

# Communications in Information Literacy

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Volume 1 | Issue 1

Article 3

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5-9-2007

## Information Literacy at Augustana: A Programmatic Approach

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### Recommended Citation

Goebel, N. E., & Neff, P. J. (2007). Information Literacy at Augustana: A Programmatic Approach. *Communications in Information Literacy*, 1 (1), 6-15. <https://doi.org/10.15760/comminfolit.2007.1.1.3>

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Volume 1, Issue 1, Spring 2007

Communications in  
INFORMATION LITERACY

# INFORMATION LITERACY AT AUGUSTANA

## A programmatic approach

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### ABSTRACT

Information literacy programs and the factors that influence their development and structure can vary significantly from institution to institution. Credit-bearing discipline-specific information literacy courses are a rare and valuable component of an undergraduate educational experience and form the basis of Augustana's information literacy program. This article provides an overview of the development, implementation, successes, and drawbacks of the credit-bearing discipline-specific information literacy courses at the Augustana Campus of the University of Alberta (Camrose, Alberta, Canada). Additional program components, including Augustana's annual information literacy workshop, information literacy awards, information literacy DVD, and marketing/branding are discussed.

### INTRODUCTION

Augustana (located in Camrose, Alberta, Canada, and formerly known as Augustana University College) is an undergraduate liberal arts and sciences faculty and campus of the University of Alberta with an enrollment of approximately 1100 students. Augustana focuses on excellence in teaching in the undergraduate context. Its mission (<http://www.augustana.ca/aboutus/>) guides the librarians' teaching efforts and is embodied in the provision of information literacy (IL) education for undergraduate students. As a

result of this focus, the librarians made an intentional shift from the traditional bibliographic instruction (BI) model to an IL-focused approach in 2001. This case study presents the successful implementation of a combination of initiatives which collectively comprise Augustana's information literacy program. It is hoped that this information and the variedness of the initiatives can provide some practical or new ideas to libraries whose information literacy programs are yet to be developed, struggling, or already rightfully successful. The Augustana Library's IL program was honored as the recipient of the 2007

Innovation Achievement Award; a national award presented annually by the Community and Technical College Libraries section of the Canadian Association of College and University Libraries division of the Canadian Library Association.

## IL VERSUS BI

While user education has been connected with libraries for many years, it was the American Library Association's 1989 *Presidential Committee on Information Literacy: Final Report* that provoked a wider understanding and subsequent adoption of the concept of IL across the profession (Behrens, 1994). However, this adoption has not been without its critics (McCrank, 1991; Foster, 1993), and there remain varying interpretations of just what IL encompasses. Snavely and Cooper (1997) observed that despite the controversy around the use and definition of IL, there has been a decided trend among librarians to transcend traditional BI sessions by increasing collaboration with teaching faculty, emphasizing the teaching of process, and facilitating the development of critical thinking skills. The Augustana librarians consider IL to be a distinct paradigm in library instruction. While the term "information literacy" has been mistakenly used interchangeably with library instruction and BI, it consists of truly distinct processes and goals. BI has traditionally focused on giving a brief overview of how to conduct library research (sometimes on a specific topic) with very limited contact time of 50 or 75 minutes, whereas IL covers a wider range of library research topics in greater depth over a longer period of time, and with specific emphasis on critical thinking and evaluation skills. This is consistent with Rader & Coons (1992), who state that IL is conceptually and pedagogically distinct from BI in that IL "serves to synthesize the pieces of the information puzzle into an integrated whole" (p. 118). The distinguishing feature of IL at Augustana is that research and critical thinking skills are developed within semester-long credit-bearing discipline-specific courses where the learning is facilitated by strong and reflective pedagogical relationships

between librarians and students. The Augustana IL program embodies Breivik's (1999) view that "information literacy cannot be taught by librarians or faculty [but, rather] it must be learned by students through experiences shaped by librarians and faculty" (p. 272).

## THE COURSES

### *Background*

The Augustana Library has long offered traditional "one-shot" BI sessions that usually focus on assisting students with library research requirements for one specific assignment. However, librarians observed that students were inevitably still inadequately prepared to do wider library research, primarily due to the limited context and content of BI sessions. Fortunately, a number of teaching faculty members also recognized this deficiency and were eager to seek collaborative solutions. Thus, the Augustana librarians sought to develop credit-bearing discipline-specific IL courses so that library instruction could take on a more continuous and meaningful role for students in a given discipline within Augustana's curriculum.

The librarians met with teaching faculty from Augustana's English and Music departments to discuss strategies that would provide students with a more intentional and integrated library research educational experience than traditional BI could achieve. English and Music were focused on initially because of the strong BI history between the teaching faculty in these disciplines and the Augustana librarians. Basing initial IL efforts on these strong relationships proved to be a solid strategy. These intentional and integrated IL efforts included such elements as more substantial teaching of the research process, library resources and services, evaluation of information, citation practices, and critical thinking skills. It was expected that this would lead to a more positive library research experience for the students and higher quality research papers. Since 2001, credit-bearing discipline-specific IL courses have been added in 19 disciplines, bringing Augustana's total number of IL courses to 21.

Most of the IL courses are one-credit. They are offered once per week in 75-minute sessions for most of the four-month academic term. The music IL course is the exception at 1.5 credits. This exception was made in response to the request of teaching faculty in the music department in the context of what fit well with the credit values of existing courses in the music curricula. This is not the only way that music uniquely stands out. Music teaching faculty were also adamant that the music IL course be a graduation requirement for all students in Bachelor of Arts (Music) or Bachelor of Music degree programs. While this endorsement as a value statement is greatly appreciated by the librarians, having all IL courses required for all programs would not be manageable without additional librarian hirings and/or a significant increase in class sizes. Current planning indicates that IL will be built into Augustana's liberal arts core curriculum, though these decisions will not be made final until 2008, so specifics cannot be provided at this time.

#### *Faculty Support*

Getting the IL courses developed, approved, and implemented depended in large part on the enthusiastic response and ongoing support of the teaching faculty. Many articles have noted teaching faculty resistance to working with librarians on IL integration. Given and Julien (2005) point out the prevalence in the literature of this phenomenon, and state that one of the primary reasons for its existence is the "experiential separation between faculty members and academic librarians" (p. 27). While teaching faculty and librarians have similar end goals of educating students, the historical pattern of tending to work in isolation of each other, thereby creating mutual ignorance of each other's roles, is too often well established. This creates an unfortunate and limited working relationship norm between teaching faculty and librarians. Augustana has been fortunate in this regard as teaching faculty and librarians share a high degree of mutual trust, familiarity, respect and understanding of each other's role in providing undergraduate education. The model of "librarian as teacher" has been well supported and endorsed by

Augustana teaching faculty and administration. The strength of this relationship is due, in part, to the small campus, which affords opportunities that may be difficult or impossible to realize in large research intensive universities. Examples of these opportunities include librarians serving on faculty committees, a collection development policy and process that fully engages teaching faculty, and the institutional "open-door" policy that encourages informal social interaction. Fortunately, the battles with teaching faculty and administration regarding IL initiatives, which are so often mentioned in the literature, are not a factor at Augustana.

#### *Administrative Support*

Administrative support for the IL courses is assumed exclusively by Augustana's Head Librarian. In Augustana's case, the Head Librarian shares the same vision for information literacy as Augustana's teaching faculty and reference librarians, so a level of potential political barriers is absent. Scheduling of the courses is coordinated by the Head Librarian with the department chairs and Registrar's Office on an annual basis. Over time, this task has become less time-consuming and more predictable, though anticipating enrollment in each course can necessitate some demographic analysis as well as conversations with teaching faculty. As with all new or special initiatives, it takes more time and planning to pursue than to accept the status quo. There was little impact on the personnel budget as there were no additional hirings to specifically support the IL program.

Augustana's librarians and teaching faculty worked together to create an initial framework for the IL course content. The content for subsequent IL courses was modeled after the initial courses. Since that time, librarians have periodically taken course-specific assessment information to teaching faculty of a single discipline to review the discipline's IL course and its overall effectiveness. This often necessitates the need for targeted analysis of pre- and post-test data, which creates another level of administrative responsibility in the maintenance and accessibility of such data.

*Not for Freshmen*

Ideally, students take their discipline's IL course in the second of four years of undergraduate study. Students are not permitted to take the courses in their first year. This decision was made after Augustana's librarians consulted with teaching faculty who indicated that it was rare for students in their freshman year to be assigned work that required substantial library research. Therefore, Augustana librarians and teaching faculty agreed to restrict enrollment in the IL courses to students in at least their second year of study, as these students would presumably derive the greatest benefit. In Augustana's context, this has proven to be the right choice, as students are then positioned to apply the learned skills and processes immediately in relevant and practical contexts.

*Planning and Objectives with Reference to Standards*

The Association of College and Research Libraries' (ACRL) *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* was used as a guide in developing the lesson plans informed too by the Augustana library's mission and the context of Augustana's curriculum. The lecture materials and assignments were designed to cover appropriate content for the respective disciplines, while ensuring that the goal behind each lecture and assignment met at least one ACRL standard and outcome. In essence, the course content was created by dramatically expanding traditional BI concepts in terms of depth, quantity and emphasis, and blending these aspects with new elements, such as a deeper focus on critical evaluation of information. For example, in-depth critical evaluation of information is an element often absent in BI sessions, whereas the IL course model affords the time and context for such exploration.

*Credit-Bearing*

In North America, credit-bearing courses in library instruction have existed since at least the end of the nineteenth century (Salony, 1995). In reference to credit-bearing library instruction, Adams and Morris (1985) state, "Giving academic credit is the way in which higher

education legitimizes learning; the way by which students are told that certain skills and knowledge are important" (p. 3). Although distinct in nature from traditional library instruction, it is still evident that giving credit for an IL course is an effective way to communicate the value of the course to students. In the students' world of competing interests, it is essential to provide whatever appropriate incentives are available. Certainly, the amount of time and work that students put into an IL course should be compensated, as appropriate, by academic credit, just as in any other college or university course. Therefore, to stress the curricular significance of these courses, Augustana's librarians and teaching faculty made them credit-bearing. Additionally, student evaluation was implemented according to the University of Alberta's grading scheme, as opposed to a pass/fail system.

*Discipline-Specific Structure and Commitment*

The discipline-specific approach, while recognized as important (Grafstein, 2002), is much less common. In a recent example, the University of New Hampshire, Manchester implemented a "super-sized bibliographic instruction program" that took a discipline-specific approach to library instruction in psychology. While it was not confined to a "one-shot" delivery model, it was not credit-bearing (Paglia & Donahue, 2003). Of the few discipline-specific credit-bearing IL courses that exist, the majority are not at the undergraduate level. In North America, only a handful of such courses at the undergraduate level exist. Badke (2005) reports a successful experience embedding a credit-bearing IL course in the undergraduate Communications Department of Trinity Western University. Burkhardt (2007) describes an IL credit-bearing lab taken concurrently with a required undergraduate business course. But generally, discipline-specific credit-bearing IL courses at the undergraduate level appear to be rare.

The Augustana librarians deliberately chose a discipline-specific model as it appeared to best meet the needs of liberal arts and sciences students. The discipline-specific approach

covers the idiosyncrasies of disciplines' research tools with a complementary emphasis on the transferability of the research process across disciplines. This allows the librarian to identify scholarly communication practices, resources, and IL skills pertinent to a particular discipline. For example, musical scores are of little interest or application to an economics class, but understanding Boolean logic is essential for all disciplines. Augustana's IL courses are taught acknowledging an institutional value that recognizes the interdisciplinary potential of information and learning; librarians are mindful of this context in their teaching and reference interactions. As well, each course has received the necessary levels of approval within the University of Alberta: departmental approval, Curriculum Committee approval, and General Faculties Council approval. Each course is named within the relevant discipline and numbered in the series of courses at the 200 level as fits with existing courses in that discipline (e.g. Biology 210: Biological Studies and Information Literacy).

Some library research skills are discipline-neutral; however, there are specific aspects of the courses that Augustana is committed to keeping discipline-specific:

#### Reference Resources

Students are taught about discipline-specific paper and electronic reference resources. For example, very different reference resources are taught in a music class than in a chemistry class, and awareness of the use and content of these resources is pivotal in students' growing understanding of their discipline and its literature, future professional research, and preparation for graduate studies. Instruction focuses first on core reference resources in the discipline of the course. After students understand the types, varieties and purposes of reference resources in the discipline of their major, they are able to transfer and apply those concepts to reference resources of other disciplines.

#### Indexes/Databases

The use of periodical databases that are most relevant to the discipline is taught. This includes the primary databases (e.g., *PsycINFO* for psychology students) and at least one general database (e.g., *Academic Search Premier*) to impart an appreciation of the differences between specialized and general, scholarly and popular. To be successful, students need to understand the appropriate use of both kinds of databases and the resources to which they provide access.

#### Discipline-specific Resources

When appropriate, discipline-specific resources such as music scores, annual reports, or topographic maps are included in the course.

#### Citation Styles

The Augustana librarians have successfully petitioned the teaching faculty by discipline to adopt, within each discipline, a particular style manual, and to sign an agreement that this will be the required style for papers submitted in those disciplines. In effect, this significantly reduces confusion for students and librarians regarding which style manual (e.g. *APA*) should be used for a particular discipline. The appropriate style manual is taught in the IL course, as determined by the discipline's teaching faculty. While this may seem unnecessary for some disciplines (for example, it is likely universally accepted that *APA* is used for all psychology courses), the same cannot be said across the wide breadth of courses taught within the curricula of a liberal education. Students, teaching faculty, and librarians alike have articulated their appreciation for this practice.

#### *The Corequisite Approach*

The more related library instruction is to other course work, the more motivated and enthusiastic students will be about participating (Adams & Morris, 1985). This also holds true for IL courses and is the reason for Augustana's "corequisite" model. The relationship between the credit-bearing discipline-specific IL course and the corequisite course is the primary method

of IL integration. Students who register in an IL course concurrently register in a senior-level (e.g. 200-, 300-, or 400-level) course in the same discipline that requires significant library research. The non-IL course is called a “corequisite.” A student would use the topic from a paper to be written in the corequisite course as the subject for all assignments in the IL course. As a result, assignments in the IL course assist the students in identifying books, journal articles, and scholarly Web sites for papers in the corequisite course. Students also construct their bibliographies according to the discipline’s agreed-to citation style.

#### *Current List of Credit IL Courses*

There are currently 21 credit-bearing discipline-specific IL courses at Augustana: Art 228, Biology 210, Chemistry 210, Criminology 260, Drama 228, Economics 212, English 204, Environment 201, French 210, Geography 210, German 210, History 285, Management 212, Music 228, Philosophy 228, Physical Education 294, Political Studies 201, Psychology 207, Religious Studies 228, Scandinavian Studies 210, and Sociology 231.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF AUGUSTANA’S INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAM

A number of initiatives partner with Augustana’s IL courses to create the Augustana IL Program. These initiatives broaden and enhance the program and assist with marketing, documentation, and promotional opportunities.

#### *Augustana Information Literacy in Academic Libraries Workshop*

The annual Augustana Information Literacy in Academic Libraries Workshop was developed to invite as speakers high-profile librarians who have demonstrated deep engagement in various aspects of IL to speak at Augustana. Each fall the workshop attracts 75-100 attendees to Augustana from across North America. The workshop’s registration is limited so as to create an intimate learning opportunity for participants. The workshop presenters and themes, to date, have been:

Beth Dupuis, Head of Instructional Services, University of California, Berkeley — “*Supporting Undergraduate Research Experiences*” (2006)

Judy Peacock, Information Literacy Coordinator, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane Australia — “*Intentional Information Literacy Strategies*” (2005)  
*Day 1: Embedding Information Literacy into the Curriculum: Proven Method or Potential Madness?*  
*Day 2: Intentional Professional Development in Information Literacy: Librarian as Leader and Learner*

Elizabeth Hutchins, Librarian (retired), St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota — “*Knowing Ourselves as Teachers*” (2004)

Deb Gilchrist, Dean of Library and Media Services, Pierce College, Washington — “*Assessment*” (2003)

Ruth Dickstein, Social Sciences Librarian, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona — “*Working with Faculty*” (2002)

Tom Kirk, Library Director and Coordinator of Information Services, Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana — “*An Introduction to Information Literacy*” (2001)

#### *IL Awards*

The Augustana librarians have created two IL awards for the Augustana community. The first award is the Augustana Information Literacy Student Award for Library Research. This \$500.00 annual award acknowledges, rewards, and celebrates students of the Augustana Faculty of the University of Alberta whose research makes extensive use of the services, resources, and collections of the Augustana Faculty Library. Funds to support the award are made available through personal donations made by Augustana’s teaching faculty, providing yet another endorsement of IL at Augustana. The start-up administrative work for the award was the most substantial task as

there was the desire to have the award formally endorsed by the university's award process and not just be an award of the library sitting independently of other institutional acknowledgement processes. On an ongoing basis, the award processes are reviewed including the application process, criteria, committee membership, marketing, Web page and assessment rubric. In preparation to apply for the award, students document their research process for a library-based research paper. There are a number of steps required to complete the application process:

- Students must complete an application form. This form gathers contact information for the student and a brief summary of the research being performed.
- The supervising teaching faculty member must complete the Support of Student Application form.
- Students must submit a Reflective Statement of Research Process that discusses the library services, resources, and collections used while researching and writing the submitted paper. This is the component in the application review process that is given the highest consideration.
- Students must submit a final version of the research paper (including its reference list, works cited, or bibliography) that was written as a requirement for a 200-, 300-, or 400-level Augustana Faculty credit course during the current academic year.

The second award is the Augustana Information Literacy Teaching Faculty Award for the Support of Information Literacy. This award is granted annually to an Augustana teaching faculty member who has contributed consistently and notably to the promotion of IL at the Augustana campus. Teaching faculty are nominated by Augustana students, staff, teaching faculty, and administrators. The teaching faculty award is presented at the annual Augustana Information Literacy in Academic Libraries Workshop. This provides an opportunity to highlight the work and advocacy of the award winner in a forum of local and visiting librarians and teaching faculty.

### *IL Video*

In 2006, the Augustana librarians created a DVD outlining Augustana's IL initiatives. *It Changed the Way I Do Research - Period: Augustana Talks Information Literacy*, a light-hearted 30-minute video, provides insight into the value of IL in the context of undergraduate liberal education by interviewing students, teaching faculty, librarians, and administrators. Narrated by an Augustana student, the DVD promotes IL in the context of higher education and explains various components of Augustana's IL program.

The video includes many testimonials by students, teaching faculty, administrators and librarians who have been influenced in some way by Augustana's IL initiatives. Participants include students who have taken one of the courses, teaching faculty who have observed improvements in papers because their students have taken one of the courses, Augustana's dean, who articulates the importance of IL in the liberal education, and librarians who have had the unique opportunity to teach credit-bearing discipline-specific IL courses. The video also explains initiatives that form a large part of our overall IL program.

The Augustana Library's Web page for the video provides information about the video itself, a downloadable order form to purchase it, instructions for borrowing it, and a short trailer. A scaled-down 10-minute streaming video version of the 30-minute DVD will be available online in the near future. The address of this Web page is <http://www.augustana.ca/library/infolit/video.html>.

### *Marketing and Branding*

If we build it, will they come? Without an effective and continuing marketing strategy in place, all the work that goes into the creation of IL courses could quickly amount to nothing. Augustana has marketed its IL courses to both students and teaching faculty in several ways:

#### Posters

Colorful posters are posted around campus, including dormitories, outlining the schedule



FIGURE 1.: AUGUSTANA’S ORIGINAL IL LOGO.

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## INFORMATION LITERACY

for upcoming IL courses. Contact information for academic advisors and librarians is provided.

### Newsletter

The *Augustana Newsletter* and *QuickFacts* (library’s newsletter for teaching faculty) are both used to promote and describe the IL courses to students and teaching faculty.

### IL awards

While there is no formal connection between the IL awards and the IL courses, the student award enjoys a high level of visibility on campus. This acts as a catalyst in having students understand the role the IL course could play in their liberal education.

### Faculty

Augustana’s teaching faculty are strong supporters of IL initiatives. It took some time to develop the relationship, but now that it is in place, the teaching faculty are likely the best marketing tool for the IL courses.

Teaching faculty report to librarians that they mark better papers from students who take the IL courses, so they are keen to encourage students to take the IL courses.

### Logos

In 2003, the Augustana Library created an IL logo for use in the visual identity/branding and promotion of all IL initiatives at Augustana. The logo consists primarily of text, including the words, in capital letters: AUGUSTANA INFORMATION LITERACY (see Figure 1).

One of the goals at Augustana has been to increase, in an ongoing and incremental way, an understanding of the importance of IL in the university curriculum among students, teaching faculty, and administration. We felt that the more and varied situations in which people saw the phrase “Information Literacy,” the more familiar it would become. To fully integrate students in this process (and to have some fun), Augustana’s

FIGURE 2.: AUGUSTANA’S PEOPLE LOGO CREATED BY STUDENTS LYING IN THE SNOW FORMING LETTERS



Head Librarian invited some students to lie in the snow one sunny Canadian winter afternoon after a recent snowfall. These students formed letters by lying in the snow to make a "People Logo" resembling our text-based IL logo. Figure 1 is our "traditional" logo; Figure 2 is the People Logo.

The People Logo has been very well received. It is mounted in various locations on campus as 4 x 8 foot posters and has also been printed on t-shirts and bookmarks.

### DRAWBACKS

Despite the success of Augustana's IL program as a whole there have been some drawbacks. With a small staff of librarians, the program's success has relied on a consistent and unwavering commitment from the librarians as well as a high expectation level regarding overall contribution. This is a considerable expectation and it cannot be assumed that members of an entire team will be able to sustain this level of engagement, focus and energy indefinitely. Fortunately, we have benefited from a team that is comprised of individuals who share a common passion and perspective, so the shared goal is clear and remains sustainable. However, because this model is filled with high expectations, it leaves little room for anything less than a very high standard of team functionality. If the team were ever to get off track, the success of the program could become tenuous or experience windows of less certainty and greater vulnerability.

This reality creates its own pressures related to workload and each individual's willingness and ability to assume a higher-than-average librarian workload. In theory and practice, it becomes a workload that reflects a built-in notion of service to the institution and service to the library profession. On the other hand, there is an extremely high level of satisfaction for each of the librarians involved. This resulting personal and professional satisfaction energizes, motivates, and perpetuates a climate of cooperation, mutual growth, and challenge.

The discipline-specific approach also necessitates providing the full range of IL course offerings with each discipline-specific course being taught at least every two years. This creates more complex scheduling and customized course preparation than the offering of generic IL courses. The administrative side of the IL courses cannot be overlooked. It requires regular communication with the department chairs and registrar, which creates more complexity than with traditional library instruction programs.

### FINAL OBSERVATIONS

Students who have taken an IL course become more self-directed learners, with increased confidence and ability to do library research. However, this newfound confidence is not self-deluding. That is, following the course, students are more likely to ask a reference librarian for assistance and tend to ask more sophisticated questions. This pattern has been observed time and time again at the Augustana Library. For a detailed examination of the Augustana Library's IL assessment practices and findings see Goebel, Neff and Mandeville (in press).

Building a broader IL "program" through a variety of initiatives creates a broader understanding and stronger support for all program components, especially the IL courses. It also creates a wide variety of professional opportunities for librarians, thereby providing a rich and motivating work culture. Key in the creation of such a program is having a clear understanding of the context of one's institution to assure the highest degree of relevance, success, and satisfaction. By demonstrating successful outcomes for students, teaching faculty, and librarians, Augustana's programmatic approach to IL can serve as an excellent model for other institutions that are similar in size or mandate or culture.

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