City University of New York (CUNY)

CUNY Academic Works

Meeting Minutes

Library Association of the City University of
New York

2009

LACUNY Junior Faculty Research Roundtable Meeting Minutes, November 2009

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MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 2009 MEETING
LACUNY JUNIOR FACULTY RESEARCH ROUNDTABLE
November 20, 2009, 10:00 am
Baruch College, Newman Library, 4th Floor Conference Room

Members in Attendance:
Maura Smale, City Tech (co-chair)
Jill Cirasella, Brooklyn (co-chair)
Brian Lym, Hunter (guest speaker)
Devin McKay, Queensborough (guest speaker)
Suzy Sciammarella, Queensborough (guest speaker)
James Watson, Bronx
Kathleen Collins, John Jay
Sarah Ward, Hunter
Amy Ballmer, Grad Center
Alycia Sellie, Brooklyn
Helen Georgas, Brooklyn
Catherine Stern, LaGuardia
Harold Gee, Baruch

We started the meeting off with a few of our usual announcements:

- Let us know if you're not on the email list and would like to be
- Remember the Wiki! http://jfrr.pbworks.com/ Feel free to use it to develop resources, for collaboration, however you'd like
- March meeting: Emerald Author Workshop, March 17, 2010, afternoon, details TBD

Then we heard from our three guest speakers about their experiences with quantitative methods for library research.

Susan Sciammarella, Coordinator of Public Services, and Devin McKay, Deputy Chief Librarian, at Queensborough Community College, spoke with us about a survey of librarians they conducted in ten years ago and a follow-up survey they are working on presently. Suzy and Devin surveyed librarians and faculty at the 6 CUNY community colleges to explore faculty perceptions of librarians. The results were published in an article in *CRL*:

> Feldman, D., & Sciammarella, S. (2000). Both sides of the looking glass: Librarian and teaching faculty perceptions of librarianship at six community colleges. *College & Research Libraries, 61,* 491-8.

They sent out 500 surveys total, 75 to library faculty and 425 to faculty in other departments, and received responses from 52 library faculty and 156 non-library faculty, which is a great response rate. The questions asked included degrees held, service to campus committees, service as library liasons, and level of involvement in continuing education, among others. Librarian responses were very consistent; most responded that being referred to as "teaching faculty" would improve the status of librarians on campus.

Suzy and Devin sent the survey out on paper to a number of departments on each campus in a batch, and asked dept office assistants to distribute them. They included a stamped, self-addressed envelope for returning the surveys, which probably contributed to the high response rate. The total cost of the survey was about $400.

Both Suzy and Devin remarked that they survey was a great experience, and that the data was so rich that "the article practically wrote itself." For their follow-up survey they are

shortening the questions somewhat and plan to use an online survey program rather than paper surveys.

Suzy cautions to be mindful of the time you spend as well as the cost -- large surveys often take more time than you expect. It's possible to apply for small grants to cover costs, but there is a certain amount of overhead associated with grant funding so it may not be worth it for small amounts (again, don't forget the value of your time).

Suzy also gave some easy ways to distinguish quantitative research from qualitative research:
- Quantitative: goal oriented; large sample sizes; can be replicated
- Qualitative: open ended; small sample sizes; unique, not generally replicable

They then gave some pointers about creating surveys, doing literature reviews, and soliciting feedback:
- When you're creating a survey, think about *why* you're asking each question. What does each question add to the survey?
- The length of the survey should consider the attention span of those who will take the survey.
- Direct your questions toward *your* research; don't be influenced by other surveys. Even if you have a huge response rate, the responses have no value unless they're providing you with valuable information!
- When doing a literature review, don't dismiss old stuff. Pay attention to what was going on 20+ years ago.
- When running drafts by colleagues, don't just run them by your friends. Also run it by people will give it a close, unsympathetic look.

Finally, they addressed working with a partner. If you work with a partner, it's very important that the partner be someone with whom you work well and naturally share the work pretty evenly. It can be hard to find such a partner; if you can't find one, it may be easier to work on your own.

Next, Brian Lym, Science Librarian at Hunter College, spoke about his research regarding Project SAILS (Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills). He and a few Hunter colleagues developed and administered a survey to look at how other schools chose samples for Project SAILS, administered the test, etc. -- things that would speak to the quality of Project SAILS data. While creating the survey, they found the book *Conducting Online Surveys* (by Sue & Ritter) to be very valuable. They came up with about 20 questions, both closed- and open-ended. They sent it to all institutions that participated in Project SAILS and got a 65% response rate. (They sent it twice to instruction librarians and then to library directors, in the hopes of getting some libraries that hadn't originally responded. Needing to send out a survey multiple times is typical.) Brian also reminded us not to forget about IRB -- even if your survey is anonymous, IRB approval is still required.

They consulted with a statistician (a professor of biostatistics at Hunter), and he became very involved with the project and ended up a co-author. The statistician's contribution greatly strengthened the resulting paper, which is soon to appear in *Reference Services Review*:

> Lym, B., Grossman, H., Yannotta, L., & Talih, M. (2010). Assessing the assessment: How institutions administered, interpreted, and used SAILS. *Reference Services Review*, *38*(1).

Finally, Maura distributed a tip sheet she compiled after attending a program about survey

design and analysis. The tip sheet is available at: http://docs.google.com/ View?id=dgn99xpj_143dc4ddn2z

Meeting adjourned at 12:10 pm.

Minutes submitted by Maura Smale, City Tech, and Jill Cirasella, Brooklyn College