

CAMPUS COLLABORATION TO BUILD A SERIES OF INFORMATION COMPETENCY WORKSHOPS

NANCY GETTY AND DEBORAH MOORE

Have you ever been frustrated by all the material discipline faculty expect you to “cover” in an hour-long instruction session? Did they promise that students had a research assignment, but when the students arrived you discovered that you and the instructor were the only ones who knew what the assignment was? Have you ever said to yourself or colleagues, “discipline faculty just don’t understand what information competency is?”

At Glendale Community College (GCC), we have taken a proactive approach to creating an information competency program to help obviate these kinds of questions. The result, after nine years of development, is a series of information competency workshops offered through the library that serves to build information competency across the campus. A review of the library literature reveals nothing about similar general information competency workshop programs. We believe GCC’s information competency workshops can serve as a model that is transferable to various sizes and types of libraries.

Important components of our workshop program include pedagogy, content, administration, and assessment. These components are interrelated, and all are integral to the program’s success. Collaboration, both on-campus and off, represents a common thread that links all of these components together.

BACKGROUND

Our workshop series is one of three elements in the information competency program at GCC. We also offer a 2-unit

course, *Introduction to Information Competency*, as well as course-specific sessions upon request and consultation. However, the workshop program is the largest part of our information competency program, both in terms of students served as well as library resources and staff.

GCC’s series of information competency workshops began in 1999 with a Fund for Student Success (FSS) grant from the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office. This grant covered overload pay for an instructional librarian to create six workshops, paid for hourly library faculty to teach some of the workshops, and included a research project to determine if information competency instruction does benefit students. This last item did not require grant funding because it was done through the collaboration of GCC’s Research and Planning unit, the library faculty and staff, and the Dean of the Library.

Over time, the workshop program has grown to include eight distinct workshops, with two more that are currently under development. The eight workshops currently offered are:

- Research Strategies
- Searching Online Catalogs
- Locating Journal & Newspaper Articles
- Internet Essentials
- Academic Research on the Web
- Critical Evaluation of Web Resources
- Improving Library Research
- Government Resources

The two untitled workshops under development include one on citing sources and another on keyword searching versus subject searching. New workshops have been added based on assessment data, observations that show the greatest needs of our students, and communication with discipline faculty about their perceptions of student research skills.

*Getty (Instruction/Reference Librarian) and
Moore (Instruction/Reference Librarian)*
Glendale Community College [Glendale, CA]

Each workshop is one hour in length, and is offered at least once per week during the twelve middle weeks of our sixteen-week semester. Workshops are offered in regular time slots each week and are rotated through those time slots so that a student who can only attend during the Tuesday evening time slot, for instance, will be able to take all eight workshops during the course of the semester. The GCC Library offers workshops during the morning, afternoon, and evening, Monday through Friday. In Fall 2005, we began offering two workshops on selected Saturdays and this time slot has proven to be the most popular. In addition, we offer workshops during our three, five-week short sessions (winter and two summer sessions). Full-time and part-time librarians are given a regular weekly workshop assignment for the entire semester, scheduled around their reference desk and other duties.

The content of the workshops is standardized; however, each workshop instructor develops his or her own style of teaching the material. Students receive a handout that includes active learning exercises, and the workshops are taught in the library's 27-computer instruction room allowing for a great deal of hands-on activity. The workshop instructors are provided with an outline for each workshop that shows the learning outcomes for that workshop, a suggested order in which material can be presented, and estimated time for each workshop activity. Rather than feeling controlled by these outlines, workshop instructors have indicated that they greatly appreciate the guidance. Detailed workshop binders that include workshop outlines and instruction materials as well as technical information on instructional technology, policies, and procedures, are provided to each instructor and updated regularly. This also greatly helps with training instructors (Glendale Community College Library, 2007).

The primary target population of the workshop program is students taking English 101, English 120, and ESL 151. All three classes require a research paper, and English 120 and ESL 151 are the feeders into English 101. Outreach and promotion efforts have resulted in the participation of many other discipline faculty who send their students to library workshops from departments such as: Administration of Justice, Art, Business Administration, Chemistry, Child Development, Computer Applications, Geography, History, Mass Communications, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, and Student Development. We encourage all faculty who assign any sort of research paper to assign library workshops as homework or extra credit. Total annual attendance at workshops has grown from 3,254 in 1999-2000 to 4,452 in 2005-2006 (the last year for which complete statistics are available). This 36.8% increase in total attendance has occurred during a period in which total full-time equivalent student enrollment (FTES) on campus remained relatively static.

Collaboration was a part of the workshop program from its inception. As the workshop program was being developed, we recruited English and ESL faculty to participate in the research project. At the beginning only a small group of faculty sent students to the workshops, but the success demonstrated by our research project and word of mouth among faculty have increased participation dramatically over the years. Feedback from discipline faculty also effected changes in which workshops

were offered. For example, during the workshop program's first couple of years, some discipline faculty did not feel a workshop on citing sources was necessary. Nine years later, many faculty are supportive of a library workshop on this content. Also from the beginning, library faculty have secured representation on relevant campus committees in order to ensure that the issue of information competency is part of campus consciousness and to seek kindred spirits with whom to form partnerships.

PEDAGOGY

Since 1999, the pedagogy of the workshops has evolved a great deal. The workshops began in more of a lecture style in a room where students had to share computers. By 2001, we had enough computers for each student, and we had added two active learning exercises to each workshop. In recent years, we have implemented control software and a cordless keyboard and remote which allow for a more student-centered environment where various teaching and learning activities take place. In addition, we have moved to more problem-based learning exercises and a constructivist approach, both of which allow students more control of their own learning.

Collaboration has been part of our pedagogy through participation and/or presentations at conferences such as ACRL, LOEX, and LOEX-of-the-West; at ACRL's Institute for Information Literacy Immersion Program; and at regional library instruction group programs, such as SCIL (Southern California Instruction Librarians, an interest group of the California Academic & Research Libraries, an ACRL chapter). These have been invaluable opportunities for continuing education and collaboration which has been essential to the ongoing development of effective pedagogy.

CONTENT

Since 2001, we have identified the core information competencies addressed in each workshop (on student handouts and in instructor outlines). Because we are not trying to "cover" everything in a one-hour instruction session, we have the luxury of only addressing a few learning outcomes in each workshop. Most importantly, we can make changes to individual workshops or to the series as a whole without overhauling the entire program.

Also since 2001, the Dean of Library and Learning Resources and library faculty have collaborated with the Academic Senate and faculty from various divisions to form a Research Across the Curriculum Committee (RAC). Among other things, this committee has identified and defined a list of *Core Information Competencies* for GCC students (Research Across the Curriculum Committee, 2007). This list of seven standards and corresponding learning outcomes has been adopted by the Academic Senate on our campus, and information competency has been included as one of the campus' student learning outcomes. We can now tie the content of each workshop to these core competencies. In addition, we have also identified the standards and outcomes not yet addressed by our workshop program, and this helps to guide development of new workshops and content.

Similarly, collaboration with individual discipline faculty has guided the development of new workshop content. Most recently, we have worked with the chair of the English division to identify the most important learning outcomes for our new citing sources workshop. Collaboration on this project took the form of library faculty developing an outline and plan, discussing it with the English division chair, getting feedback on what he thinks the students' greatest areas of need are, and then modifying the workshop content. We are also working with him to recruit English faculty to beta test this workshop before we officially add it to the series.

Collaboration with other librarians, even those whose titles don't include the words Instruction Librarian, cannot be underestimated either. Our colleagues within the library have done much more than merely participate in the teaching of workshops. As liaisons to the various campus divisions, they have actively promoted the workshops to discipline faculty across the entire campus. The library liaison to our English division contacted every faculty member in that division (both full-time and part-time) by phone and/or in face-to-face meetings to explain, and encourage them to use, our workshop program. Both full-time and part-time librarians promote the workshop program to individual students and faculty at our reference desk. In addition to promoting the workshops, full-time and part-time librarians participate in the development of new workshops (both content and pedagogy) as well as the revision of existing workshops.

ADMINISTRATION

Students register for workshops using a custom-built database. Until 2007, this was an Access® database available to students on only two computers near the reference desk in the library. Through collaboration with the campus Instructional Technology department, we migrated this database to a Web environment. Beginning in Spring 2007, the database became available online so students can register and make changes to their library workshop enrollment from anywhere. This has cut down on the number of students who register but then don't show up for workshops, thus allowing more "wait list" students to get into workshops. (During the latter part of the semester, it is not unusual to have 50 students registered for a workshop that can accommodate 30 students at the most.) The workshop database also provides valuable information for administrative decision making. We can generate reports about student attendance arranged by course number, faculty member, semester/session, workshop title, workshop time, day of week, etc.

Another part of administration is steering faculty away from one-shot, course-specific sessions and toward the workshop series for their students who are doing general research. (Course-specific sessions are reserved for classes with content-specific research needs.) Students get more in-depth instruction from the workshops than we can address in a one-shot session. In addition, faculty do not have to take time away from their course content to bring the class to the library; students attend the workshops on their own time.

Administrative collaboration includes regular communication with faculty via email at the beginning and end of each semester. We announce new workshop content, changes to the schedule, changes in registration policy and procedures, etc. We also communicate new attendance records, positive research results, and other successes. Scheduling also requires collaboration. We coordinate library workshops to coincide with the English and ESL class schedules, our primary target audiences. We also coordinate workshop time slots with librarians' reference and other duty schedules.

ASSESSMENT

The workshop registration and attendance database allows us to collect data for our research project and for our own assessment needs. We can generate reports as described above, and we can provide instructors with reports showing which of their students attended which workshops. In addition, data is entered into the campus student records system by library staff so that the Research and Planning unit can continue the research project begun in 1999.

The research project measures student success, among other factors. As an example, it compares students in English 101 who take the library workshops with those in English 101 who do not. Success is defined as the number of students enrolled at census time who receive an A, B, C or credit (Research and Planning, 2006).

During most semesters, the results of the research have been statistically significant. Since 2000, the average success rate (i.e. pass rate) for students enrolled in English 101 who take workshops is 15 percent higher than for students in English 101 who do not take workshops. For English 120 over the same period the difference is 14 percent, and for ESL 151 the difference is also 14 percent, though the data fluctuate somewhat more than the data for English 101 and English 120.

We strive to increase collaboration with more faculty and divisions on campus by sharing with them the results of our quantitative research project. The GCC Library's workshop program offers statistical evidence that it improves student success, and this has increased its credibility among faculty and administration. This credibility helped us retain funding from various sources on campus that valued the workshop program and didn't want to see it disappear during a time of budgetary constraint.

The library has also been able to contribute in a meaningful way to campus-wide discussions of student learning outcomes because of our experience with and knowledge of assessment. Being at the forefront of the student learning outcomes discussion increases our workshop program's visibility on campus.

CONCLUSION

What can you do to make this kind of information competency program happen on your campus? First, establish

within your library an understanding that information competency is a priority. With this understanding, there is a lot that the library director can do. In our case, it meant grant funding as well as advocacy for information competency at high administrative and academic levels on campus.

Second, understand that it happens gradually and start small. You might even begin with a student survey to determine the library anxiety level of students on your campus or a faculty survey to determine their perception of student research skills, or the lack of them. Develop and offer one workshop that addresses just one of the needs you identify. Expand from there.

Third, recognize that collaboration is essential from the beginning. As mentioned before, collaborate with the librarians with whom you work. If teaching is not their thing, involve them in different ways. They can help with outreach and promotion, they can help develop the curriculum, or they can help with assessment by observing workshops and providing feedback. Involve your part-time library colleagues as teachers, trainers, and content developers; make use of their expertise.

Another step to take is to become an active player on your campus. With or without faculty status, there are avenues for involvement that will put you in a position to advocate for information competency, even if it is a matter of converting one person at a time. Look for opportunities to begin dialogue with campus players, both administrative and academic by finding out what their priorities are (basic skills, first-year learning communities, etc.) and identifying how information competency is important to those efforts.

There is strength in numbers; commiseration too. Seek support and collaboration outside your campus environment. If there is a regional instruction librarians group, join it. If there isn't, see what you can do—perhaps through your state library association or ACRL affiliate—to establish one, or use a listserv to find like-minded librarians with whom to collaborate informally. You don't have to have all the answers; it is by working together that we develop them.

Finally, whatever the size of your program, use assessment from the outset. You may not have an elaborate database to generate data, but it is important always to be in assessment mode in order to document your successes as well as your failures. This is the information that you can take back to collaborators to increase your program's credibility and to justify change, growth, and financial consideration.

The idea of coming up with a product (program) and hoping to sell it to campus stakeholders is what many of us have been conditioned to think of as collaboration. This model reflects the service mentality that says we can do anything—with or without resources—in the interest of student learning, but that's not always true. Perhaps the most important thing we have learned about our program is how important collaboration is to the development of an information competency program; it needs to feed the program, not follow it. To make information competency a reality, it must be a campus priority, not just a library priority. Collaborating with non-library colleagues from the very beginning gives them more investment in information competency instruction. In addition, it makes for a stronger, more comprehensive program.

REFERENCES

- Glendale Community College Library. (2007, March 14). *Workshop Materials*. Retrieved April 25, 2007, from <http://www.glendale.edu/library/instruction/workshops-materials.html>
- Research Across the Curriculum Committee, Glendale Community College. (2007, April 24). *Information competency at GCC: The core competencies*. Retrieved April 25, 2007, from <http://www.glendale.edu/library/instruction/documents/CoreCompetenciesGCCdraftFinal.pdf>
- Research and Planning, Glendale Community College. (2006, March 6). *Statistical evaluation of information competency program student outcomes, Spring 2000 to Spring 2005*. Retrieved April 25, 2007, from <http://www.glendale.edu/library/instruction/IC-research-report.html>
-