

I HEAR THE TRAIN A COMIN', COMMON CORE IS ROLLIN' ROUND THE BEND

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INTRODUCTION

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative is a state-led effort to provide clarity about and consistency in what is expected of K-12 student learning across the country. The new standards focus on higher-order thinking to foster the knowledge and skill sets high school students need to be prepared for college and future careers. Many of the standards emphasize what librarians refer to as information literacy. These key areas of curricular focus include creating sound persuasive arguments with evidence, effectively using primary and secondary sources, reading and analyzing complex texts, and reading and comprehending informational text.

As instruction librarians, we were able to easily identify how the Common Core standards align with the Association of College and Research Libraries' Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. Both sets of standards identify the critical information literacy skills necessary to become independent lifelong learners. However, because the Common Core standards are being implemented now, the implications for higher education are still murky. This shift raises many questions for instruction librarians: How will the Common Core change students' research abilities when they enter college, and what can instruction librarians do to prepare for this shift? Should we take a cue from K-12 and emphasize course-integrated information literacy instruction rather than for-credit IL classes? Our goal was to start a dialogue with other instruction librarians about what we might do to do to prepare for the outcomes of the changes happening in K-12 curricula.

OVERVIEW

The CCSS Initiative was led by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The standards

communicate what is expected of students at each grade level in a K-12 school setting. Each state independently made the decision to adopt the CCSS beginning in 2010. Forty-five states, the District of Columbia, four territories and the Department of Defense Education Activity have adopted the CCSS. Virginia and Nebraska have joined provisionally and Minnesota has adopted the English Language Arts Standards, but not the Math Standards. Alaska and Texas have not joined the CCSS at this time. Assessment of the CCSS is to begin during the 2014-2015 academic year; however, the state of New York has just recently (as of May 2013) started to assess students being educated under CCSS.

The CCSS is a result of education reforms that have spanned the past thirty years. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published a report that was critical of the quality of public education and made recommendations to reform education. George H. Bush started the National Education Goals Initiative in 1989 to take a look at the education standards and goals of the nation as a whole. In March and October in 1994, the Improving America's School Act and the Educate America Act under the Clinton administration were passed to provide resources to states and communities to develop comprehensive education plans with state governor and Chief State school officers. There was also a push to include Internet and computer skills in the curricula. In December of 2001 under the George W. Bush Administration, the No Child Left Behind Act was passed. It required each state to measure students' progress in reading and mathematics during grades 3-8 and again during grades 10-12 by 2005. The subject of science was to be added for assessment by 2007. Criticism of this initiative led for many to advocate a development of national standards and assessments (Watt, 2011).

Achieve, Education Trust, the Forham Foundation and the National Alliance of Business launched the 2005 American Diploma Project Network. This organization was interested in

determining two things: a) What do students need to know for academic success in college or the workforce in a contemporary society? and b) What do states require students to demonstrate to graduate with a high school diploma? (Achieve, 2012). Outcomes from the study of the American Diploma Project provided the basis for initiating the CCSS. In July 2009, Race to the Top under the Obama Administration designated funds for educators to develop CCSS assessment tools. These assessments would focus on four areas: college readiness, career readiness, international benchmarks and alignment with state standards. The standards and assessments are meant to ensure that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared with the skills and knowledge necessary to collaborate and compete with their peers in the United States and overseas.

INTEREST TO ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS

As only three months separate grade 12 and grade 13, it is important for academic librarians to study the CCSS and expand upon the information literacy skills that are embedded in the standards. Kristin Fontichiaro (2011) identified key areas of CCSS of interest to school librarians that also resonate with academic librarians: Creating sound persuasive arguments with evidence, effectively using primary and secondary sources, reading and analyzing complex texts and reading and comprehending informational text. According to the ACT College Preparedness Report (2010), 51% of incoming college freshmen read at a remedial level. The new CCSS guidelines have students reading an increased percentage of informational text as they move up in grades. In grade 4, half of the text that students will be reading will be informational, but by grade 12, that number will rise to 70%. As students move up in secondary grades, they will also focus on comprehension skills by summarizing what they have read, identifying main ideas through asking questions, and creating new meaning.

The CCSS speaks to the information literacy standards identified by the American Association of School Librarians publication, *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning* (1998). Now is a perfect time for school librarians to capitalize on their role in the K-12 setting by helping classroom teachers create assignments that push the use of primary sources to link literacy, critical thinking and the inquiry process. This is of interest to academic librarians because what we have been seeing in higher education is that students often struggle with creating solid research questions, as well as critically assessing information. This need for increased collaboration with librarians aligns with the *2010 Top Ten Trends in Academic Libraries* report that states “increased collaboration will expand the role of the library within the institution and beyond, indicating that collaborative efforts between librarians and teaching faculty will continue to grow” (ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee, 2010, p. 288).

SOME PROBLEMS WITH CCSS

As with any curricular change, many problems have been identified in relation to these new standards. While we can identify similarities between what we at the academic level

have been doing in terms of collaboration, and what seems to be necessary with CCSS, the interesting twist is that school librarians were not consulted in the creation of CCSS. However, they have taken it upon themselves to map their standards against relevant CCSS in a document called the Crosswalk of the Common Core Standards, which will be discussed in more detail below. Another issue with Common Core is that financial incentives were offered before the standards were fully developed. Considering the climate in our country surrounding educational funding, some states (Nebraska in particular) have really criticized the federal government for roping public schools into adopting these standards before they were fully developed. Another issue, articulated by the Virginia Board of Education, was the lack of an assessment plan or curricular framework at the time of CCSS adoption (*Voices*, 2012).

Sally Drew (2012) identifies some pertinent issues with CCSS in relation to researching and learning in an online environment. She found that while Common Core does focus on students interacting with a variety of types of resources, including those that are online, it does not fully take into account the digital literacy skills that students will need in order to be successful in college and/or careers. She proposes five additional English/Language Arts Anchor Standards that relate to digital literacy. These include participating in online and offline literacy communities, critically evaluating search results, and the creation of new online texts. One interesting thing that she points out that is of interest to academic librarians is that there is a lack of acknowledgement in the CCSS of how the Internet has changed the nature of text. Whereas texts of the past were static and straightforward (text on paper, text on a screen), texts are now explosive pieces of information that can have countless embedded links to other textual sources, videos, images, etc. The strategies necessary for reading and digesting such a text are different than those needed for digesting straightforward narratives.

RELATIONSHIP TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Because the CCSS are really focused on preparing students for college and careers, the individuals involved in the planning and execution of these new standards have been distinctly aware of the need to involve experts in higher education. In 2011, the Educational Policy Improvement Center created a national survey, “Reaching the Goal: The Applicability and Importance of the Common Core State Standards to College and Career Readiness.” In this survey, approximately 1800 faculty who teach introductory level college courses at a variety of institutions were asked questions about whether they found the standards to be a good reflection of the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in first-year courses. The majority of faculty surveyed confirmed that they were indeed a good reflection of what students would need in order to be prepared for college.

Another issue on the horizon relates to how colleges of education and schools of arts and sciences are going to go about preparing future educators to be able to effectively teach to these standards. This will be an ongoing issue, but one project

that is already focused on this issue is the College Readiness Partnership. This is a collaboration between the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), formed in 2010 to promote postsecondary engagement in the implementation of CCSS. The partnership brings together state, local, and institutional leaders at elementary, secondary and postsecondary levels. Additionally, the Task Force on College Readiness, an AASCU-only initiative, focuses on the role of AASCU institutions in preparing K-12 students for college. The organization's final report argues for a broad and multifaceted approach to college readiness, highlights exemplary programs, and suggests strategies for P-12 partnerships and institutional alignment (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, n.d.).

IMPACT ON INFORMATION LITERACY INSTRUCTION

While we know that there are efforts being made to strategize about how CCSS will impact higher education more generally, the effect of these standards on students' information literacy skills upon graduating high school is still uncertain. We know that information literacy skills (before Common Core) were being taught in high school to varying degrees. One piece of evidence of this can be found in the results of a survey conducted by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) at the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA in 2011, titled "The American Freshman." In this survey, over 200,000 first time college students from all across the U.S. were asked a variety of questions, including a number of questions related to academic habits. Students were asked to respond to the question, "In the past year, did you **frequently**..." with the following endings that will be of interest to instruction librarians:

- Evaluate the quality or reliability of information
- Locate research articles and resources
- Integrate knowledge from different sources

In response, 40% of students answered that they frequently evaluated the quality/reliability of information, 25% of respondents said that they frequently located research articles and resources, and 56% said that they frequently integrate knowledge from different sources. Thus, most students entering college in Fall 2011 confirmed that they needed more experience and education related to information literacy and research strategies (Pryor, 2011).

The question that is left unanswered is whether the CCSS will help improve these numbers in the future. As mentioned earlier, school librarians were not involved in the planning conversations around CCSS, but have recognized that these standards address many of the skills that they have been responsible for fostering for years. They have mapped the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) standards to the Common Core, creating a document called the Crosswalk

of the Common Core Standards (American Association of School Librarians, n.d.). While this has helped them identify areas of shared value, it is worth noting that this mapping reveals the complexity that exists in some of the Common Core standards. For example, in the Crosswalk, one of the grade 11-12 standards related to Reading, states, "Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem." School librarians have mapped this single Common Core standard to *eight* separate AASL standards.

STARTING THE CONVERSATION

While school and academic librarians are likely pleased to see these skills included in the curriculum, how do we constructively address the fact that a single standard often encompasses a number of steps that are far more complex than they appear at first glance? Likewise, since there is no separate category for information literacy skills in the CCSS, are there skills and strategies missing that we value and are necessary for success in college and careers? The digital literacy issues that Sally Drew identifies (2012) serve as an example of this.

Academic librarians can begin conversations with faculty about the role of the library in addressing how future educators will learn how to teach to these standards. We identified a segment of the grade 11-12 standards that were related to information literacy (Appendix A). Instruction librarians could use this as a springboard for conversations with other relevant parties. These standards could be mapped to the ACRL IL Standards, or taken to faculty liaisons in colleges of education or arts and sciences to begin conversations about what librarians can do to support future educators in teaching to these standards.

Does the implementation of these standards change our role, or strengthen in it some way? Information literacy skills are not listed in a separate category—they are integrated throughout the standards for subjects. Does that mean that we decide to drop the idea of for-credit classes and rely on these K-12 standards as our new building blocks? Again, we did not want to pretend that we have any clear idea of how the new standards will affect us in academia—only that it will eventually trickle down and we will see a change.

PARTICIPANT THOUGHTS

At the end of our session, we asked participants to consider two questions, in order to capture other ideas that we had not considered on our own:

- How do the new standards create opportunities for us as academic librarians?
- What challenges can you identify relating to these standards, specifically when it comes to IL instruction at the college level?

Session attendees provided some very thoughtful answers, which are detailed below.

- A number of librarians were aware of issues in rural districts that lacked the resources to provide textbooks, much less multimedia resources. To what extent will these students be able to meet the CCSS without basic resources?
- Another individual whose daughter is in a school that has implemented CCSS also brought up the issue of textbooks, noting that her daughter's teachers have to cobble things together, and students do not have access to computers.
- How can students be expected to complete homework on a time-limited computer at a public library?
- Even if these standards are adopted, what about international students?
- The standards will be implemented differently between states
- Even if students gain these skills, it's the regression of transferring that we in academia must face. What skills do we need to cover again?
- The ACRL Standards will be changing—how will that map out?
- One librarian mentioned that she was hopeful. Her instinct was to be wary, but if it does work out, then we can assume a better baseline of knowledge for students coming in. When we're trying to plan, we cannot assume that a student knows a single thing, but to be able to anticipate that students have a better baseline of skills would allow us to do more complex and interesting things when we see them.

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APPENDIX A

CONTENT	COMMON CORE STANDARD	ACRL IL STANDARD(S)
Writing	WHST.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.	
	WHST.11-12.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.	
	WHST.11-12.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.	
Reading- informational	RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.	
History/ Social Studies	RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.	
	RH.11-12.8 Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.	
	RH.11-12.9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.	
Science/ Technical	RST.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., quantitative data, video, multimedia) in order to address a question or solve a problem.	
	RST.11-12.8 Evaluate the hypotheses, data, analysis, and conclusions in a science or technical text, verifying the data when possible and corroborating or challenging conclusions with other sources of information.	
	RST.11-12.9 Synthesize information from a range of sources (e.g., texts, experiments, simulations) into a coherent understanding of a process, phenomenon, or concept, resolving conflicting information when possible.	
College/Career Reading	CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.	
	CCRA.R.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.	
	CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.	
College/Career Writing	CCRA.W.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.	
	CCRA.W.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.	
	CCRA.W.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.	