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# Beyond Search: Information Literacy, Special Collections, and the First Year

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# Beyond Search



## INFORMATION LITERACY, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, AND THE FIRST YEAR

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# Purpose



- I. To argue that information literacy (IL)—including first-year IL—should shift its primary focus away from searching and toward higher-level skills
- II. To illustrate what first-year IL outcomes and teaching strategies might look like with such an approach
- III. To argue for the centrality of special collections in teaching transferable, high-level research and information skills to first-year students

# Augustana's First-Year Sequence\*



**LSFY101:** *What does it mean to be a liberally educated individual?*

**LSFY102:** *How does exploring the past deepen our understanding of the human condition?*

**LSFY103:** *How do we embrace the challenges of our diverse and changing world?*

\*See “General Education Studies (AGES),” Augustana College, <https://www.augustana.edu/academics/majors--areas-of-study/general-education-studies>.

# LSFY Skills Matrix (prior to 2013-14)



<b>LSFY 101</b>	<b>LSFY 102</b>	<b>LSFY 103</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Describe how information is organized</li> <li>-Distinguish among different forms of information (books, articles, newspapers, and web materials)</li> <li>-Use reference materials to select a topic and to locate reliable background information</li> <li>-Examine the use of indexes, databases, and bibliographies when searching for information</li> <li>-Search for books and/or chapters/essays in books in ALiCat and I-Share</li> <li>-Distinguish between popular and scholarly materials</li> <li>-Define a research question</li> <li>-Develop keywords for a simple search and use subject headings to expand the search</li> <li>-Explain why sources must be cited and demonstrate familiarity with MLA citation style</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Identify the means of accessing print and electronic information</li> <li>-Use bibliographical information to advance research</li> <li>-Determine which forms of information are appropriate for a research topic</li> <li>-Determine when interlibrary loan is appropriate and know how to use it</li> <li>-Distinguish between primary and secondary materials and determine which kind of source is needed for a topic</li> <li>-Select relevant popular and/or scholarly materials based on research needs</li> <li>-Formulate a search strategy using mapping concepts and/or subject headings</li> <li>-Consider the authority, bias, currency and relevance of all resources</li> <li>-Format references appropriately in in-text citations and bibliographies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Master the research tools available for information retrieval</li> <li>-Refine a research question by employing advanced search strategies in subject-specific databases</li> <li>-Gather the appropriate sources through a combination of consulting bibliographies, searching catalogs and databases, and chasing cited references</li> <li>-Evaluate resources based on authority, bias, currency, and relevance and effectively integrate them into research</li> <li>-Use a citation style appropriate to the task</li> </ul>

# Part I



*INFORMATION LITERACY—  
INCLUDING FIRST-YEAR IL—  
SHOULD SHIFT ITS PRIMARY  
FOCUS AWAY FROM  
SEARCHING AND TOWARD  
HIGHER-LEVEL SKILLS*



# Higher-Level Bloom Skills



Evaluation

Synthesis

Analysis

Application

Comprehension

Knowledge

Examples:

- evaluating sources (content as well as surface features)
- developing research questions

Examples:

- search mechanics
- manipulating databases

# The Library's Assessment Project



## Quantitative Assessment (fixed-choice quiz)



# The Library's Assessment Project



## Performance-Based Assessment\*

- In-class worksheets
- Questions targeted to specific learning outcomes

\*For more information on the library's assessment project, see Stefanie R. Bluemle, Amanda Y. Makula, and Margaret W. Rogal, "Learning by Doing: Performance Assessment of Information Literacy across the First-Year Curriculum," *College & Undergraduate Libraries* 20, no. 3-4 (2013): 298-313, doi:10.1080/10691316.2013.829368.

# The Library's Assessment Project



LSFY 101	LSFY 102	LSFY 103
<p data-bbox="79 425 498 494">-Describe how information is organized</p> <p data-bbox="73 505 658 701"><b>Use reference materials to select a topic and to locate reliable background information</b></p> <p data-bbox="79 729 639 911">-Examine the use of indexes, databases, and bibliographies when searching for information -Search for books and/or chapters/essays in books in ALiCat and</p> <p data-bbox="92 919 587 1062"><b>Distinguish between popular and scholarly materials</b></p> <p data-bbox="79 1072 639 1293">-Develop keywords for a simple search and use subject headings to expand the search -Explain why sources must be cited and demonstrate familiarity with MLA citation style</p>	<p data-bbox="678 425 1219 494">-Identify the means of accessing print and electronic information</p> <p data-bbox="678 494 1161 736"><b>Determine which forms of information are appropriate for a research topic</b></p> <p data-bbox="678 765 1190 1293">-Distinguish between primary and secondary materials and determine which kind of source is needed for a topic -Select relevant popular and/or scholarly materials based on research needs -Formulate a search strategy using mapping concepts and/or subject headings -Consider the authority, bias, currency and relevance of all resources -Format references appropriately in in-text citations and bibliographies</p>	<p data-bbox="1277 425 1837 451">Master the research tools available for</p> <p data-bbox="1290 454 1804 701"><b>Refine a research question by employing advanced search strategies in subject-specific databases</b></p> <p data-bbox="1277 729 1837 951">databases, and chasing cited references -Evaluate resources based on authority, bias, currency, and relevance and effectively integrate them into research -Use a citation style appropriate to the task</p>

# Results of the Assessment Project



Students *most easily* learned skills such as:

- Navigating Library of Congress classification
- Locating on-topic articles in databases
- Employing database limiters
- (By the end of the year), deciphering new or unfamiliar databases

# Results of the Assessment Project



Students were *most challenged* by skills such as:

- Using research to shape/inform the development of topics and research questions
- Selecting the best sources from among several on-topic options. For example:
  - Determining source type beyond the database record (e.g., research vs. review articles)
  - Evaluating sources' purpose/arguments

# Project Information Literacy



From a study of first-year students, four “categories of difficulties”:

- “Formulating effective and efficient online searches
- “Identifying, selecting, and locating sources
- “Reading, comprehending, and summarizing materials
- “Figuring out faculty’s expectations for research assignments”\*

\*Alison J. Head, *Learning the Ropes: How Freshmen Conduct Course Research Once They Enter College*, (Seattle: Project Information Literacy, 2013), 16, [http://www.projectinfolit.org/pdfs/PIL\\_2013\\_FreshmenStudy\\_FullReport.pdf](http://www.projectinfolit.org/pdfs/PIL_2013_FreshmenStudy_FullReport.pdf).

# Project Information Literacy



From a study of second- to fourth-year students, the most difficult parts of the research process:

1. “Getting started is difficult
2. “Defining a topic
3. “Narrowing down a topic
4. “Filtering irrelevant results”\*

\*Alison J. Head and Michael B. Eisenberg, *Truth Be Told: How College Students Evaluate and Use Information in the Digital Age* (Seattle: Project Information Literacy, Information School, University of Washington, 2010), 25, [http://www.projectinfolit.org/pdfs/PIL\\_Fall2010\\_Survey\\_FullReport1.pdf](http://www.projectinfolit.org/pdfs/PIL_Fall2010_Survey_FullReport1.pdf).

# Recommendations



“We recommend modifying [library] sessions (in-class and reference encounters) so they emphasize *research process*--framing a successful research process--over *research-finding of sources*.”\*

“We think it is essential librarians teach students *transferable information concepts* that are integrated into lower and upper division courses, *instead of focusing on search skills* in brief encounters with students.”\*\*

“*[T]he results of our assessment project support decreasing the emphasis on search in LSFY library visits and increasing the emphasis on evaluative and analytical skills . . . [such as] developing topics and research questions, evaluating sources, and articulating sources’ role in the research project.*”†

\**Truth Be Told*, 39; original emphasis.

\*\**Learning the Ropes*, 32; emphasis added.

† Thomas Tredway Library, Augustana College, “Assessment Report” (unpublished manuscript, October 3, 2013); original emphasis.

# Part II



*WHAT MIGHT FIRST-YEAR INFORMATION LITERACY LEARNING OUTCOMES AND TEACHING STRATEGIES LOOK LIKE WITH SUCH AN APPROACH?*





# Revised LSFY Skills Matrix\*



	<b>LSFY 101</b>	<b>LSFY 102</b>	<b>LSFY 103</b>
<b>Writing Skills</b>	<b>The Writing Process</b> -Exploratory writing -Revision (with an emphasis on bringing out the line of your argument)	Continued practice with process writing . . . + <b>Writing with Sources</b> -Summarizing -Documentation -Entering the conversation	Continued practice with process writing and writing with sources . . . + <b>Multi-source Case-Building Essay</b> -Putting multiple sources into conversation with one another -Selecting and interpreting evidence
<b>Reading Skills</b>	Exploring reading through annotation and asking questions	Summarizing/Paraphrasing	Identifying points of agreement and disagreement between texts
<b>Oral Communication Skills</b>	Exploring ideas through class discussion	Presenting information	Persuading audiences
<b>Information Literacy Skills</b>	Exploratory research to generate ideas and questions	Evaluating sources based on the research need	Synthesizing diverse sources to develop and address a research question

\*Excerpt from “LSFY Skills Matrix,” Augustana College, accessed February 11, 2014, [http://www.augustana.edu/Documents/AGES/LSFY\\_Skills\\_Matrix.pdf](http://www.augustana.edu/Documents/AGES/LSFY_Skills_Matrix.pdf).

(Continues with common readings/experiences)

# First-Year Information Literacy Outcomes\*



- **LSFY101:** Exploratory research to generate ideas and questions
- **LSFY102:** Evaluating sources based on the research need
- **LSFY103:** Synthesizing diverse sources to develop and address a research question

\*“LSFY Skills Matrix.”

# Teaching Strategies



**LSFY101 – Rhetoric & the Liberal Arts – [Faculty member]**

Librarian: Stefanie Bluemle ([stefaniebluemle@augustana.edu](mailto:stefaniebluemle@augustana.edu))

Which of the papers you wrote this term do you want focus on during this class period? Recap the main argument you made in that paper here:

Spend the rest of the class period looking for sources relevant to the topic of that paper. **Your goal is to find a source that can help you develop, revise, or re-think your argument for the paper. Any source that doesn't develop your thinking in some way is probably not a good choice!**

Focus on these resources:

- [provide a list]

At the end of the class period, choose the source that has done the most to develop your thinking so far about the paper. If it's a book, consider checking it out. If it's an article, consider reading it. **How might your revised paper look different with this source to inform your thinking?** Write 4-5 sentences reflecting on that question, based on what you know so far about the source.

**How might your revised paper look different with this source to inform your thinking?** Write 4-5 sentences reflecting on that question, based on what you know so far about the source.

**LSFY101: Exploratory research to generate ideas and questions.**

## Lesson:

Students identify one source that can develop their thinking as they work to revise a paper

# Teaching Strategies



**LSFY102:** Evaluating sources based on the research need

Lesson:\*

1. In groups, students examine two or more sources and rank them from “best” to “worst” for the assignment; discuss as a class
2. Librarian demonstrates how to find a “good” source using databases
3. Students each identify one source for their own projects and justify decision in a paragraph

\*See also Bluemle, Makula, and Rogal, “Learning by Doing,” 307-308.

# Teaching Strategies



**LSFY103: Synthesizing diverse sources to develop and address a research question**

## Lesson:

Students select two sources that help them refine an initial, broad topic or research question (or develop a topic into a question)

### Developing a Topic or Research Question

1. As you begin to think about this project, what topic or question would you like to explore?

2. Where will you begin your research?

-Reference collection

-Explore databases

-ALiCat/browsing the book stacks

3. **Select two sources** you have found **that will help you explore your subject.**

a.

b.

**“How have the two sources helped you refine or narrow your topic or question?”**

4. After reviewing the two sources, **how have they helped you refine or narrow your topic or question?**

Write a short paragraph answering these questions.

How have they helped you refine or narrow your topic or question?

# Part III



*SPECIAL  
COLLECTIONS  
SHOULD BE CENTRAL  
TO TEACHING  
TRANSFERABLE,  
HIGH-LEVEL  
RESEARCH AND  
INFORMATION SKILLS  
TO FIRST-YEAR  
STUDENTS*

# Special Collections and First-Year Students



- Outcomes mentioned designed to include Special Collections
- Inherently inquiry-based and hands-on
- No reason not to use Special Collections with first-year students

“engaging [first-year students] with thoughtfully selected materials from our collections early in their college careers contributes to their cognitive development and critical thinking skills”\*

\* Barbara Rockenbach, “Archives, Undergraduates, and Inquiry-Based Learning: Case Studies from Yale University” *The American Archivist* 74 (2011), 275-289. <http://hdl.handle.net/10022/AC:P:10945>

# Background



Grew organically out of what we were already doing

- ~25% of first-year students use Special Collections every year
- Many start as early as their first term
- Steadily increasing usage over past ten years



# Special Collections Outcomes



- Have students become familiar with the existence and resources of Special Collections (101)
- Provide interesting, unusual, and unique content for students to explore (101)
- Evaluate and analyze documents (102)
- Learn to frame a research question or topic so as to be able to communicate with a librarian and get the materials they need (103)
- Set expectations and guidelines for use of the materials

# Hands-On Work with Materials



- Spend significant time with materials
  - At least the length of one class
  - Return visits are preferable
- Librarian can prepare a variety of materials before class
- Include introduction to handling materials
- Have students discuss their materials so that they can compare the types of sources and analysis techniques

# Example Exercise



**Exercise:** Analyze all aspects of an original primary source

## Lesson

Ask questions of the document, consider its format and physical aspects, connect on an emotional level

### Document Analysis

What did you find in these documents that seems surprising, unexpected, or that provokes an emotional response? Consider their content, as well as their appearance and “packaging.”

What questions do the documents raise?

Why do you think these documents were created? Who created them? For whom?

How are the two documents similar? How are they different?

Why is it important to look at these types of documents? What can you learn from them? What is different about the experience of working with these documents compared to other sources you have used? (This could include fiction, scholarly articles, online sources, etc. depending on the content of the class.)

# New Types of Analyses



- Unique and unusual sources
- Encourage students to analyze visual and physical aspects of materials
- Influence of original materials

# Choosing Collections



- Do not need large collection of rare materials
- Nor do materials have to be very old
- Something students can connect to
- Most important is to defamiliarize the research process for students and to force them to think in new ways about research and documents

# Coming Full Circle



- Now assessing our work in Special Collections
- Very little assessment on teaching and learning in special collections, let alone with first-year students
- Initial surveys showed that students were learning some of the things we hoped they were
- Piloting an assessment project studying special collections and information literacy

# Part IV



CONCLUSION



# Conclusion, Part I



- Using assessment to re-evaluate and change outcomes allows you to address what students on your particular campus are struggling with
- Librarians should move pedagogy beyond search to focus more on higher-level information literacy skills
- Special Collections is a valuable partner in teaching a wide variety of information literacy skills to first-year students, and should be part of an integrated information literacy instruction program



# Conclusion, Part II



- This type of program allows for building on information literacy skills in the major and towards senior seminars
- The assessment cycle is always recursive: now we're assessing the changes we have made and the work of special collections
- This may sound like something amazing and different, but it's quite easy to do on your own campus

# Questions?



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