Lighting the Path to Collections Through Collaboration

Brena Smith and Alison Armstrong

Background

HNRS101-I, a two-unit course for performing research in the social and behavioral sciences, was created as a project within UCLA's Undergraduate Initiatives (UI). UI is a new library-wide service attempting to connect all library units to their undergraduate students. UI's mission is to work directly with undergraduate students, their faculty, teaching assistants, campus support services and library units, and programs and services to enhance the undergraduate learning experience by integrating the vast resources, services and collections of the UCLA library into everyday student life.

In the spring of 2008 the Director of UI was approached by the Director of the Undergraduate Research Center (URC) for the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and asked to develop a two-unit course to support URC students participating in the Undergraduate Research Fellows Program (URFP) and the Undergraduate Research Scholars Program (URSP). It was also suggested that students within the Academic Advancement Program (AAP) would likely benefit from a discipline-specific research course. Programs offered through AAP and URC provide unique research opportunities to undergraduates at UCLA to participate in long-term research projects within their fields of study. Students are partnered with a graduate student mentor who guides them in their research and, after a two-year period, students present their finished research at an on-campus conference. Students must apply to the programs, which are

Smith *(Information Literacy Operations Librarian)* and
Armstrong *(Director of Undergraduate Initiatives and Head of College Library)*
UCLA [Los Angeles, CA]

highly selective. In response, UI partnered with the URC, AAP, and UCLA Library's Information Literacy Program (ILP) to create a course that would meet the needs of this specialized group of students.

As we began to develop the course we asked ourselves several questions. First, what are the existing models for unit-bearing courses? Is it necessary to create something "new"? What do we already have in place - and will they meet our needs for these students?

Literature Review

Our review of current literature focused on the types and models of for-credit classes and included a scan of the past five years of previously compiled bibliographies. Specifically we reviewed "Library Instruction and Information Literacy" which is published annually in *Reference Services Review* (Johnson & Jent 2004, Johnson & Jent 2005, Johnson & Jent 2007, Johnson, Jent & Reynolds 2007, Johnson, Jent & Reynolds 2008).

The literature on for-credit classes tends to focus on case studies describing how the courses fit in with local practices and programs within a library or across a campus (Aldrich 2007, Harvey & Goodell 2008, Wong, Chan & Chu 2008). Just as often, a case study focused on the use or integration of technology in relation to the class (Jacobs 2007, Matesic & Adams 2008, Florea, 2008). Occasionally, the focus of an article was on the subject alignment (if different than the local practices) or on the targeted audience (Goebel & Neff 2008, Harvey & Goodell 2008, Kraemer 2007). The depth of information available about information literacy courses is abundant, therefore we wanted to narrow our review as we were particularly interested in the targeted audience of honors students and for-credit teaching.

We found Kraemer's (2007) article, "Developing information literacy instruction for honors students at Oakland University: An information consulting approach," informative for good collaboration with Honors students. She provided us with helpful information about curricular approaches to the integration of information literacy (IL) skills within an Honors program. Another point that resonated and affirmed our experiences included the high demand that Honors students place on themselves and the high and often unwarranted expectations, by faculty, of these students' abilities. Our trajectory for growth parallels OU's in that we are committed to sustaining a lasting relationship that focuses on research in a holistic context.

Goebel and Neff's (2007) article, "Information Literacy at Augustana: A programmatic approach," provided us with valuable information because we had many similarities in our "combination of initiatives" (p. 6) which make up both our programs. Notably, the Augustana librarians were working toward a credit class that is discipline based and where research and critical thinking skills are the focus. One of the drawbacks noted in the article was the issue of sustainability. With these considerations, we designed our course to be sustainable and we are cautiously optimistic that by sharing the guest lecturing opportunities and by rotating the course coordinator role, we can sustain and grow.

Another useful article for our purposes was Sharkey's (2006) "Toward information fluency: Applying a different model to an information literacy credit course." We found that Sharkey's pilot course, GS 175 Information Strategies, and its development shared commonalities with our course. Sharkey's discussion of critical thinking skills in higher education reinforced our experiences with students' struggle to gain these skills and faculty's difficulty with incorporating or integrating some of these skills into their course. GS 175 course objectives and goals were tied directly to IL, computer literacy and critical thinking skills and our objectives were tied to IL and a deep understanding of research skills within the disciplinary context.

EXISTING COURSES AT UCLA

There were several unit-bearing courses that were either currently being taught or had been taught in the past at the time of our planning. The first was EC 123, which was an IL course being taught through the English Composition department. Two additional courses were developed through UCLA's Fiat Lux Freshman Seminars. Fiax Lux seminars are one-unit courses and have limited enrollment (usually 15-20 students) to ensure students have meaningful engagement with faculty. In the Fall of 2008 two librarians were teaching Fiat Lux classes; one titled "Artists' Books in the UCLA Library and Beyond" and another titled "How I Learned to Stop Just Googling... and Find the Really Good Stuff!". In the past another one-unit course had been developed to support Sociology students.

These courses did not meet our needs because their frameworks did not allow us to provide a deeper level of instruction to honors students or those working on long term research projects. Further, these courses were designed to be taught by one instructor which countered our objective of teaching this class collaboratively.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

With these considerations, we also needed to align the course objectives with UCLA Library's strategic plan. We focused on three of the library's six strategic areas which included making specialized collections available, enriching services, and improving research skills.

Concerning specialized collections, it is stated in the strategic plan that "[t]he Library will guarantee that the totality of its specialized and unique research resources are identifiable, accessible, and available for researchers and students" (UCLA Library, 2005, p.9). To reach this goal, we devoted an entire class session to special collections, which was also led by a librarian from special collections. As a follow-up, students were required to choose an item from special collections and write a short summary about the collection it came from, why they choose the item, and provide a description of the item.

Another aspect of the strategic plan we considered important focused on "enriching services" with emphasis on "high-quality services that support research, teaching, learning, and the creation of knowledge" (UCLA Library, 2005, p.11). By creating this course we not only added another layer of service but also brought to light existing services that students may not have been aware or been able to access. This included new services such as our Text Reference and more traditional services such as meeting with a subject specialist.

"Improving research skills" was the final strategic area we focused on. While the UCLA Library has always had a strong instructional program, there is close attention paid to our ability to "measurably raise...students' information competence" and to do so by creating "beneficial partnerships" (UCLA Library, 2005, p.13). Our goals were to not only raise their information competence through a variety of in- and out-of-class assignments, but to assist students who were working on long term research projects. Measurements would be taken through pre/post tests and evaluation of assignments. Accomplishing this through "partnerships" was also at the center of our mission. The URC, ILP, AAP and College Library partnered to plan this course and this concept of partnership and collaboration continued into the actual teaching and delivery of content within the course.

COURSE DESIGN & OBJECTIVES

We sought to create a course that would allow us to teach to the ACRL standards, and be flexible enough to for us to incorporate many aspects of the research process. We wanted student to be able to walk away with a high-level understanding of performing research specifically within their disciplines. The overarching goal of the course was to highlight the wide breadth of documents and information that can be integrated into the research process. Ultimately, we wanted students to have a deep appreciation of research as an art, not a dread of research as a chore, and to utilize

UCLA's marvelous collections to their fullest.

Beyond our course objectives, partnerships and collaboration were important not only to the delivery of content to students, but also to the sustainability of the course. This would mean including various subject specialists and other experts within the library. To be sustainable we needed to consider a model that would not unnecessarily tax other library units or any one individual. Additionally, while our focus was to develop the course for students within the social and behavioral sciences, to be truly sustainable, we needed to create a course that could easily be adaptable to other disciplines.

The class met for two hours, once a week for 10 weeks. It was taught in the Fall 2008 and Winter 2009 quarters. At the beginning of the quarter students chose their research topics which they would use to complete a 4-5 page literature review and a short (3-5 minute) oral presentation - due at the end of the quarter. If the student was in a URC fellowship or scholarship program, he or she used the topic they were researching for the program.

The collaboration was carried out by having a subject specialist discuss a particular collection and/or an IL standard. Each week of the course had a theme and that theme had an underlying concept of how the issues related to it impacted students' access to information. For example, the theme of week 3 focused on scholarly communication and included a discussion about the open access movement. This was followed up by class session devoted to discussion of intellectual property and copyright. During week 6, the government documents librarian defined government information, the many types of documents associated with the government, and demonstrated how to track a bill.

Class assignments guided students in searching a wide variety of collections in multiple formats, utilizing specialized and traditional library services, building their bibliographies, and ultimately, writing a final literature review. In addition to class assignments, weekly readings were assigned. These readings were chosen either by the guest speaker or the instructor.

Assessment

Student learning was assessed in several ways. At the beginning of both classes student were given a pre-test (see Appendix 1). This pre-test was intended to test their knowledge of several IL concepts, their comfort level on utilizing tools such as databases and library catalogs, and to gauge how they begin their research.

Students reported using a variety of techniques to begin their research including searching the Web, talking with professors and/or classmates, and visiting the library. However, none reported meeting with a librarian. While students reported having varying levels of difficulty when utilizing databases or library catalogs, generally most students stated they found searching either somewhat difficult or very difficult. About half of the students between both classes were able to correctly define

what a peer-reviewed article is. While students had no problem dissecting an article citation to identify journal title, article title, etc., they did have difficulty locating an article when given an article citation. Many chose to search for the title of the article in the library catalog.

A post-test was conducted, but done so differently for each class. For the Fall 2008 class the post-test was not given to the students at the end of the Fall quarter; instead, it was given to students at the end of the following (Winter 2009) quarter; 90% of the students responded (see Appendix 2). We wanted to see how, if at all, students incorporated the things they learned into their research habits after one quarter. Students did not make radical changes in their habits, but most noted that the course, in some way had changed how they approached their research. All students who responded stated the class was valuable to the development of their research skills. Half of the students reported using specialized materials (such as special collections) in the Winter quarter.

The post-test questions for the Winter 2009 class were different than those for the Fall 2008 class. All ten questions, except for three which were multiple choice, required narrative responses (see Appendix 3). While some questions required only simple answers, others required students to articulate a particular process or to describe how a particular type of source could benefit their research. Students were also able to freely add any comments about the class. All of the students answered the question satisfactorily, with the exception of one question. When asked "The UCLA Library catalog will help you find which of the following items?" all students selected "Journal/ Magazine articles" and one student selected "materials from other libraries." The UCLA catalog does not index articles nor can students search for materials outside the UCLA Library. Therefore, in the future more attention will need to be paid to teaching students about the types of records available in the library catalog.

Conclusion

The model that we utilized to create HNRS101-I is sustainable because it does not rely on one person or department to carry out instruction. It is also sustainable because it can be easily adapted to meet the needs of other disciplines. The assessment of the course through course evaluations, pre/ post tests, and course assignments demonstrates that students benefited from this course. We believe students benefited for several reasons. First, the course was directly tied to their disciplines and a project or paper they were working on. Second, students learned about specialized materials and collections directly from the specialists. Finally, through the process of writing a literature review, students were able to place their resources directly within the context of their research process and also deepen their knowledge of scholarly communication in their disciplines.

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APPENDIX 1: PRE-TEST

1. What are some of the ways you begin your research process (to decide on a topic, find background research, etc.)?

	Always	*Sometimes*	*Never*
Google (or another web search engine)			
Subject or general Encyclopedia			
Article database (e.g. JSTOR, PsycINFO, etc.)			
Search a library catalog (UCLA or a public library catalog)			
Visit a library (either a local public library, or a library on campus)			
Visit a library: discuss topic choices with a librarian			
Visit a library: browse the collection			
Review magazine/journal articles			
Discuss topic choices with my professor/instructor			
Discuss topic choices with classmates/friends			
Other:			

2. How difficult is it for you to identify and retrieve sources for your research? *Please rate the difficulty of each of the following activities; N/A indicates you have never accessed information via this method:*

	Very difficult	*Somewhat difficult*	*Easy*	*N/A*
Using a library catalog				
Using an electronic index (article database)				
Using a print index				
Using a Web search engine (Google, Yahoo, etc.)				
Physically locating sources in the library				
Obtaining materials through document delivery or inter-library loan				

3. The UCLA Library catalog will help you find which of the following? *(Circle all that apply)*
 	
   a. Books
   b. Journal/Magazine titles
   c. Journal/Magazine articles
   d. Course reserve material
   e. Materials from other libraries
	4. A peer-reviewed article is:
	   a. An article that is reviewed by the author's peers.
	   b. Has been presented at a conference to peers of the author.
	   c. Has been posted on a public website for the author's peers.
	   d. I don't know

5. I can download and use any content (text, video, music, etc.) from the Web, to use for course projects. I do not need to ask permission because I am a student; the content is used for educational purposes and therefore is covered under the Fair Use clause of the Copyright Act.
   a. True
   b. False
	6. Which of the following search terms would retrieve the MOST results in an online search?
	   a. movies OR films
	   b. movies AND films
	   c. movies NOT films
	   d. I don't know

7. Use this citation to answer the following questions:

Miller, B. (2008). States, nations, and regional war. *Ethnopolitics, 7*(4), 445-463.

Author: _____

Title of article: _____

Title of journal: _____

Publication date: _____

Page number(s) of the article: _____

Journal volume: _____

Journal issue: _____

APPENDIX 2: POST-TEST (FALL 2008)

1. Did you integrate the techniques you learned in Fall 2008 HNRS101-I into your research during this last winter quarter?
2. At the beginning of the Fall 2008 quarter many of you reported being uncomfortable or only somewhat comfortable using subscription article databases – is this still true?
3. How valuable was HNRS101-I to the development of your search skills?
4. Since the end of the course have you utilized specialized resources such as special collections or subject specialists?

APPENDIX 3: POST-TEST (WINTER 2009)

1. List 2 professional and/or national issues (political, academic, etc.) UCLA Librarians are involved in:
2. List at least 3 ways you can get help from a librarian:
3. Scenario: Your professor has told you that when you use websites for a research paper to only use those from educational sources – how can you limit your web search so that your results only return websites from educational sites?
4. What are some of the ways in which an encyclopedia can help you in your research?
5. A peer-reviewed article:
   a. Has been reviewed by the author's peers.
   b. Has been presented at a conference to peers of the author.
   c. Has been posted on a public website for the author's peers.
   d. I don't know
6. The UCLA Library catalog will help you find which of the following items (select all that apply)?
   a. Books
   b. Journal/Magazine titles
   c. Journal/Magazine articles
   d. Course reserve material
   e. Materials from other libraries
7. Howard, M. (1993). War and the making of nations 1789-1945. Dalhousie Review, 73(4), 438. The above citation is for an article that is not available electronically. This is an article you MUST have. Your paper depends on it...your grade depends on it ...your life depends on it. So, you know what that means - you need to track down a print copy (oh the horror!). Tell me the steps you would take to find a print copy:
8. At the beginning of the quarter many of you stated that you found searching electronic article databases very difficult or somewhat difficult. How do you feel now?
   a. Still very difficult
   b. Still somewhat difficult
   c. I find searching much easier now
9. At the beginning of the quarter all of you reported that you had never sought assistance from a librarian when beginning a research project - will this change in the future?
   a. No, I will likely never seek assistance from a librarian.
   b. Yes, I will likely seek assistance from a librarian, but only when I am having trouble with my research.
   c. Yes, I intend to always seek assistance from a librarian when I am working on research projects.
   d. Yes, not only will I always seek help from a librarian, but I want to be a librarian when I grow up.
10. Feel free to add any comments