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Crossing Boundaries: Collaborating to Assess Information Literacy [ACRL Conference]

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Crossing Boundaries: Collaborating to Assess Information Literacy

ACRL Conference:

Sailing into the Future ~ Charting Our Destiny

Baltimore

March 30, 2007

Program



- **Project Overview - *Carolyn Sanford***
Head of Reference & Instruction
Carleton College, Northfield, MN
- **Results, Users and Uses - *Jo Beld***
Professor of Political Science, Director of Academic Research
St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN
- **NITLE's Role - *Nancy Millichap***
Director of Professional Development Programs
NITLE / National Institute for Technology and Liberal
Education

The Idea



- An interest in surveys
- A focus on the liberal arts experience
- A need for individual college data
- An interest in comparative data
- An ability to do customization, post-tests and tracking

Assessment Influences



- ACRL Information Literacy Standards
- Accrediting agency requirements
- Information literacy assessment tools
- Survey creation and data analysis skills development

Surveys, Surveys, Surveys



CSEQ

Library

- Information Literacy
- LibQual

Academic departmental surveys

NSSE

CIRP

ETS's ICT

Project SAILS

Alumni Survey

Collaborating-the Colleges



A commitment to the liberal arts education

Collaborating - the People



The NITLE Team Model:

- Librarians
- Faculty
- Institutional Research/Assessment staff
- Academic/Instructional Technologists

Key Players



Steering Committee

Carolyn Sanford, **Carleton** (Librarian)

Jo Beld, **St. Olaf** (Professor and IR Administrator)

David Lopatto, **Grinnell** (Professor)

Data Analysts

Jackie Lauer-Glebov, Carleton, Institutional
Research (2004-05)

Shauna Sweet, University of Maryland (2006-07)

FYILLAA



First Year Information Literacy in the Liberal Arts Assessment

(Fil-la)

a shared Web-based assessment tool to measure
the information literacy of incoming students

The Philosophical Goal



To approach information literacy holistically, assessing not only skills, but also attitudes and approaches to information sources

Important Project Aspects



- Created a valid, reliable assessment tool to establish baseline data
- Tracked individual students
- Offered post-testing

FYILLAA - Dimensions



Divided into **Dimensions of Information Literacy**

Experience: *What can/do students do?*

Attitude: *What do students value?*

Epistemology: *What do students believe?*

Knowledge: *What do students know?*

Critical Capacities: *How do students evaluate?*

2006 Participating Colleges



Participation



- All first year students or a random selection of first year students
- Given before any library instruction
- Number of participants: nearly 4400
- Participation rates ranged from 28% to 89% with 11 colleges greater than 44%

Data & Reports



- Raw data files
(cleaned)
- Comprehensive results
(all institutions)
- Comparative results
(institutions with $>44\%$ participation rate)
- Institutional results

What Are We Learning?



A profile of the information literacy characteristics of the “typical” liberal arts undergraduate at the beginning of his/her college experience

(With apologies to Linda Ronstadt)

Experiences



Using libraries

Using on-line sources

Doing research assignments

Seeking help

Using libraries...



During the academic year before she started college, the typical first-year student:

- Received instruction on using library resources (74%)
- Used the library principally for research or other academic work (72%)

but...

...“Just one look”



- Used her high school library twice a month or less (74%)
- Never used a college or university library (63%)

Using online sources...



The typical first-year student:

- Used online sources for research (100%)
- Used Google, Yahoo, or other general search engine (94%)

but...

...“That’ll be the day”



- Did not use an online library catalog (55%)
- Did not use online indexes or databases (53%)

Doing research assignments.



The typical first-year student:

- Was required to write at least three papers using three or more sources (81%)
- Was often or almost always required to use a specific bibliographic format for sources (79%)

but...

...“Like a heat wave”



- Did a little work soon after the assignment was given, but did most (or all) of the work just before (or on) the due date (63%)

Seeking help...



The typical first-year student:

- Often or almost always sought help from teachers (63%)
- Often or almost always sought help from friends or classmates (48%)

but...

...“When will I be loved?”



- Rarely or never sought help from a librarian (60%)
- Talked with a librarian about a research assignment once or twice, if at all (82%)

Attitudes



Enjoyment of research
Relative ease of research activities

Enjoying research...



“In general, how much do you enjoy doing research?”

Very much	6%
Quite a bit	26%
Some	51%
Very little	17%

...“It’s so easy”



Students say it’s “somewhat” or “very easy” to:

Use a library catalog/electronic index	73%
Develop a list of sources	79%
Physically locate sources	81%
Decide what information to use	74%

Knowledge and Critical Capacities



When to document a source

How to document a source

How to evaluate sources

Documenting sources...



- 77% think it's easy to know *when* to document a source

but...

...“Don’t know much”



- 47% did not recognize the correct definition of a *citation*
- 44% could not determine when a citation is not required

Documenting sources...



- 68% think it's easy to know *how* to document a source

but...

...“Poor, poor pitiful me”



- 76% could not differentiate a journal article from a book or book chapter
- 66% could not identify the distinctive characteristics of an academic journal

Evaluating sources...



- 88% think it's “very easy” or “somewhat easy” to determine whether a source is appropriate for an academic research project

but...

...“You’re no good”



- 46% did not recognize a personal web page as a less appropriate source than a university press book, encyclopedia, or refereed journal article
- 78% thought that *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News* could be scholarly sources

Potential Users



- Reference and instruction librarians
- Classroom faculty
- Institutional/educational researchers
- Curriculum decision-makers
- Faculty development decision-makers
- Students

Potential Uses



- Improving the “fit” between what, how, and whom we teach
- Strengthening collaboration between library and classroom instructors
- Shaping the content of faculty development programs

Potential Uses



What librarians might do:

- Provide individual consultations for students
- Give priority to areas where students lack experience, knowledge, or critical capacities
- Work with Institutional Research or assessment faculty/staff to interrogate the data further

Potential Uses



What disciplinary faculty might do:

- Require the use of unfamiliar resources
- Hold class sessions in the library
- Develop source type exercises
- Build the survey into grant applications

Potential Uses



How librarians and disciplinary faculty might collaborate:

- Require consultation with a reference librarian in an assignment
- Spread library instruction out over the semester
- Agree on discipline-specific criteria for evaluating sources
- Review FYILLAA results together

Feedback from Users



**“Great for
marketin
g the
library”**

**“Results were easy
to understand”**

**“Holistic approach
meets our planning
needs”**

**“Dovetails with
other campus
curriculum projects”**

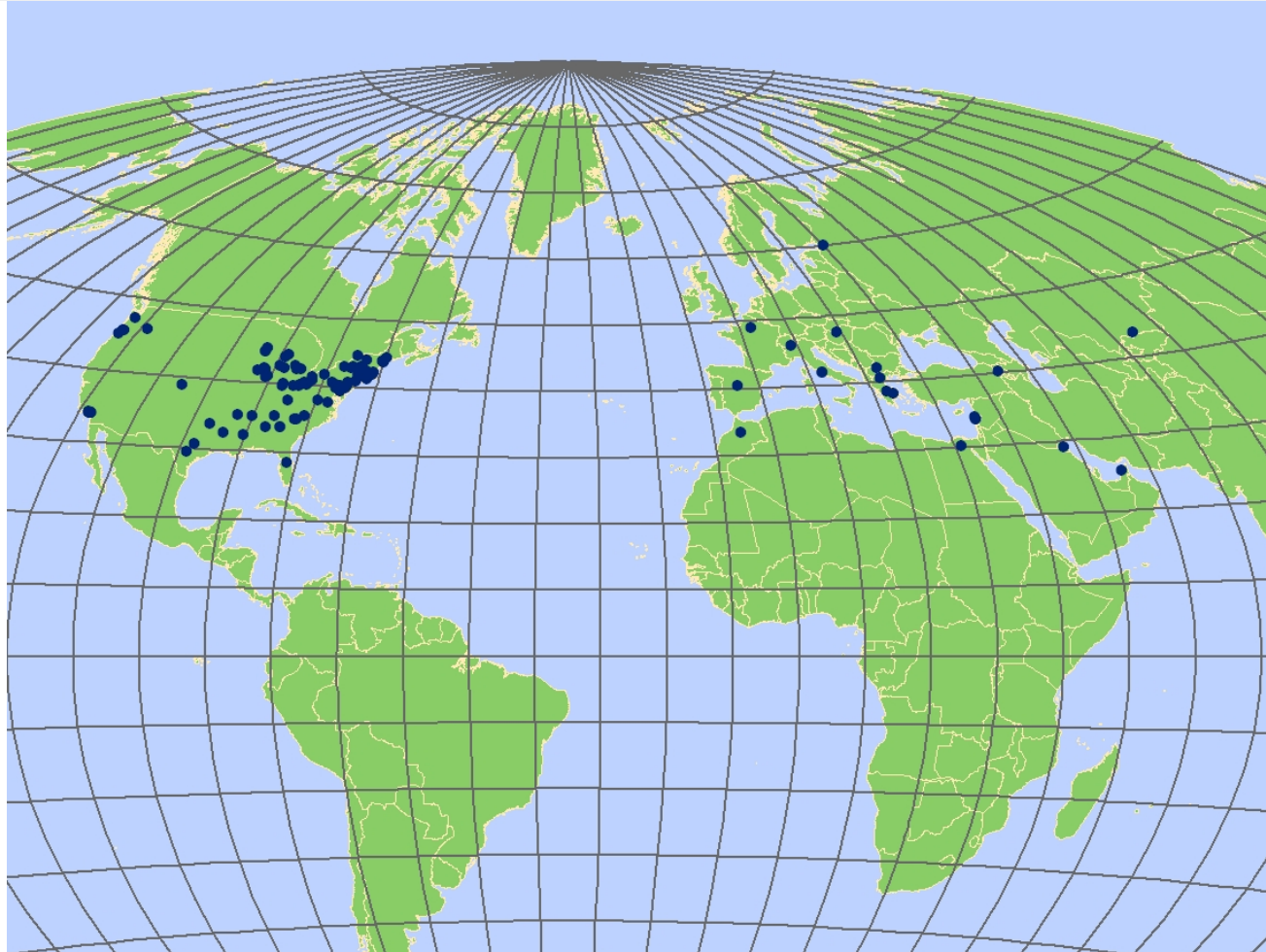
**“May help us get
resources”**

What NITLE Is



- A non-profit dedicated to advancing liberal education in the digital age
- An organization serving institutions with missions centered on undergraduate education
 - 114 institutions
 - Located nationwide, with several abroad

Institutions NITLE Serves



What NITILE Does



NITILE provides programs and services in support of innovation

- Professional development
- Peer networking
- On-line tools and resources
- Other programs

NITLÉ and Collaboration



- NITLÉ sees inter-institutional collaboration as a vital innovation strategy for small institutions
- NITLÉ supports and encourages collaborative projects through its programs and services
- This presentation showcases one such project