The following checklist poses several scenarios with recommendations to help you determine if scheduling an embedded librarian is a good fit for your course. See also the list of best practices to support online students in successful research.

Embedded Librarian Service: Is it the Right Choice for Your Course?

- **If yours is an online course, then:**
  
  **Probably, and here’s why:**
  
  - Many online students cannot come to the library in person or reach us during hours the library is open.
  - Students’ research skills may be rusty if they have been out of school for several years.
  - An embedded librarian can provide relevant assistance for students as problems are observed – usually from a post on the discussion board. This can reinforce online students’ sense of connectedness to the college.

- **If yours is a lower level course where there is a mandatory research assignment requiring the use of materials outside of course-provided readings, then:**
  
  **Probably, and here’s why:**
  
  - Students often begin a course with varying levels of research skills.
  - If it is the first time students need to use academic library sources, they are most likely unfamiliar with the organization and mechanics of researching in our collections.
  - In large classes, some students are hesitant to ask questions.
  - Having an embedded librarian at the time and place of need helps students concentrate on the content and learning objectives for your assignment, rather than spending time figuring out how to navigate the information landscape.
• If yours is a writing intensive course, then:
  Maybe, and here’s why:
  o The extent to which an embedded librarian would benefit your students depends on the nature and complexity of the assignment.
    ▪ If you are asking students for an opinion piece on course readings, then no.
    ▪ If you are asking students to research the pros and cons of a topic with supporting evidence for an argument, then yes.

• If yours is an upper level course with a research assignment, then:
  Probably, and here’s why:
  o Upper level students may have basic research skills, but now need assistance with more sophisticated research strategies as their assignments increase in complexity.
  o Students tend to overestimate their research skills and confuse technological competence with information literacy.
  o BCC librarians aim to scaffold information literacy instruction in manageable units; building on students’ skills over time. Upper level courses should challenge students to engage more deeply with a variety of academic sources, regardless if the student is pursuing a certificate, terminal 2-year degree, or transferring to a 4-year institution.

Best Practices for a Successful Student Online Experience in Academic Research

• Invite your librarian to participate in online class discussions and offer input from the library’s perspective. This will help students feel more comfortable with the presence of the librarian as an academic support partner.
• Dedicate one week of your discussion forums to a research-specific topic, hosted by the librarian. Students can focus and express their ideas and concerns about the research process. Questions posed by one student and answered by the librarian may have relevance for several students who share similar research challenges.
• Require engagement with the librarian as part of the student’s participation grade; reading, reflecting and commenting on classmates’ posts concerning their research assignment benefits all participants.

Content for this checklist was adapted from an original created by Joe Hardenbrook, former instruction and reference librarian at University of Wisconsin at Green Bay, now at Carroll University.