



Wish You Were Here: Embedded Librarianship in an Education Abroad Context

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Introduction

With an ever-increasing emphasis on experiential learning in higher education, most colleges and universities now offer their students study abroad programs.¹ NAFSA, the Association of International Educators, reports that about 10% of all U.S. graduates in academic year 2016-2017 participated in an education abroad program.² Many of these programs rely on a flipped classroom model, with students completing preparatory research on campus before leaving for an immersive experience abroad.³ Yet this model often relegates the librarian to a passive role: librarians may assist students with pre-departure assignments and provide remote reference but can take little part in shaping learning outcomes or assignments. This study considers methods for recasting the narrative of librarian involvement with study abroad from passive participation to active involvement. It presents models for practicing the principles of embedded librarianship within the experiential framework, demonstrating that librarians are as critical to the success of study abroad programs as they are to on-campus counterparts.

The case studies presented in this study explore the more extensive range of activities supported by librarians in these different international models. Some experiences are expected and familiar from embedded librarianship models at home institutions: librarians offered research support, expertise with project design and redesign, facility with the team-teaching model, and the ability to identify collections and resources that allow students to meet course objectives. Others, however, represent new experiences that capitalize on librarians' existing strengths in assessing and adapting to the needs of our users and their contexts. Such activities include disaster planning and crisis management on the ground with students abroad; researching travel itineraries and managing program budgets; resolving access issues (whether it be to hotel rooms, obscure archives, or Wi-Fi networks); liaising with international faculty and staff; and communicating program needs to a diverse audience, ranging from customs officials to panicked parents. Librarians, we argue, are perfectly positioned to more actively support study abroad programs on their campuses due to our existing expertise in a variety of academic spheres.

Literature Review

In 2008 and 2010, respectively, the Association of Research Libraries and the Institute of Museum and Library Services published reports underscoring the importance of library support for study abroad.⁴ Since the appearance of these publications, a growing body of research has investigated how libraries can provide support for students as faculty engaged in education abroad programs ranging from short, immersive programs to semester or yearlong placements at foreign institutions. Literature on the relationship between librarian and study abroad course has, to date, tended to focus either on the pre-departure period or on remote research assistance, explored primarily through case studies.⁵

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White, Ye, and Guccione establish a theoretical framework for the information seeking behavior of students during a study abroad experience and describe how Dickinson College built a program to support these behavior, largely from the home campus.⁶ Denda charts the types of support needed by both students and faculty before they leave on a study abroad trip, including the need to access materials from the home institution while abroad, better awareness of continued access to library resources while abroad, access to research help while abroad, and assistance in creating meaningful connections between study abroad participants and local communities after the study abroad program was completed.⁷

The literature on remote research assistance for education abroad contexts builds on that of distance education more generally. Solis and Perkins explore strategies for the effective use of digital learning objects and synchronous online instruction in a study abroad context.⁸ Chan et al. discuss how librarians at the parent institution can effectively support student research occurring at libraries overseas that are not staffed by librarians.⁹

Discussion of a more holistic, immersive approach to librarian participation in study abroad is quite limited. Two studies discuss the role that the library can play after the study abroad program is completed. One describes a digital scrapbooking project facilitated by the University of Tennessee Libraries,¹⁰ and the other focuses on the role libraries can play in preserving data captured and collected during a study abroad experience.¹¹ To date, only two studies describe the role of embedded librarians. One presents the experience of a single librarian at Dickinson College who co-taught a three-week Intensive Course Abroad.¹² The focus in this article is on establishing relationships that allow a librarian to participate in a study abroad class rather than the role the librarian played. Griner and Herron describe their efforts in designing a service learning class and their participation in that class, from course conceptualization through de-briefing after travel.¹³

Although librarians obviously contribute to study abroad programs, it is clear that their current (and potential) roles have not been well defined except on a case-by-case basis. This may reflect the ongoing challenge to define study abroad itself. As Richard Edelstein has demonstrated in his review of the study abroad literature, most programs are highly individualized and lack common goals, methodologies, or structures.¹⁴ While nearly every institution promotes study abroad as cultivating “intercultural competence” or “global citizenship,” such broad concepts are not easy to measure or assess.¹⁵ Some colleges and universities have the resources to design and implement their own programs, while others must rely on external providers or partnerships with larger institutions. As a result, student needs and experiences are highly varied and discussions of these programs are correspondingly diverse.

Methods

The case studies presented here seek to expand the conversation about the librarian’s collaboration with study abroad. Although the authors explore this role through case studies, they identify larger best practices that may be implemented beyond individual cases, programs, or institutions. This study examines two different models for actively supporting education abroad: the visiting librarian and the embedded subject specialist. The first model explores the role of the visiting librarian through a music librarian’s experiences with facilitating interaction between students from an American liberal arts college and onsite libraries and archives in Europe. The second model explores the role of embedded subject specialists and presents librarian experiences with designing and co-teaching study abroad courses from the ground up in collaboration with teaching faculty in their assigned liaison areas. One case study offers the perspective of a special collections curator at a research intensive university, the other the perspective of a subject specialist at a liberal arts college.

Model 1: The Visiting Librarian

In the “visiting librarian” model, the librarian occupies a traditional role but with expanded scope. This model functions most effectively within internal programs (programs taught and administered by the home institution rather than an external partner) which are at least a semester in length.

Case Study: Furman University and “Music in Italy”

Furman University’s “Music in Italy” program provides a standard example of a semester-length internal program. A residential liberal arts college with an enrollment of about 2700, Furman offers multiple semester-long study abroad programs to its students. “Music in Italy” is based in Arezzo (about an hour southeast of Florence) and students are hosted by a local institution. The institution provides room, board, and classroom space, local musicians teach applied lessons, and a rotating group of Furman faculty give academic instruction, including a required survey class on music history. In this course (which satisfies both a university writing requirement as well as a degree requirement), students must research and write an eight to ten-page paper on an historical topic. The Furman Libraries have sought to support this assignment by providing research instruction before departure as well as remote reference assistance.

Students regularly rank this paper and the research process as the least satisfying components of their study away experience. Besides the practical challenges of completing this assignment while away from campus, there is a broader and more fundamental issue. Students perceive the research process and the ensuing paper as totally disconnected from the experiential components of “Music in Italy.” Although the paper topics themselves must be related to the course content, the students do not see connections between this work and their experiences abroad. They recognize the research paper as a requirement imposed by their home institution but find it otherwise irrelevant to their studies in Italy.

How could the research process become more integrated into the “Music in Italy” study abroad program? What would constitute an experiential research component, especially for fifteen different students with fifteen different paper topics? Furman’s music librarian proposed an exchange with the Morrill Music Library, housed within Villa I Tatti, Harvard University’s Center for Italian Renaissance Studies in Florence. The music librarian would travel to Italy to facilitate this interaction in collaboration with the Morrill’s music librarian, as well as the Furman faculty member onsite. This was not simply a tour of an impressive, unique library. While the Morrill is certainly both, this exchange had three clear goals. First, the music librarians introduced students to the challenges of acquiring rare music materials and illustrated these through recent accessions. This was illuminating for these students, who were astonished to discover that important items are regularly bought and sold. Second, the librarians discussed a set of sources whose provenance and creators remain unknown. This was another surprise, since undergraduate students tend to view music history as a settled narrative with fixed answers rather than an evolving discipline with many questions still to explore. Finally, the Morrill’s music librarian described some of the projects currently in process at I Tatti and the kinds of sources that scholars were using. The students were especially engaged by this last conversation, since some of the sources and topics related to music that they were studying or researching themselves.

The value of this experience was not its originality; in fact, if these students were on campus, a similar exchange could have taken place in Furman’s special collections and archives. The value lay in establishing continuity between their own music research and the larger world of research, between their own work and the work of other scholars. It allowed them to understand materials as active within the research context rather than as static items in a curated exhibit or a published work. Furman’s music librarian cultivated this continuity and deeper understanding by proposing the idea, negotiating the interaction, and directing the experience on the ground. Furman has since successfully incorporated this model into other study away programs with a range of libraries and archives.

Model 2: The Embedded Librarian

Study abroad provides unique opportunities for the practice of embedded librarianship. We provide two case studies that offer ideas for the ways in which librarians might support students and faculty through direct participation in education abroad experiences.

Case Study 1: Special Collections and Archives Abroad

This case focuses on the experiences of a special collections librarian who co-taught a three-week course during Maymester, a short-term course at the University of South Florida (USF). USF is a very large public university with over 50,000 FTE, where students can engage in a variety of education abroad experiences, ranging from short term (like this course) to a full semester or year abroad. At USF, alternative course formats are encouraged during Maymester, providing an excellent opportunity for developing new study abroad courses. The course examined in this case study, a survey of children's literature offered through the College of Education, was offered at the senior undergraduate and graduate levels and co-taught by a faculty member in the College of Education and the special collections librarian.

As the course took place over Maymester, which is not considered part of the regular 9-month contract period, the faculty member from the College of Education was listed as the instructor of record, and all student credit hours accrued under her name and department in order to facilitate providing her with summer salary and compensation for teaching the course. The librarian was employed on a 12-month faculty contract and the course was considered a normal part of her duties, both during the planning and recruitment phase that happened in the spring semester and the three weeks spent abroad during the summer. In addition to holding faculty status as a librarian, the librarian was also credentialed to teach at the undergraduate and graduate levels in the College of Education.

At both the undergraduate and graduate levels, the course took the form of a survey that broadly explored children's literature as a literary art form with a special emphasis on the role of place in British children's literature. At the undergraduate level, the course satisfied the university Gordon Rule intensive writing exit requirement. At the graduate level, the course satisfied elective distribution hours at the masters and doctoral levels in the major field of study.

The professor who routinely taught this course as a full-semester, on campus course wanted to redesign the summer section as a study abroad, experiential learning course, focusing particularly on the representation of place in children's literature and the physical places that facilitate the study of that literature. She invited the special collections librarian, whose job responsibilities included curation of the university library's children's literature collection, to participate in reframing and teaching the course. Prior to working on the education abroad project, the librarian had supported the on-campus iterations of the course at the undergraduate and graduate levels, offering general bibliographic instruction sessions as well as scaffolding special collections research projects in children's literature. Given the existing areas of specialization represented by the collaborating faculty member and librarian, the study abroad course focused on special collections, archives, place, and children's literature in England, Ireland, and Northern Ireland.

The collaborating faculty member and librarian shared responsibility equally for course development. They both selected texts, chose sites to visit, designed assignments and assessments, and worked on making logistical arrangements for travel. At USF, faculty members were responsible for all travel planning, with the exception of paying invoices. In addition to logistical planning, the collaborating faculty member and librarian held pre-departure meetings with students, covering both logistics of travel as well as a crash course in research methods for on-the-go study.

The first three days of the education abroad course took place at Homerton College, Cambridge University, where students participated in lectures, discussions, and conference sessions on the academic study of children's literature alongside experiential excursions, including a trip to see the Winnie the Pooh manuscript and a Hogwarts-style dinner with the Homerton faculty and students. Following the course introduction in Cambridge, class time focused on experience over lecture, including travel to London, Oxford, the Lake District, Belfast, Dublin, and the Dingle Peninsula. The class visited Mr. McGregor's garden after reading *The Tales of Peter Rabbit*; explored Hogwarts and considered the relationship between text and film adaptation at the Harry Potter movie sets; visited the real life inspiration for Roald Dahl's *Mathilda*'s village; explored gateways to Narnia and Wonderland in Oxford; considered the relationship between politics, place, and literature in Belfast; and hiked the Cliffs of Moher while exploring traditional Irish literature and re-tellings of folktales for young audiences. Along the way, class discussion happened on buses, in train stations, and in hotel lobbies. Students were encouraged to keep good notes during the trip, but no written assignments were due until after students returned to the United States.

The course included formative and summative assessments.¹⁶ Formative assessments are low-stakes activities in which students demonstrate their emerging understanding of a topic or concept; these may take place while sharing meals, discussing ideas, asking questions, or reflecting together on an experience. Summative assessments, in contrast, require students to demonstrate proficiency in a formal context (e.g. an exam or a paper). All students kept a journal over the course of the trip, and they were required to reflect in their journals on the relationship between the places we visited and the representation of those places in the texts we read. In addition, all students submitted a research paper, completed after the trip's conclusion, on a thematic topic of their choosing. This project required students to develop their topic throughout the course of the trip and in response to their changing conceptualizations of children's literature that arose with new experiences. In the vocabulary of the ACRL framework, this project treated the development of the research paper topic and related inquiries as an iterative process and encouraged students to formulate new questions in response to the information sources they were encountering.¹⁷

Given the course focus on libraries and archives, the librarian was instrumental in locating and negotiating access to collections of materials relevant to the course. The librarian identified relevant collections and libraries to visit, contacted curators, arranged for visits, and selected materials from the collections that related to course concepts. That is, the librarian performed the types of work with repositories abroad that she typically conducted for this type of class at the parent institution's library, and she also created course assignments related to those activities.

Case Study 2: Musicology Abroad

As in the Special Collections and Archives case study, this course took place during Furman University's three-week May semester. The class, "Rites of Spring," focuses on Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes and takes students to Paris and London, where the company lived and worked.¹⁸ The Ballets Russes were at the forefront of the early 20th century avant-garde, collaborating with many important artistic figures in the period (including Igor Stravinsky, Coco Chanel, and Pablo Picasso). The course uses the company as a framework for exploring the relationships between politics, fashion, music, dance, and design in the early 20th century. The course also seeks to engage undergraduate students with non-print primary sources and to develop their ability to interact with and interpret such sources. Students from all majors and class levels may participate in the course; although the course is housed in the university's music department and offers music elective credit, there is no pre-requisite beyond permission of the instructors.

This course is team-taught by a musicologist and a music librarian; both are credentialed to teach as instructor of record within the university's music department and both were equally compensated for this teaching. The faculty members envisioned this course as an intersection of their separate but complementary expertise—the musicologist is a Russianist with a focus on ballet, while the music librarian studies stage works and musical ephemera in the Anglo-European fin-de-siècle. They jointly designed and proposed the class itself, sharing complete responsibility for curricular and practical components. With the support of the university's Center for International Education, they made all the arrangements from booking hotels to arranging access to archives.

The course has been taught in two models—the first begins with three days on campus, front-loading lectures and student research. The second leaves directly for Paris; class lectures and research are interwoven with on-site activities. A typical day abroad on “Rites of Spring” comprises group excursions to a library, museum, or archive; student presentations; and evening performances or discussions. As in the USF course, students complete a mixture of formative and summative assessments. So, for instance, they journal throughout the course, responding to prompts that ask them to consider their reaction to a performance or a specific item seen in an archive. Their summative assessments include short and long oral presentations, given to the entire group. The short presentation discusses an individual ballet, while the long presentation focuses on a topic related to the Ballets Russes (for instance, “The Ballets Russes and Artistic Patronage”). These presentations require the student to engage in their own research, as well as drawing from lectures, experiences, and interactions that took place throughout the course.

Although the course is about the Ballets Russes, it is also about how the historical narrative may be constructed, altered, and manipulated by sources or the lack thereof. Much of the discussion centers on the surviving historical record, as well as portions of that record which have been lost or remain impossible to capture (e.g. the unique performances of individual dancers). It asks students to consider how librarians, archivists, and curators are active in shaping this narrative through the ways in which they collect materials, prepare exhibitions, and make them accessible or even deny access. It also asks them to consider how research may be sometimes be both an act of discovery and of destruction. This is illustrated through the Ballets Russes costumes, which are highly sensitive to light and which degrade each time they are removed from storage.

From this perspective, the librarian provides not only subject expertise in music but also disciplinary expertise in library and information science. The course invites students to see themselves as active participants in the creation of knowledge, prompting them to reflect critically about what it means to “reconstruct” an historical event or to offer “sufficient evidence.” It draws parallels between the interpretive roles of artists and the interpretive roles of researchers, as they both act on and are acted upon by their own work. To put this in terms of the ACRL framework, this course seeks to cultivate a deeper knowledge about how “Authority is Constructed and Contextual.”¹⁹

Conclusion

Through these case studies, our aim is not simply to chart the individual experiences of two librarians participating in study abroad activities. Rather, we present these case studies to consider the larger implications of such participation and to identify contributions that librarians can make to study abroad programs. These case studies highlight three separate but related contributions. First, case studies show that librarians can bring professional expertise to study abroad programs in the design and facilitation of research experiences. As in parallel on-campus courses, librarians should closely collaborate with teaching faculty and/or program administrators to identify information literacy and research goals. What information needs emerge while abroad and what are the barriers or challenges to meeting those needs? The answers to these questions will vary, of course, depend-

ing on the institution, the program, the coursework, and the faculty. Librarians should assess the study abroad information needs on their own campus and determine how they might contribute to supporting those needs.

Second, these case studies demonstrate how librarians may bring subject expertise to study abroad by developing or contributing to programs in that area. Most academic librarians have an area of specialty, whether highly specific (British children's literature) or broadly focused (music). Librarians should consider how they may contribute to experiences that would capitalize on their own expertise while supporting institutional goals and priorities. Such involvement could range from the visiting model (where the librarian is involved with one component of a program) to full integration (as teacher or team-teacher traveling with the students for the entirety of a course).

Third, librarians can and should contribute to study abroad programs as students engage issues within information literacy more broadly. While not every course brings students into foreign libraries, archives, and museums, every student studying abroad must grapple with questions of authority, value, and access. Many American students will discover, for instance, that some countries have no public libraries, that borrowing privileges in a university library may be highly restricted, or that access to particular materials might require a letter of recommendation. This can surprise students from the United States, who are accustomed to an information culture that prioritizes openness, equal access, and fairness. As students prepare for, participate in, and reflect on their international studies, librarians have a role to play. They can help students recognize that navigating new information environments is part of the global literacy that study abroad seeks to cultivate.

Not every academic librarian can participate in study abroad and not every study abroad course can have an embedded librarian. But the librarian may still be embedded in the process of each study away course. Some librarians may contribute by evaluating information literacy components and collaborating to design assignments that take into consideration the special challenges of research overseas. Some may be full participants in the travel experience, directing a program in their subject specialty. Others may play a role in pre- or post-trip reflection about global information fluency. Within this range of possibilities, librarians are ideally positioned to support, collaborate, and lead within the field of international education.

Endnotes

1. Throughout this paper, we use the terms "study abroad," "international education," and "education abroad" interchangeably to describe any credit-bearing curricular experience that takes students away from their home institution to learn in another country. Such programs are often, but not exclusively, overseas.
2. NAFSA, "Trends in U.S. Study Abroad," accessed December 8, 2018, https://www.nafsa.org/Policy_and_Advocacy/Policy_Resources/Policy_Trends_and_Data/Trends_in_U_S_Study_Abroad/.
3. Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams, *Flip Your Classroom: Reach Every Student in Every Class Every Day* (Eugene, OR: International Society for Technology in Education, 2012), 5-10.
4. Ann Lindell and Association of Research Libraries, "Library Support for Study Abroad," SPEC KIT (Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries, 2008), 1-125; Institute of Museum and Library Services, "Strengthening Connections, Advancing Global Understanding" (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2010), https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/publications/documents/intlreport_0.pdf.
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6. White, Ye, and Guccione, "Study Abroad Students."
7. Denda, "Study Abroad Programs."

8. Eimmy Solis and Dan Perkins, "Globetrotting Students and Faculty: Adapting Library Instruction to Global Sites," *Journal of Library & Information Services in Distance Learning* 11, no. 1–2 (January 2, 2017): 123–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1533290X.2016.1229419>.
9. Kimberly Posin Chan et al., "Libraries Across the Sea: Using a Virtual Presence and Skilled Student Assistants to Serve Students Abroad," *Journal of Library Administration* 55, no. 4 (May 19, 2015): 278–301, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2015.1038921>.
10. Michelle Brannen, Sara Green, and Thura Mach, "Digital Scrapbooking at UT Libraries," *Tennessee Libraries* 58, no. 1 (2008), <https://www.tnla.org/page/181>.
11. Kutner, "Study-Abroad Programs as Information Producers."
12. White, Ye, and Guccione, "Study Abroad Students."
13. Lily Griner and Patricia Herron, "Preparing Global Citizens: Librarians Connect Students with a Learning Service Opportunity in Nicaragua," *Electronic Journal of Academic and Special Librarianship* 10, no. 3 (2009), http://southernlibrarianship.icaap.org/content/v10n03/griner_l01.html.
14. Richard Edelstein, "Globalization and Student Learning: A Literature Review and Call for Greater Conceptual Rigor and Cross-Institutional Studies, Research & Occasional Paper Series: CSHE.6.14," *Center for Studies in Higher Education* (2014): 1–15.
15. Edelstein, "Globalization and Student Learning," 7.
16. The terms "formative" and "summative" are drawn from Bergmann and Sams' work on experiential learning and the flipped classroom. See Bergmann and Sams, *Flip Your Classroom*, 59–76.
17. American Library Association, "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education," February 9, 2015. <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.
18. For a full discussion of this course and its place within the music history curriculum, see Laura Kennedy and Patricia Puckett Sasser, "'Long-braided Lolitas,' or Teaching Undergraduate Music History in a Study Abroad Context," *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 7, No. 2 (2017), 19–31.
19. American Library Association, "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education."

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