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A Program for Introducing Information Literacy to Commercial Art and Design Students

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the process of developing and implementing a comprehensive, school-wide, and sustainable information literacy program at an applied art and design school. The program requires that information literacy student learning outcomes be included in specific General Education and art and design courses across the curriculum. The results of this multi-year effort indicate that while the program is sound, teaching information literacy is an on-going effort requiring more training of faculty and students. Best practices in information literacy in library science and art and design literature are reviewed.

INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced and ever-changing digital world where technology allows easy access to a seemingly endless flow of data, information literacy has emerged as one of the most important skills students can learn. The three "r's" of the past have been joined by a fourth: research. However, as researchers from The Information School at the University of Washington have recently found, conducting course-related research is frustrating and challenging for students from Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts to Mills College in Oakland, California (Head & Eisenberg, 2009). One can imagine then how difficult the research process is for non-traditional students seeking an associate's or bachelor's degree in an applied art or design field at a limited enrollment college where a high school degree is the most rigorous entrance requirement.

There is an important additional challenge to teaching information literacy in applied art and design fields where the instructors themselves are not researchers. In a traditional academic setting, the terminal degree is valued and teachers are seen as independent, autonomous researchers whose accomplishments are defined in terms of grant-funded, researched-based conference presentations, blind-review publications and scholarly books. This is not typically the case in the applied art and design schools offering associate's and bachelor's degrees that are the focus of this paper. At these schools, students are taught by faculty who are seasoned, hands-on practitioners with years of industry experience. A terminal degree is less important than years on the job, and accomplishments are defined by the art and design products created.

How does one promote information literacy in a setting in which faculty have not received training in, nor are they expected to develop or practice, research-based skills, who share with some of their colleagues in the more traditional academic setting a lack of interest in accepting the responsibility for teaching information literacy and who are also resistant to change? The authors of this paper argue that the only way to promote information literacy successfully is through a comprehensive, campus-wide, formalized, and sustainable programmatic approach. Information literacy student learning outcomes need to be integrated horizontally across the curriculum from art to zoology and vertically throughout the college years from introductory to advanced classes. Support and collaboration among administrators, faculty, librarians, and other program staff at all levels are essential from initial inception through development and assessment.

Best Practices in Information Literacy

Librarians have tried different ways to teach information literacy. One example is bibliographic instruction: in-class or in-library lectures given by librarians. Embedding information literacy as a component of an isolated course is another example. Librarians sometimes find "academic champions" to help them teach information literacy. According to McGuinness (2007, p. 30–31) these are individual "academics who are favorably disposed towards the idea of information literacy instruction on a particular campus." Furthermore, they are able to "negotiate the administrative barriers on behalf of the less powerful information professionals and create opportunities for collaboration that would otherwise elude the librarians." Bibliographic instruction and embedding information literacy in one course is likely to have limited effects on teaching students information literacy. These efforts are one-shot, single sessions isolated from the broader curriculum with little or no follow-up instruction. And even if librarians are lucky enough to find an academic to champion information literacy, they will likely experience only intermittent success because their efforts will be personality, not program, based (McGuinness, 2007, p. 32).

Many scholars in information literacy are beginning to agree on the characteristics necessary to develop a comprehensive, school-wide and sustainable information literacy program. According to McGuinness (2007), a successful information literacy program must receive support from the highest levels of the administration. Information literacy must be a core value in the institution's mission and an essential objective of each academic discipline. Breivik (2004, p. xii–xiii) identifies four characteristics of successful information literacy programs. First, information literacy is a "learning issue not a library issue" for which classroom faculty must be responsible. Second, collaboration between librarians and faculty is essential from planning to implementation. Third, student learning outcomes that meet national standards, preferably those established by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) and endorsed by the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE), should be used to assess progress. Finally, a successful information literacy program must be institutionalized across the

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curriculum. Rockman (2004a) describes an information literacy curriculum as "campus-based; problem-based; inquiry-based; and resource-based (that is, it uses a variety of information resources)." Furthermore, it "makes effective use of instructional pedagogies and technologies; is learner-centered; and is integrated and articulated with a discipline's learning outcomes" (p.16). Information literacy should be integrated "throughout the curriculum, both vertically (within the major) and horizontally (across the curriculum), in both lower- and upper-division general education, elective, prerequisite, pre-professional, and major courses, culminating in a senior capstone experience" (p. 17). Curzon (2004) reviews nine models for teaching information literacy. She offers one recommendation which combines five models in a comprehensive and systematic attempt to reach students: the entrance requirement model, the introduction model, the learning model, the faculty-focus model, and the on-demand model. In this holistic approach, students would enter college with a basic knowledge of information literacy, it would be horizontally and vertically integrated throughout the curriculum, specified in course objectives, taught in the classroom, and be relevant to majors. In a critique of course-based information literacy, Eland (2008) states emphatically, "If we are serious about information literacy, then our goal should be to provide in-depth instruction that is taught and assessed at multiple points in the curriculum to every student who graduates from our institution. Anything less demonstrates that we are not truly serious about information literacy instruction" (p.104).

For Eland, an information literacy program should be comprehensive in scope, reach all students in introductory, intermediate and advanced levels and be tailored to specific majors. The program should be outcome driven and assessed across the curriculum. Eland also says that, "academic librarians must be intimately involved in the process, either as the primary instructors, or as team teachers and co-assessors, or at a minimum as consultants to teaching faculty" (p. 107).

Co-curricular learning opportunities and activities can also be useful in campus-wide efforts to teach students information literacy. While no information literacy program can be successful without a classroom focus, literature is starting to emerge which argues that teachers cannot successfully teach information literacy without the support of the entire campus community. Residential learning communities are one example (Rockman, 2004b). Broadly speaking, a residential learning community includes a group of interested faculty, administrators, staff, and students in an ongoing effort focused on a particular topic. Academic support services are not often thought of as playing a role in teaching, but in this new approach to learning, even these groups can be involved in helping students become information literate. Rockman mentions librarians involved in "training residential advisors, who, in turn can provide *preliminary help* [italics added] to students" (2004b, p. 55). At the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, information literacy efforts are supported by "eight libraries that are maintained, managed, and operated by the Housing Division, working collaboratively with the university's undergraduate library" (2004b, p. 56). Service learning provides another opportunity for students to be exposed to information literacy skills outside the classroom. An example includes "being able to provide clients in a clinic or agency with the most up-to-date and accurate information in order to solve a problem" (Rockman 2004b, p. 61). Rockman (2004b) discusses similar service learning experiences at Southwest Missouri State University, Lehigh University in Pennsylvania, California State University at Monterey Bay, and Berea College in Kentucky (p. 61–62). At these schools, students team up with clients who need to develop a research strategy to search, locate, retrieve, evaluate and/or document information.

In 2003, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) published a list of characteristics that exemplify information literacy's finest undergraduate programs (American Library Association, 2003). It is

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intended as a guide for those interested in starting, developing or evaluating an information literacy program. The ACRL was clear that no college or university needs to include all 78 characteristics it has organized under 10 major categories into its information literacy program. However, as the current literature previously reviewed seems to suggest, a consensus appears to be emerging as to which of the ACRL characteristics are most important. In summary, a successful information literacy program has the support of the highest levels in the school. An information literacy mission statement needs to be established which corresponds to the mission statement of the institution which, in turn, is reflected in the mission statement of the school's various departments and programs. Collaboration among administrators, faculty, librarians, and other program staff is essential from initial inception through development and assessment. Information literacy objectives must be widely disseminated throughout the campus, i.e., integrated horizontally across the curriculum and vertically throughout the college years, thus progressing in sophistication. The programs and courses charged with implementation are clearly identified. Programs and course objectives must be formalized and assessed periodically, using multiple measuring techniques.

INFORMATION LITERACY IN ART AND
DESIGN DEPARTMENTS AND SCHOOLS

Assessing student learning in art and design higher education is becoming increasingly important. In fact, Measuring Unique Studies Effectively (MUSE), hosted by the Savannah School of Art and Design (SCAD) February 8–11, 2009, is the first conference to systematically address the role of assessing student learning in applied art and design higher education. While assessment at the individual grading level dominated the MUSE Conference (Sawyer, 2009; Cunliffe, 2009), there were a few presenters who addressed course- and program-level assessment efforts (Boeher, 2009; Vernon & Pecha, 2009; Bondarchuck & Kubiski, 2009). Unfortunately, none of the presentations included a discussion on how to

assess information literacy at the individual, course, or program level.

The focus of information literacy in the art and design literature is teaching (Gervits & Rusak, 2000; Cohen, 2005: Halverson, 2008; Zanin-Yost & Tapley, 2008), not program development. Gervits and Rusak discuss the multi-disciplinary nature of information literacy that needs to be taught during general or course-integrated bibliographic instruction sessions. Cohen describes how new technologies call forth a new way of teaching information literacy which she calls "collaborative learning" (2005). According to Cohen, the new teaching and learning paradigm "stresses exploration, learning how to learn, problem solving and learning to cooperate. Faculty-student collaboration means that students bring their skills to the class and the teacher need not be an expert in all fields, but becomes a coach, a resource, and a problem solver" (2005, p. 62). Even Halverson's (2008) description of the California Institute of the Arts programmatic efforts to infuse information literacy "throughout the curriculum in meaningful ways," focuses on "in-class assessment tools for both the Writing Arts and the foundation course sessions …. including written forms students fill out as they are completing a hands on exercise presented after an initial demonstration" (p. 35, 37). Zanin-Yost and Tapley identify problems inherent in teaching information literacy during a single stand-alone session or what they call "integration of information literacy," which means having a librarian meet with students in class several times during the term (2008, p. 41). They argue that emerging ways of gathering information, which they call "action research, a process that entails asking a question, collecting the relevant information, and using that information to answer the question," (2008, p. 41) cannot be achieved in one, single, stand-alone, bibliographic session.

It is the present authors' point of view that these innovative and creative classroom advances in teaching information literacy, while essential, are insufficient. The discussion needs to move beyond the individual teaching level. The focus

INFORMATION LITERACY AT THIS COMMERCIAL ART AND DESIGN SCHOOL

The history of teaching students information literacy at the authors' school is not unlike the experiences at other schools throughout the United States. The librarians conducted bibliographic instruction for many years. Some instructors saw the value of this instruction, while most did not. Instructors rarely included an assignment for the students to work on. Inconsistency and lack of planning resulted in some students never receiving bibliographic instruction and other students sitting through more than one session. As a result, bibliographic instruction was not very effective at teaching information literacy.

In the fall of 2005, the librarians developed an 11-week, three-credit elective class called "Information Fluency." The class lectures and hands-on assignments contained a mixture of theory and practice which were based on the Association of College and Research Libraries' Standards for Information Literacy (ACRL 2000). The course was first offered in January 2006 with the department librarian for Arts and Humanities assigned to teach it. From a population of approximately 3,000 students, 11 enrolled in the class. Based on the instructor's experience teaching this class, informal discussion with students, and course evaluations, four important insights emerged from teaching this class. First, students usually did not apply critical thinking to information choices, but instead selected information for assignments based on the first and most convenient Internet source found. Second, piecing together information from multiple sources in order to answer a question was a concept foreign to these students. Third, all information appeared equal. Students were not interested in differentiating between information found in a press release, a white paper, a print journal article, a Web site, or a book. Finally, students did not, or could not, transfer learning to their majors. For example, students

understood the differences between popular and scholarly information, but could not apply that knowledge to projects or assignments within their major. "Information Fluency," was offered three more times, but each time the class was canceled because of low enrollment. Multiple focus groups of students were asked their opinion concerning the low interest in the class. The irony of the students' comments was that they believed their fellow students needed this class, but that they themselves did not. The course was discontinued in January 2007. Teaching information literacy returned to bibliographic instruction.

The librarians decided that they needed to survey the students to try to determine how information literate the student body actually was. An upper-level General Education Research Methods course was recruited to build, administer and analyze a survey with the goal of establishing an information literacy baseline. After analyzing the data, the librarians decided that the lack of information literacy among students was still an issue that needed to be addressed. In May 2007, the librarians presented the findings from this survey to the program chairs and academic deans. They decided to create the Information Literacy Task Force with the goal of developing a plan of how to teach students basic, intermediate and advanced information literacy skills and how to assess skill attainment. Eight representatives from various art and design departments, General Education and the library were appointed to serve on the task force. On June 4, 2007, the Information Literacy Task Force met for the first time.

During the first meeting, the members of the task force decided that some of the ACRL and ALSNA information literacy standards were at a level beyond that which someone seeking an associate's or bachelor's degree in an applied art and design field needs to know. It became clear that the first job of the task force would be to develop a unified understanding about what the information literate student at our college should know and be able to do. Discipline specific information literacy skill sets, or what Head and

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Eisenberg (2009, p. 5) refer to as the need for context, are gaining popularity and, "initiatives to develop information literacy in a community context will continue and will gain momentum in the coming years" (Hinchliffe, 2008, p. 230). The Information Literacy Task Force selected what it thought to be the most appropriate discipline specific beginning information literacy skills needed for art and design students at our school. These are shown in Table 1.

The implementation plan called for reaching freshmen three times within the first three terms of matriculation to include both program and general education courses. Table 2 lists the program classes selected and the departments in which they are housed.

Each student would be taught technical search skills, such as Boolean Logic and other Internet based search techniques in the required Computer Science class. In the required Topics for Composition class students would be taught the process of planning, developing and writing a research paper. Ideally the art or design program class would be taught in the third term after the students had taken the Computer Science and English classes. The program class had to be a project or lab class, not a lecture class, with an assignment that required students to produce a creative project that required them to collect and use information relevant to their major. The task force created the following course objectives:

TABLE 1—INFORMATION LITERACY RUBRIC FOR ART AND DESIGN PROGRAM COURSES

Criteria	Above Average	Average	Below Average
A. Navigation	Documents using all three of the main retrieval systems, i.e. search engines, online library catalogs, and library databases	Documents using two of the main retrieval systems, i.e. search engines, online library catalogs, and library databases	Documents using one or none of the main retrieval systems, i.e. search engines, online library catalogs, and library databases
B. Trade and Consumer Information	Documents using more than one trade and more than one consumer resource	Documents using one trade and one consumer resource	Documents using one or no trade or one or no consumer resource
C. Primary and Secondary	Documents using more than one primary, and more than one secondary resource	Documents using one primary and one secondary resource	Documents using one or no primary, and one or no secondary resource
D. Evaluation	Writes a thorough statement explaining reasons for selecting information sources	Writes an incomplete statement explaining reasons for selecting information sources	Writes no statement explaining reasons for selecting information sources
E. Documentation	Cites all sources following *Give Credit Where Credit Is Due**	Cites some sources following *Give Credit Where Credit Is Due**	Cites no sources following *Give Credit Where Credit Is Due**
F. Application	Incorporates all of the information identified in A-E above into artifact	Incorporates half of the information identified in A-E above into artifact	Incorporates little of the information identified in A-E above into artifact

*Give Credit Where Credit Is Due is an internal document created by the Information Literacy Task Force to summarize how to cite works appropriate for art and design students.

Computer Science
Demonstrate the ability to retrieve information via search engines.

Topics for Composition
Construct and complete a research project, following the ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries) standards, which includes demonstrating the ability to search, identify, locate, and evaluate information resources and to integrate selected information into the research project using proper documentation.

Program Courses
Identify, acquire and evaluate a wide variety of information types (including but not limited to: primary vs. secondary, and trade vs. consumer), in order to develop project ideas and a continuing awareness of industry news; and to properly document used information.

The information literacy learning objectives that were included in the General Education and program course syllabi each called for students to cite information properly in their projects. Many comprehensive how-to manuals exist for citing references according to Modern Language Association (MLA) and American Psychological Association (APA) formats. However, for applied art and design students in program classes, the assignment might not be a written paper but a tangible product like a dress,

building interior, drawing, painting, demo reel, Web site, photograph or film. Knowing what to cite, when to cite and how to cite research material related to the variety of products the students could produce might not be easily found in MLA and APA formats. The task force agreed to create a document, *Give Credit Where Credit Is Due,* that would be more relevant to the type of artifacts created by art and design students and would allow them to quickly see how these citations should be written.

In anticipation of a January 2009 starting date, two general training sessions for the 12 program faculty and eight department chairs participating in this program were held during the Fall 2008 term. The General Education instructors participating in this program had received training earlier in the year. These sessions focused on introducing the information literacy course objectives and rubrics as well as discussing appropriate assignments. Two workshops were also held during the Winter 2009 term for all participants including the six General Education instructors. These sessions were held during weeks three and nine of the 11-week term. They were intended to give participants the chance to clarify processes and procedures, ask questions, discuss what was working or not, and to share their experiences with others. The reference librarian conducted one-on-one training sessions with the five instructors representing Interior Design, Photography, Graphic Design, Advertising and

TABLE 2—ART AND DESIGN PROGRAM CLASSES SELECTED BY TASK FORCE TO INCLUDE IN-FORMATION LITERACY COURSE OBJECTIVES IN THE SYLLABUS

Course Name	Department
Art Culinaire	Culinary
Concept Development	Advertising, Graphic Design, Illustration
Design Concepts for Interactive Media	Web Design
Ergonomics	Interior Design
Human Factors in Design	Industrial Design
Introduction to Game Development	Game Art
Introduction to VFX	VFX
Manufacturing Apparel Concepts	Fashion Design, Fashion Merchandizing
Radio Journalism	Broadcasting
Scripting and Storyboarding	Animation
Scriptwriting	DFVP, Video Production
Survey of Photography	Photography

Illustration. She was also invited into classes in Photography, Graphic Design, Advertising and Illustration to teach students about the beginning level skills they were expected to learn as listed in Table 1.

Assessing Student Learning and Evaluating the Information Literacy Program

The Information Literacy Task Force officially disbanded in the winter term of 2009. Since information literacy was now formalized as a program objective in General Education, the responsibility for overseeing information literacy on campus became the responsibility of the General Education chair. The General Education Information Literacy Committee was created. A committee consisting of two librarians, including the library director and the former Information Literacy Task Force leader, two administrators from General Education including the chair (Ph.D. in Sociology) and assistant chair (Ph. D. in English), and two program faculty, one from Graphic Design and Advertising, the other from Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management, offered the right mix of administration, teaching, knowledge, and industry experience to guide the information literacy program through its next phase. The first major task of the committee was to evaluate the artifacts collected during the Winter 2009 term. The committee met for two hours each on March 23 and 24, as well as on April 13 and 15. Artifacts were turned in from English Composition, Computer Science, and eight of 12 program classes. One program class was not offered during the Winter 2009 term, and instructors in three other program classes were not prepared to implement information literacy in their classes. While the intent of the artifact evaluation meetings was to create an action plan to improve students' information literacy knowledge and skills, conversation quickly turned to evaluating the shortcomings of the information literacy program itself.

The rubrics were the main focus of criticism. Some argued that the rubrics were too ambitious as evidenced by the fact that some program instructors were able to teach only two or three of the six criteria contained in the rubric shown in Table 1. Others criticized some of the wording contained in the rubric. For example, the word "navigation" in row one is not clear and it was argued that it should be replaced by the phrase "collecting and gathering information." Another criticism is that the rubric was too prescriptive. In some programs, trade or consumer documents do not exist. Perhaps the instructor has a good reason for wanting the students to use only primary or only secondary sources. The instructor should also be able to choose the type and number of trade and consumer information resources required in a project as well as the format for citing resources appropriate to that discipline. Finally, the documentation criterion should be expanded to include in-text citation skills. The rubric for Computer Science was also found to be problematic. It was a grading rubric that measured learning in ways only the instructor could evaluate. For example, the teacher required the students to create a PowerPoint presentation, an Excel spreadsheet, and a Word document but from these artifacts, the assessment committee could not tell if the student was "able to evaluate information provided by all sources," or whether the student located, gathered, and used the information efficiently.

Other criticisms of the information literacy program also emerged. The members of the assessment committee knew that while the program had the support of the Dean of Academic Affairs, neither information literacy nor assessment is identified explicitly in the school's mission and value statements. Information literacy is one of five objectives stated specifically in the mission of General Education, but that is insufficient to rally the program faculty around this goal. This lack of support can be seen in the low attendance by some program faculty and chairs at the information literacy workshops and training sessions. The three instructors who did not turn in information literacy artifacts did not attend any of these training sessions or workshops. No faculty attended the first workshop held during

the winter term. Two chairs and three instructors attended the second workshop. Almost all instructors failed to turn in a description of the assignment, leaving the committee little guidance when evaluating the artifacts. One instructor turned in only examples of artifacts receiving an "A". Another turned in a summary evaluation of the artifacts collected but not the artifacts themselves. Students also need to receive more training. The training sessions conducted by the reference librarian were voluntary and therefore spotty at best.

WHAT WOULD WE DO DIFFERENTLY?

We have learned many things during the past few years, not the least of which is what we would do differently if given the opportunity. If we could we would:

1. Reconfigure the Information Literacy Task Force to include more influential and powerful faculty and staff. Planning, organizing, coordinating, implementing and administering an information literacy program across the curriculum is too much work for one person already employed full-time as a reference librarian. We would appoint the chair of General Education, the director of Teaching Excellence, two to three department chairs, and three to six faculty members (two each from art, design, and General Education) to give the Task Force chair the support and assistance necessary for such a big job.

2. Provide the task force with at least part-time administrative support to help the Chair arrange meetings and workshops; take minutes; collect, copy and distribute rubrics and syllabi; keep track of changes in personnel and paperwork; and help promote the efforts of those involved across campus.

3. Work more closely with classroom teachers, rather than the program chairs, in the selection of the courses to be used to teach information literacy. While the chairs know what goes on in their program classes, the instructors have more intimate knowledge of the classroom activities, assignments, papers, projects or exams that will produce the best artifacts to assess student learning.

4. Spend more time training faculty prior to the term and teaching students during the term about information literacy. Make the training sessions mandatory for faculty and assign grades to students regarding what they learned during information literacy sessions.

5. Seek funding to help secure the time and resources necessary to successfully implement the comprehensive information literacy program outlined in this paper.

6. Ask the Dean of Academic Affairs to recognize those who participated in this project at various times and in different ways.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The General Education Information Literacy Committee has decided that our action plan to improve this program includes suspending the collection of artifacts until January 2010. Until then, the 80 full-time instructors at the college will be required to attend one of five information literacy workshop luncheons sponsored and hosted by the Dean of Academic Affairs. These workshops are intended to continue to share ideas, to discuss how to overcome previously identified problems, to secure faculty buy-in and to begin identifying the course that might be best for implementing information literacy at the intermediate and

advanced levels. Those faculty who will participate in the second phase of artifact collection at the introductory level in January 2010 will also receive more training and rewrite rubrics. Plans will be put in place for librarians to play a more active role in teaching information literacy to students in the classroom.

While it may appear that this experiment in teaching information literacy across the curriculum was a failure, this is not the case. Information literacy at the school is now integrated horizontally across the curriculum to include two General Education and 12 program courses taught in all 16 art and design departments. A very solid foundation for unprecedented long-term collaboration between librarians, faculty, and administrators has been laid. As we move forward in trying to assess information literacy at the introductory level, we will also begin to plan for assessing information literacy at the intermediate and advanced levels.

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