Undergraduate Research Experiences:
Ground for Embedded Librarianship

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1. Definitions.
2. Why embedded librarianship (EL) now?
3. Why embed in undergraduate research experiences (UREs) now?
4. How does embedding work?

Definition: EL

Embedded Librarianship (EL)¹:

- **GROUP-LEVEL**: Focus on needs of specific group(s)
- **OVER TIME**: Build long-lasting relationships
- **DEEPER**: Deep understanding of their work
- **CUSTOM**: Provide highly-customized services rather than only “Q&A” reference model
- **SHARED RESPONSIBILITY**: Close collaboration implicates shared responsibility for outcomes

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Definition: UREs

- Undergraduate Research Experiences (UREs):
  - Experiences involving “inquiry or investigation conducted by … undergraduate student[s] that make an original intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline.”

- UR Assistantship vs. URE

Why EL now?

- **Historical Gloss:**
  - **1970s** Informationist; medical librarians
  - **2000s** Expansion to academic librarians
  - **2010s** What’s the next *practical* step?

- **Contemporary *context* for embedding:**
  - Stress student-centeredness and retention
  - Pressing financial realities for higher education
  - Assessment culture proliferates

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Why EL now?

- So, why should librarians embed now?
- External Rewards:
  - Maximize impact, visibility, and recognition.
  - Examples to illustrate related to retention:
Why EL now?

≠ student retention
Why EL now?

request fulfillment?

≠ student retention
Resource support and archival training for the African American Heritage Undergraduate Research Project?

The Heritage Project
African American History In Blair County
Teayra L. Turner, Tasia V. Scott, Kayla G. Fleming, Daniella S. Zubarev
Advisors: Jeffrey A. Knapp, University Libraries; Nicholas J. Rowland, Sociology

= student retention
Why EL now?

- So, why should librarians embed now?
- External Rewards:
  - Maximize *impact*, *visibility*, and *recognition*.
  - Examples to illustrate related to *retention*:
    - Not ephemeral, but tangible and visible outcomes.
    - Builds reputation (the currency of higher education)
Why EL now?

- So, why else should librarians embed now?
- Internal Rewards:
  - Access to student achievement agenda setting.
    - Example, “That’s good; it’s just not good enough.”
Why EL now?

Revisiting the Interaction Membrane
How People Discuss Religion and Non-religion
Christopher Lehman
Advisors: Nicholas J. Rowland, Sociology, Eric P. Charles, Psychology

OBJECTIVES
- Discovered from pre-existing interview data: Discussed that some individuals routinely discuss religion and non-religion. A small group of 5 were interviewed, some again.
- Revised a recent study on social psychology, focusing on the interaction membrane (IM) and its role in discussions.
- Open-ended interviews allowed for a broader understanding of the interaction membrane and its influence on discussions.
- Previous research: The IM was found to be a significant factor in social interactions and discussions.

METHODS
- Data Collection: During previous interviews about non-religious identity, we learned about a group of individuals that regularly discussed religion and non-religion in a group setting. We then interviewed these individuals about their experiences regarding these discussions.
- Coding: We transcribed these interviews and coded i.e., analyzed them looking for apparent themes found within them. After the themes of each interview were found, we narrowed the list of themes to the ones that were found throughout each interview. We then analyzed these interviews for second time looking solely for themes that were common to all interviews. According to Weiss (1994), this is common practice.
- Participants: We interviewed nine participants about their involvement in discussions about religion and non-religion. Of the one participants, seven were male and two were female. The majority of the participants was middle and middle-class. Most of the participants were non-religious. Seven of them were considered as religious, another two were non-believers and one was identified as religious and non-religious.

RESULTS
- We report the results from our analysis, which amounts to a list of significant themes common to all interviews.
- The recurring themes captured the structure of the interaction membrane (IM) and the environment that the interactions were embedded in.
- The interaction membrane: This interaction is embedded in a social environment or verbal responses by the members of the group. This then opens the door for a discussion of religion and non-religion.
- Reducing the interaction membrane: In every interview we found evidence of an instance where someone became unresponsive and, as a result, the interaction membrane was reduced and discussion, therefore, ended.
- Environment of familiarity: The interaction membrane allows for discussion of topics that are familiar to the members of the group. Discussions are more open-ended in these environments.
- High School Environment: A majority of the college aged respondents talked about having these conversations in high school. We believe that the interaction membrane is an environment, away from the judgment of adults, in which they could safely discuss these new ideas.

SIGNIFICANCE TO FIELD
- After interviewing numerous individuals, we discovered two prominent interpretations of the IM: one as a social interaction and the other as a verbal interaction. These interpretations are supported by the findings of other researchers.
- The IM is not only a social interaction but a significant factor in discussions about religion and non-religion.

SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE
- Americans are increasingly not only religious but also religiously affiliated. However, we found that discussions about religion and non-religion are often left unexplored.
- Environment through sight: Understanding how the environment influences discussions about religion and non-religion is essential in shaping conversations.

INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSION
- In order to fully explore the interaction membrane, it is necessary to understand the way in which individuals engage with each other within a social context.
- Future research: A majority of these conversations are initiated by random thoughts and experiences. However, the interaction membrane can be enhanced if it is explored further. Future research should focus on understanding the various factors that influence discussions about religion and non-religion.
Why EL now?

- So, why else should librarians embed now?
  - Internal Rewards:
    - Access to student achievement agenda setting.
      - Example, “That’s good; it’s just not good enough.”
    - Avoid librarian “alienation.”
      - Marxist use of the term; to be estranged from the products you help to produce on an assembly line.
      - Personal satisfaction of seeing reference help through to project fruition.
Why embed in URE now?

- URE is iconic of the liberal arts education:
  - Recruit, retain, and mentor top students.¹
- URE is part of move to student-centeredness:
  - Emphasis on learning over teaching; call to quality.²
- Opportunity to make visible contributions:
  - Enhance librarian reputation outside the familiar walls of the library; align library with institutional mission; engage new resource streams.

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What is the ISSR?

- **Project-focused:**
  - Rather than only student-focused, our projects span semesters, faculty, and groups of students.

- **Student-involvement at all stages:**
  - Early conceptualization, identification of sources, to the communication of scientific research.

- **50/50 faculty-/student-driven projects:**
  - Librarians are useful when students do more.¹ ²
  - Opportunities open up with a librarian on-hand.

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How does embedding work?

- Getting embedded, slowly, but surely:
  1. Casual network tie and frequent referrals
  2. Guest lecturing and lab attendance
  3. Course collaboration, grants, and scholarship

- Other strategies:
  - Attend Undergraduate Research Fair
  - Network; don’t expect them to come to you
  - “Did you ask for the business?” approach
1. What is an embedded librarian?
   - Active librarian; the librarian of the future?
2. What is undergraduate research?
   - Part of broader shift to student-centeredness.
3. Why is undergraduate research ripe for embedded librarianship?
   - Librarians can provide broader context of knowledge as it is made