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The Library Associates

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Changing Learning...Changing Roles

"...I could never imagine teaching in any other way, than what I have doing now [at the Mellon Institute]...It is so satisfying. It's just the most incredible, creative process I have ever been in..."

Ruth Tringham, Mellon Library/Faculty Fellow, Anthropology

In one of the most exciting and far-reaching programs taking place today, Cal's librarians are working with faculty and staff campuswide to redefine the way undergraduate courses are taught and how undergraduates conduct scholarly research. The Mellon Library/Faculty Fellowship for Undergraduate Research is made possible through a \$749,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The goal of this four-year project is to develop faculty that believe information competence, research skills, and the effective use of library resources are critically important tools for undergraduates to acquire.



2004 Mellon Faculty Fellows.

To reach that goal, Fellows work to redesign undergraduate courses and curricula to emphasize undergraduate research as a critical component of independent and self-directed learning.

The project strengthens the connections between undergraduate research, information literacy, and library collections with particular emphasis on lower division, large enrollment, and high impact courses where students can develop foundation skills

that will serve them throughout their academic careers.

The ever-expanding information universe holds enormous potential for undergraduate learning and personal growth. But the size and complexity of this universe presents serious challenges to librarians, faculty, and undergraduates alike. Studies here at Berkeley and elsewhere have found that students often do not possess the practical and critical thinking skills necessary to effectively navigate this information-rich environment or to evaluate what information they do uncover. And, while independent inquiry and research have become increasingly more important in the undergraduate curriculum, teaching students just how to go about doing that research-how to find, analyze, and evaluate information-has generally not been integrated into teaching or coursework.

"The library has evolved from being a repository of material to an educational partner," says Patricia Iannuzzi, associate university librarian and chair of the

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Mellon steering committee. Last year the library taught 22,000 students how to use library databases to find information. Those technical skills, Iannuzzi says, need to be complemented by "a more complex set of skills that relate to critical thinking, synthesizing, and evaluation. Addressing those complex skills is an important faculty challenge in teaching the next generation of students."

"I had no idea that I could discover so much about one subject...and be able to actually make my own opinion about it and be able to have an argument that is not the same as the secondary sources that I always believed in. It was a great experience."

Mollie Caselli, UC Berkeley Undergraduate

"Instructional innovation has often been the result of [efforts by] individual faculty entrepreneurs," says Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education Christina Maslach. "The Mellon project allows us to expand that strength by linking faculty with librarians, instructional technologists, assessment experts, graduate student instructors-all of the partners who together can have a greater impact on student learning than each can alone."

At the conclusion of this project, faculty and librarians will have redesigned and/or created some 50 undergraduate courses with a total enrollment of some 10,000 undergraduates. Restructured syllabi will incorporate library collections-print, electronic, manuscript, pictorial-all components of the library collections. As faculty members continue to teach and revise these courses, and as their colleagues adopt the same innovative teaching and research components in their courses, this figure will continue to increase exponentially. The Berkeley model is already attracting national attention from peer institutions across the country. Faculty and library colleagues are anxious to observe this work first-hand.

"...[the project] highlighted for me the importance, particularly for young scholars, of grounding their thinking and their work in the resources of the library and using the tools the library has...one of the things that really changed in my mind was expanding my conception of research to realize it is critical thinking and building all sorts of mechanisms into my teaching to develop critical thinking skills..."

Ingrid Seyer Ochi, Mellon Library/Faculty Fellow, Education

The UC Berkeley Library is playing a fundamental role in teaching and research-the lifeblood of the university-as it thrives and evolves across campus today.

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