Staff Development of Academic Librarians to Improve Information Literacy Education in the Digital Age

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Abstract. For enhancing skills related to information literacy instruction in the digital age, we developed an education program for academic librarians, based on knowledge of learning science and educational technology. We evaluated the program in practice and discovered that: 1) academic librarians want to acquire basic knowledge of learning science and instructional design, 2) lectures about theory alone are insufficient, but the combination of theory with practical workshops is effective for promoting the integration of participants' knowledge, and 3) some practical examples support understanding of the theory.

Keywords: academic library, instruction librarian, education program

1 Introduction

In the digital age, information literacy is increasingly indispensable to digital library users, and information professionals have great responsibilities for information literacy education. In North America, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) showed the standards of competency and framework for information literacy for higher education [1], and the position of "instruction librarian," which involves proficiencies in instructional design and teaching skills, became established in academic libraries [2]. However, academic librarians in Japan have few opportunities to gain such skills and educational programs for them are not organized systematically, even though the government has promoted educational reform and expects librarians to enhance information literacy education in the university. In this paper, we developed an education program for academic librarians based on the knowledge of learning science and educational technology with specialists, and evaluated it in practice to improve the skills related to information literacy instruction in the digital age.

2 Education Program Outline and Evaluation

The education program covers two categories of ACRL's proficiencies: teaching skills and instructional design skills. The learning objective is that librarians should be able to recognize the positive effect of learner-centered approaches and that librarians should be able to point out which theory or model of instructional design is applicable to improve information literacy education. The program consists of two parts. Part I

offers two sessions in a one-day seminar. The first session contains an introductory lecture on learning science and an activity on collaborative learning strategy known as the "jigsaw technique." The second session contains an introductory lecture on instructional design, and provides references for learning about each theory and model more deeply. In addition to acquiring knowledge and skills, the program focuses on applying them to a real task. Thus, Part II is held as a one-day workshop one or two months after the seminar. Participants make a practical proposal to improve their own situation, and utilize what they have learned. Specialists, who were the lecturers in Part I, also give feedback to participants at the workshop and by online communication during the preparation period for Part II.

We implemented the education program and hosted Part I in November 2014 and Part II in January 2015 at the Kyushu University library. Forty-one librarians, both from the university and from outside, joined Part I. Nine librarians from the university joined Part II. Participants answered questionnaires for assessing the program after joining each part. The results of the survey were as follows: response rates were 75.6% for Part I and 100% for Part II. Among Part I responders, 97% answered that what they had learned from the first session was useful for improving educational activities at their own institution while 58% responded that the second session was useful. In particular, 16% made a positive comment on experiencing the practical activity of collaborative learning in the first session. For the second session, there were comments indicating the difficulty of connecting theory with practice. Among Part II responders, 56% strongly agreed and 44% agreed that they would review their proposal further and would implement it in their actual situation.

3 Future Development

Through developing and putting in practice a new education program, we discovered that: 1) academic librarians want to acquire basic knowledge of learning science and instructional design, 2) lectures about theory alone are insufficient, but the combination of theory with practical workshops is effective for promoting the integration with the participants' knowledge, 3) practical examples support understanding of the theory. By opening the workshops to librarians from other universities, we will continue to improve this program and develop an e-learning program of lecture videos combined with workshops while improving the evaluation strategy of the program.

References

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