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RESTRUCTURE, RECYCLE, AND RENEW: MOVING TO AN IMPROVED, YET SUSTAINABLE, INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAM

NANCY FALCIANI-WHITE

INTRODUCTION

Programmatic change is complex and time-consuming. Yet change is necessary to adapt an information literacy program to changing needs and to keep content fresh for both students and library instructors. After more than ten years of one-shot sessions scattered across the college campus, librarians at Wheaton College knew things needed to change. Students regularly commented that they had “had this before,” and were visibly disengaged from class sessions. Librarians were bored from the repetition of teaching lower-level content, and did not feel as if we were giving students the best information literacy education possible, because we were unable to scaffold and develop their skills in meaningful ways. We also felt unable to make significant improvements because the structure of the college curriculum made it challenging to present higher-level concepts with confidence.

When Wheaton faculty voted to begin revising the college’s general education curriculum, the library saw an opportunity to advocate for the inclusion of information literacy into the new curriculum. Although there was great uncertainty as to whether information literacy would be included in the new curriculum, the library began evaluating its existing instruction and casting a vision for what an ideal information literacy program would look like. Partway through this process, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) began revising the Information Literacy Competency Standards (Association of College & Research Libraries, 2000). While Wheaton’s information literacy curriculum was only loosely based on these standards, we decided to develop our new curriculum in accordance with the new Framework (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2015) in the hopes that the three concurrent revision processes (Wheaton general education, ACRL Standards, and our IL curriculum) would align, and allow for the changes in our library instruction that would help our students graduate with stronger information literacy skills. We knew we needed to renew our enthusiasm for teaching information literacy, and that we would likely need to restructure our program to make that happen. We hoped that we would be able to build on the excellent work already done in the library field so that we could make all of these changes in a way that would be sustainable for the library for years to come.

BACKGROUND

Wheaton College is a small, private, Evangelical, liberal arts college located in the suburbs of Chicago with a student population of approximately 2400 undergraduate students and 480 graduate students. Buswell Library comprises twenty staff members, eight faculty librarians, and the Director of Library and Archives (hereafter, Director). Each faculty librarian, in addition to their responsibilities in cataloging, outreach, etc., is the subject librarian for two or more academic departments, and responsible for relationship-building, research support, information literacy instruction, and collection development for those departments, as well as general reference service at our information desk. Faculty librarians meet monthly to discuss topics specific to their subject librarian responsibilities.

Prior to the general education revision, information literacy skills had been incorporated into almost all ENGW 103/4 (Composition and Research) courses beginning in 2006, and the BITH 111 (Gospel, Church, and Culture) course beginning in the fall of 2010. While the percentage varies year-to-year, approximately 25% of all students test out of ENGW 103/4 altogether, and

while students are encouraged to take it during their freshman year, they are not required to do so. All incoming freshmen are required to take BITH 111 during the first semester of their first year, but these classes are taught in sections of over 100 students, and the structure of these classes has made their use as a foundation to our curriculum extremely challenging.

One-shot sessions are also taught across campus, through partnerships with individual faculty members rather than departmental commitments. This creates challenges when faculty members go on sabbatical or leave the institution. All library instruction sessions taught during the last five years are presented in Table 1, showing that our instruction program has continued to grow despite the challenges it has faced.

Table 1: Information Literacy Statistics

While existing collaborations have provided a vehicle by which to introduce information literacy to many students at Wheaton College, the timing of these sessions has made it impossible to anticipate what interactions a student may have already had with the library. This has made the rate of repetition high, and challenged librarians' abilities to teach more complex concepts. It has been possible for one student to graduate having had only a single introduction to information literacy, and that in the first semester of their freshman year, while another student received four or five very similar presentations during the course of their Wheaton career.

THE PROCESS

Revising Wheaton's information literacy program has required vision, compromise, strategic planning, collaboration, persistence, presence, and project management, and has loosely followed the steps outlined in *Leading Change* by John Kotter (2012).

Information Literacy Curriculum Revision

Aware of the opportunities provided by general education revision, and unsure of the timeline of these revisions and implementation, we began reviewing our existing curriculum over five years ago, with the development of an assessment plan and a review of information literacy literature. In a proposal submitted to the General Education Revision Committee in 2012, the library advocated for a developmental approach to information literacy instruction at Wheaton College, which would include a foundational course in the general education curriculum that all students would take, signaling the important role information literacy plays in student success (Shapiro & Hughes, 1996). We recommended that this initial introduction be followed by a scaffolded sequence of instruction embedded in the major, to help reinforce to students that these are not isolated skills and processes, but rather tools intended to facilitate the synthesis of knowledge from information (Grafstein, 2002; Head & Eisenberg, 2009; Kolowich, 2011).

While instruction statistics were captured each year, a close review of the content taught in each class had never been done, and so we mapped the skills and concepts we were teaching to see where they were being addressed. This exercise confirmed our sense that we were spending a lot of time on fundamental concepts—such as basic search techniques using our discovery layer, placing interlibrary loan requests, and primary, secondary, and tertiary sources—while students were rarely being taught how to construct a literature review; even avoiding plagiarism and constructing a research question were only taught occasionally. We also conducted research on student and faculty perceptions of the challenges students face when researching.

After collecting and discussing these data, we had a sense of what we wanted our students to know, and that we wanted them to move beyond information seeking skills to understanding how information fit into research more broadly. As the ACRL Framework developed, we saw that the threshold concepts being identified could be used to frame our curriculum and help us maintain our focus on our broader goals. In July 2014, we operationalized the Framework objectives identified at that point in the ACRL revision, to merge the Framework with our knowledge of our campus, curriculum, and needs (see example in the Appendix). We took liberties with the Framework, rewriting what we felt was unclear, merging objectives that we felt could be merged without losing meaning, and leaving out components that seemed irrelevant to our context. We ended that workshop with concrete concepts and skills that fit our context and mapped onto the broader organizational structure of the ACRL Framework (see our full revision timeline in Table 2).

Table 2: Information Literacy Curriculum Revision Timeline

While we were engaging in this work on the information literacy curriculum, work on the general education revision continued. And as that curriculum was finalized, we organized the frames and objectives that Buswell librarians had operationalized to accommodate the structure of the three core general education courses that were taking shape.

General Education Revision

In 2010, Wheaton faculty voted to begin revising the college's general education curriculum, launching a campus-wide process that has lasted six years. The Director and various faculty librarians have participated in all stages of the process, because of involvement in faculty governance or strategic involvement with the intention of advocating for information literacy in the new curriculum (see Table 3).

Table 3: General Education Revision Timeline, with Library Involvement

The new general education curriculum was voted into place in November 2014, to launch in August 2016. Wheaton adopted an outcomes-based model of general education, including a thematic core and a shared core (Wheaton College, 2016). Information literacy was written into all three shared core courses: the First Year Seminar (FYS), taken by all freshmen during their first semester at Wheaton; the Capstone Experience (CE), typically taken in the last year; and the Advanced Integrative Seminar (AIS), taken any time between the two.

Once this commitment of general education was in place, the library asked each academic department to partner with us to select a course required of all majors to meet discipline-specific information literacy needs. At the end of the 2015-16 academic year, all but one of Wheaton's 25 departments have made department-level commitments to collaborate with the library on information literacy, giving the library four points of contact with students during their Wheaton education.

IMPLEMENTATION

Creation of the new information literacy curriculum content began almost immediately, given the tight implementation schedule. Loyola Marymount University (LMU) librarians had presented on their *Lion's Guide to Research & the Library*, comprising five modules of information literacy skills in October 2014 (Loyola Marymount University, 2014). The tutorial had been created in Articulate Storyline, and LMU librarians agreed to share the Storyline files under a Creative Commons license. General education shared core classes were intended to be capped at 25 students, resulting in 35 sections of the FYS each fall, with a minimum of 10 additional sections of the AIS to be offered each semester. To make this many sections sustainable for the library, and minimize disruption to teaching faculty already concerned about the amount of content in these classes, we decided that online tutorials were the best way to deliver our content. We will teach almost all sessions in the majors face-to-face.

First Year Seminar

While every freshman will take the FYS during their first semester on campus, there is no research project that needs to be completed for the course. We recognized that this situation could easily lead to a disconnect for students, so we decided to use modified problem-based learning to ground them. We drafted a scenario that students could legitimately encounter during their time at Wheaton, in an attempt to maintain student engagement and focus (Barrett & Moore, 2011). We then took the LMU Storyline files and divided their content up according to the learning objectives we developed for each of the four courses in our curriculum. Because LMU had developed their curriculum prior to the ACRL Framework, and because we were arranging our content according to a different structure, substantial reorganization was required, with some sections removed entirely, and new content added. We completed the FYS tutorial in August 2015, and reached an agreement with the BITH 111 faculty to pilot this tutorial in Fall 2015 in place of the library tutorial and workshop that had been taught in that class in previous years. The tutorial was published as a SCORM package, uploaded to each section in Blackboard, and graded in Blackboard. Of the students enrolled in six two-hour sections of BITH 111 (n=644), 330 were enrolled during A-Quad (courses ending in October), and 314 were enrolled during B-Quad (courses ending in December). Of these students, 221 (67%) completed the tutorial in A-Quad, while 252 (80%) completed the tutorial in B-Quad, for a total completion rate of 473 (73%).

During this pilot, we quickly identified errors in our tutorial, and learned peculiarities of using SCORM in Blackboard that impacted student success. We also gained insights into our students' behaviors that we had not anticipated, and learned firsthand the challenges of working with over three hundred students, each using their own computer with different operating systems configured in different ways. We also got feedback regarding the length and quality of the tutorial.

We addressed problems with the tutorial at the end of A-Quad, and encountered fewer frustrated students, resulting in higher completion rates, among B-Quad students. Completion was still not as high as we would like, however, given that all future information literacy content would depend upon students knowing the content in this tutorial, so in collaboration with the Director of Core Studies, we are working to ensure that the tutorial has a grade associated with it when it launches as part of the First Year Seminar in Fall 2016. At the conclusion of the pilot, we analyzed our question data and made changes to questions that lacked reliability and/or validity.

NEXT STEPS

The 2016-17 academic year will see the launch of the FYS tutorial in the fall, as well as the launch of the AIS tutorial in Spring 2017. Meetings between the library and each department on campus will also take place this year, to develop or adapt discipline-specific content that builds upon the general education instruction, but also builds upon and enhances the relationships the subject librarians have been developing with their departments. Content development for the CE is planned for the following year, to be done in close collaboration with each department.

Change management has permeated every aspect of this developing curriculum. We established a sense of urgency through our understanding of our curriculum student needs and created a guiding coalition, as well as sustained partnerships, with the Director, Teaching & Outreach Group Leader, the subject librarians, as well as departments across campus, the administration, and the Director of Core Studies. Understanding the literature and studying our existing program helped us to develop a vision and a strategy, and we communicated this vision in various ways for more than six years. We made changes as needed to support and empower those at the center of the curriculum development, and have achieved some “wins,” in that information literacy is now part of Wheaton College’s general education curriculum. Assessment for the individual general education components has been established as part of the general education curriculum, and assessment will be a necessary part of our discussions with departments in the coming year, which will impact assessment of the program as a whole. We will need to continue to work hard to continue to develop the rest of the program, and continue to advocate so that these changes become fully embraced on our campus (Kotter, 2012).

Sustainability is context-specific, and while this curriculum is still developing, we designed it to be sustainable by: understanding our students, our campus, and our staff; matching staff to our curricular and technological needs; devoting time and resources to it; and setting reasonable expectations for time and advocacy. The value of LMU’s curricular content to our progress cannot be overstated. Our instruction program will continue to grow and improve as we implement all the phases of this curriculum, but by restructuring our existing program through the use of new content delivery options and recycling content developed elsewhere, we can renew our program so that it better facilitates student learning, but is also sustainable for the library into the future.

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APPENDIX

Operationalized ACRL Framework

6. Understand and demonstrate the ethical use of information

Students will be able to...

- a) Recognize the meaning of intellectual property (trademark, patent, copyright), and understand that intellectual property is a social construct that varies by culture.
Students need to do/demonstrate/know:
- Understand that intellectual property, broadly defined, comprises copyright, trademarks, and patents. (concept)
 - Understand that concept and practice of intellectual property differ geographically (concept)
 - Copyright law includes fair use, etc. (concept)
 - Applying copyright law and fair use in particular situations (skill)
 - That there are legal and illegal uses of information (intellectual property) (concept)
- b) Understand what copyright law is, as defined in the United States (fair use) and public domain.
Students need to do/demonstrate/know:
- Define copyright, open access, and public domain with in the U.S. context (concept)
 - Understand the differences among them and articulate how they are interrelated (concept)
 - Provide an example of each term along with a description of how it might be a factor in information research on a particular topic (skill and concept)
- c) Give credit to the original ideas of others through proper attribution and citation, as defined in the United States.
Students need to do/demonstrate/know:
- What plagiarism is and is not (concept)
 - How to use and build on words and concepts of other authors without plagiarizing (accurately quote, paraphrase properly) (skill)
 - The purpose and usefulness of proper attribution and citation (attribution helps establish credibility, citation saves work for readers) (concept)
 - Avoiding plagiarism and respecting copyright are different things (concept)
 - When to quote, paraphrase, and summarize (skill)
 - How to quote, paraphrase, and summarize (skill)
 - Understand that there are multiple citations styles and that most disciplines have a preferred style (concept)
 - How to use at least one citation style (MLA, APA) correctly in a writing assignment (skill)

Images for Tables and Figures (Editor will put in body of the text later)

Table 1

Course-based Instruction	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15
Number of instruction sessions (class periods)	87	99	129	141	115
Number of students attending	2,046	2,179	2,838	2,796	2,494
Number of academic departments participating	16	17	15	18	16

Table 2

Date	Work Accomplished
May 2010	IL assessment plan developed
2010-2011	Review of literature
Oct 2011	Memo to Gen Ed Committee: Buswell Library input on the current program's strengths and weaknesses. Focused on information literacy.
Apr 2012	Proposal submitted to Gen Ed Committee
Nov 2012	IL mapping exercise
2013-2014	Critical incident analysis of student research
Apr 2014	Faculty feedback on student research
Jul 2014	Workshop on Framework learning objectives
Oct 2014	Encountered LMU's <i>Lion's Guide to Research & the Library</i>
Spr 2015	Updated curricular content to reflect final version of the Framework Divided objectives into coherent modules Began using Storyline
Sum 2015	Completed FYS tutorial
Fall 2015	Piloted FYS tutorial
Spr-Sum 2016	Develop(ing) AIS tutorial

Table 3

Date	Committee	Library Involvement
2010 – 2011	General Education Exploratory Committee (GEEC)	Director
2011 – 2014	General Education Revision Committee (GERC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director on primary committee (2011-12) • Memo to committee on gen ed strengths/weaknesses (2011) • Proposal submitted explaining and detailing information literacy in a new curriculum (2012) • Various library faculty on sub-committees (2013-14)
2014 – 2015	General Education Summit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching & Outreach Group Leader • Continued with to advocate for information literacy with the Director