

## Integrating Information Literacy into the Curriculum: a four year plan for design students

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Traditionally, undergraduate education has included a library instruction component particularly in orientation programs for incoming freshmen. Through the years, the goal of instruction has evolved to encompass not only the retrieval of information but also its evaluation and effective use beyond the academic environment as part of a lifelong process of learning. The changing role of information literacy instruction demands a change in method.

Freshmen often experience only one class period devoted to library instruction. During this session, the librarian must introduce call number classification, circulation policies, and a dizzying array of electronic resources. The sheer volume of material often overwhelms students whose only prior exposure may have been in a small local library.

Fast forward past sophomore and junior year; the seniors have arrived for another instruction session in order to prepare for the big research project. The librarian must assume the students have acquired and retained basic skills and forge ahead to discuss research strategies, complex electronic resources, and evaluation of resources and results.

Wouldn't it be more effective to build instruction into the curriculum on a consistent basis? Other disciplines use this approach. No one expects freshmen to learn basic arithmetic and then skip to calculus three or four years later. Yet this is precisely what librarians have expected of students in respect to developing information seeking skills.

My solution focuses on integrating information literacy instruction into the curriculum beginning from the first year through the final year of study, gradually building on the existing knowledge base. My initial outline, created for a Graphic Design program, can be easily adapted to any discipline.

### ***First-Year Instruction: Types of Resources***

First-year instruction focuses on available resources and the differences among them. Few students will retain a great deal of information from this first session, but if they leave aware that the library holds useful resources and that the subject librarian can help them, an enormous first step has been taken towards becoming an information literate adult.

An important element of the first-year instruction is a tour of the physical library and the establishment of a relationship between the librarian and the student. Students can be hesitant to ask for help and intimidated by the library setting. I do not have the advantage of regular contact with the students, so I use any opportunity to advertise my presence and encourage the students to seek assistance. A primary goal for first-year instruction is to demonstrate the approachability of librarians and the library. A

basic introduction to the Library of Congress Classification System and a quick tour into the stacks can do a great deal to remove anxiety and improve the comfort level of students.

A certain amount of time must be devoted to the mechanics of locating and retrieving materials. Routine transactions such as requesting materials online can simplify the research process. Policy issues, including circulation procedures, are explained. Although many first year students will not take advantage of interlibrary loan services, it is important to make them aware of the potential. I introduce the students to basic features of the library catalog and encourage students to browse subject headings in the catalog in addition to browsing books in the stacks.

I encourage the students to use the subject guides to navigate the library webpages and internet. After several different versions, I have finally arranged the materials by medium (graphic design, sculpture, etc). By including both subscription databases and websites, I can easily point to comparisons and contrasts. I urge the students to take a moment to think about who created the websites. Was it an educational institution or an individual? What are the author's qualifications? Is the information timely and accurate? Of course, the distinction between internet sources and subscription databases becomes increasingly important with the growing popularity of internet search engines like Google. It is virtually impossible to teach the students about every database, so we must provide them with the necessary tools to critically evaluate the resources they access.

Successful researchers need to understand how to select the appropriate resource for their particular needs. Most students can differentiate between a scholarly journal and a popular periodical. However, when everything is accessed through one computer, it is difficult for students to recognize an encyclopedia from an index, or an electronic resource from a print resource with web access. Many teaching faculty require students to cite a certain number of print or electronic resources. With this in mind, I clarify that one resource can be available in multiple formats. *Grove Dictionary of Art*, which is available both in print and online, serves as a good example. After an overview, I can then introduce selective subject specific databases.

The session concludes with a brief exercise requiring the students to search for and retrieve print materials. Prior to the library session, the students have received the course assignment to research a specific designer and product. The students' newly acquired skills can be directly applied to their research project, which hopefully improves retention after the class period.

### ***Second-Year Instruction: Searching Techniques***

While the first year focuses on what is available, the second year focuses on how to search. The coverage of specific subject da-

tabases can also be expanded, including the use of image databases.

Although the reality remains that even upper level students and advanced researchers will continue to rely on keyword searching, it is important to introduce the concepts of advanced searching including the use of indexes or thesauri. With the advent of federated searching capabilities and constantly changing vendors, less emphasis on specific interfaces is needed. I stress that the strategies discussed can be applied to all databases, including the library catalog. If the students can grasp the basic concepts, they will be able to adapt to a variety of changing resources. The ability to transfer their information seeking skills to other areas of learning and beyond the academic environment is imperative to their future success.

In addition to demonstrating various search features, we explore how to construct a search. If students are unable to locate sufficient materials using obvious search words such as personal names, or companies, they may be confused by how to continue. We discuss possible ways to expand the search and explore related concepts and terms to retrieve additional results.

### ***Third-Year Instruction: Relevance***

Design students can be reluctant to research the work of other artists, failing to understand why this would be relevant to their own work. This is a good time to explain how research can enhance a project. Giving historical background and context to the topic enriches analysis and provides areas of contrast and comparison. It is also vital to examine current developments and the work of peers.

With advanced research, it is time to emphasize the use of resources outside the university libraries. Use of interlibrary loan, dissertations or theses, and archival or special collection materials may all be necessary to complete the research project. WorldCat can be an indispensable tool at this point in the students' progress.

### ***Fourth-Year Instruction: Organization***

The final year of study is a culmination of previous years of library instruction providing a review of the first three years and a discussion of how to organize the research results into a final project. An overview of ethical issues concerning plagiarism and copyright is provided. As citation management software becomes readily available and more user friendly, less time is needed to discuss the mechanics of compiling bibliographies. However, this is a good opportunity to entertain any questions students might have in this regard.

Rather than simply providing a lecture, I devote the majority of the class period to individual research conducted with my guidance in the instruction lab. I have found these sessions to be productive for the students and helpful for me, through direct observation of the students' research strategies in practice.

### ***Teamwork***

A collaborative working relationship with the teaching faculty is imperative to the success of integrating any literacy program into the curriculum. The design faculty provided a list of essential skills needed to complete the program, which I was then able to refine. They provided specific class assignments that could be directly related to the library instruction. Faculty support reinforces the vital role the library plays in the program. Just as it is imperative to make the instruction relevant to the students, it is also imperative to make the collaboration relevant to the teaching faculty.

### ***Conclusion***

After the completion of the four-year undergraduate library instruction program, the students have been introduced to the five Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education.

The information literate student: determines the nature and extent of the information needed accesses needed information effectively and efficiently evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information

Seen in its entirety, the path towards achieving information literacy can seem long and arduous to both instructor and student. Taking it step by step over the course of the program provides time for the librarian to communicate his or her knowledge effectively and the student to assimilate the information more readily.

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