and advising on future research. This ability to dispense with the background information on the request seems to make students more likely to seek out help and focus on what they want and need. In addition, by working closely with the team over the course of the term, we can gauge if their request provides a teachable moment. While early in the term, we might suggest more exploration on their own; late in the project we might simply work with them to quickly get an answer.

Third, we can easily identify gaps in the collection, enabling Kresge librarians to preemptively seek out and evaluate other available resources. Fulfilling this information need is critical to the success of the embedded librarian program since many MAP projects involve new markets and applications. Rarely do we find prepackaged reports and articles that will serve as a Rosetta Stone for all MAP teams.

Fourth, it helps us with projects that are very demanding in terms of information needs. MAP projects involve seven weeks' worth of work for students, and both the faculty member who assigns a grade and the sponsors expect the projects to be well researched and documented. Students are expected to make a business case with hard data that will support other decisions the company might make. To that end, students working on MAP projects are looking at dozens, if not hundreds, of reports and articles. This makes the entire project larger in scope than any individual project or paper that a student might be required to complete.

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In evaluating this program, we continue not only to build upon the foundation of work that we have done but also to seek to address the needs of students as they embark on these yearly projects. As ABL becomes a means of teaching that is not limited to full-time MBA students, we have moved with the school to ensure that we do not offer other students and other projects less service. We have not formally surveyed the students on MAP but will start doing that this year as part of the exit process for MBA graduates.

Overall, we feel that we have done a great job of connecting with the students and showcasing our individual skills and abilities as researchers. In many regards, we are bridging the gap between academic and corporate library models of embedded librarianship. We are following the academic library model in providing students with instruction on how to use the resources. We also are following the corporate library model in providing students with the actual information and reports through introductory and advanced searching. The happy medium, as we are discovering, is somewhere between these two types of library models. Clearly, what is most important, from our library's perspective, is that we provide a means to connect the students with the information they require.

## NOTES

1. For more information on the school, please visit: http://www.bus.umich.edu/NewsRoom/FastFacts.htm (accessed March 1, 2010).
2. http://www.beyondgreypinstripes.org/about/index.cfm (accessed March 1, 2010).
3. Stephen M. Ross School of Business website, http://www.bus.umich.edu/MAP/ABL.htm (accessed March 1, 2010).
4. http://www.bus.umich.edu/MAP/Dev/ABL.htm (accessed April 20, 2010).

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