

What this is

The *Innovative Instructor* is an article series (<https://ctei.jhu.edu/ii>) and a blog (<https://ii.library.jhu.edu>) related to teaching excellence at Johns Hopkins

Article categories

Best Practice

How to use technologies and apply innovative instructional methods

Pedagogy

Hopkins professors share successful strategies for teaching excellence

Technology

Information about emerging technologies, who is using them, and why you should know

For information on how to contribute to The Innovative Instructor or to read archived articles please visit:

<https://ctei.jhu.edu/ii>

or email:

ctei@jhu.edu

About the CTEI

The Center for Teaching Excellence and Innovation partners with faculty, postdocs, and graduate students to extend instructional impact by connecting innovative teaching strategies and instructional technologies

CENTER for
TEACHING
EXCELLENCE &
INNOVATION



Working with your Academic Liaison

Margaret Burri, Assistant Director, Academic Liaison
Sheridan Libraries, JHU

Who they are

If you can imagine a world where books and databases were not cataloged, it would be nearly impossible to find and build on existing knowledge. The Sheridan Libraries curate and organize resources available to the Hopkins community and Academic Liaisons are at the forefront of that effort. As content specialist librarians, Academic Liaisons help library users find supporting academic materials for their research, teach them to evaluate content, and expand access to discipline specific databases and resources made available to the Hopkins community. Not only do they know what databases exist for any given subject, they also know the most efficient ways to search them to find what is needed. This can save researchers a great deal of time and effort. If there's a resource we don't have here at Hopkins, your liaison librarian can work with you to get it.

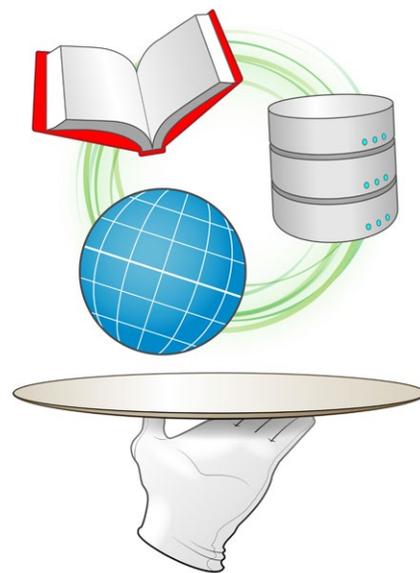
The idea of the academic liaison at a library expresses an acknowledgement that the need for bibliographic support (building collections) and library support (instruction on how to find content) cannot be separated. For the past 30 years, academic liaisons have served Hopkins community by not only showing them how to find content but also teaching them how to navigate the vast world of knowledge and further support their research.

How to use them

Instructional Support for Library Resources

If you would like to have an Academic Liaison facilitate an in-class instruction session, send an email to asklib@jhu.edu. The Academic Liaison assigned to your discipline will schedule a meeting with you to discuss the needs of your students. They recognize that the demands for research are different in each course and subject area. It is best to contact them a couple of weeks prior to when you would like them to meet with your class to ensure adequate time for structuring the session.

An example of how instructional support from the academic liaisons might be used: instructors from engineering courses have design projects where students have to dig into the current research on a topic to propose new directions to solving engineering problems.



Why they matter

Faculty often incorporate course projects that require students to do research; the research process trains students to become critical thinkers, a necessary skill in academia. Many faculty may struggle to find time to teach students how to conduct thoughtful research and to find and evaluate content. Academic Liaisons are available to facilitate in-class instruction sessions or one-on-one consultations to help students refine their research topics and discover meaningful content. These encounters help improve the quality of student work and sets students on a path to become skilled researchers.

As a part of the design project, students are instructed to meet with their Academic Liaison to begin their investigation into what is currently written or published about that topic.

Research Support

In addition to holding in-class sessions, Academic Liaisons are always available to assist the research needs of faculty and students. They are available through chat from the Sheridan Libraries' homepage (<https://library.jhu.edu>) or through email to asklib@jhu.edu.

For those who want to learn about library resources or how to evaluate sources on the fly, the Sheridan Libraries website offers Research Guides (<https://guides.library.jhu.edu>) as a starting point. The Research Guides are always available even after hours to answer some of your research questions.

Content Discovery

The Sheridan Libraries subscribes to hundreds of academic journals and hundreds



Photo by Jarred Craig on Unsplash

of discipline specific databases. Moreover, there are millions of books available to borrow, not only at the library but also through the extended network of the interlibrary loan program, which is a partnership with other higher-ed research universities, including the Ivy+ Library Consortium. Academic Liaisons are best

poised to guide you through this myriad of resources to find meaningful content. A simple email to asklib@jhu.edu can result in helpful connections to content. If content is not available, or seems to be behind a paywall, please reach out to them. Never pay for content.

Other thoughts

While physical libraries shift focus to online resources more and more each year, the role of the librarian remains unchanged. Librarians, and by association, Academic Liaisons, see content as format agnostic. Whether you seek a physical book, or an online journal, or a digital archive of historical records, or a digitized map of Baltimore as it existed in the 1800s, librarians seek to remove the barriers to knowledge regardless the form it takes. Their effort is to guide you to the right resource to support your research needs.

Additional Resources

- The Sheridan Libraries serve the schools based at the Homewood Campus.
- Sheridan Libraries' website: <https://library.jhu.edu>
- Library help guides: <https://guides.library.jhu.edu/help>
- Library support email: asklib@jhu.edu
- Academic Liaison department page: <https://www.library.jhu.edu/library-departments/academic-liaison/>

Author's Background

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Margaret Burri is the Assistant Director for Academic Liaison and Special Collections at Johns Hopkins University. She sets strategic direction for the library's support of research, teaching, and learning by coordinating the work of curators and research librarians to ensure that strong relationships are built and maintained with faculty and graduate students, that undergraduates receive the highest level of instruction in research skills and methods, and that the collection we build reflects the research needs of faculty and students.

She received her B.A. in Humanistic Studies from Johns Hopkins University, and her M.A. in History and a certificate in museum studies from the University of Delaware. She also holds a master's in library science from the University of Maryland.