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ILLUMINATING AN INSTRUCTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE: BUILDING A TIERED INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAM FROM THE GROUND UP

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HISTORY

Before 2013, library instruction classes at Baylor University were provided by the department of Reference and Library Instruction (RLI). While there was a nascent liaison program in the library, which paired a “consultant” librarian with academic departments, not all those librarians were a part of the RLI department. Some RLI librarians taught information literacy instruction classes specifically for their assigned departments, as they were already heavily involved with those academic departments. The rest of the RLI librarians were mainly generalist reference librarians and taught classes as they were requested. Aside from ENG 1304 (first-year writing composition), instruction classes were provided by request of the teaching faculty, through a form on the library website. There was not a systematic approach to instruction, either at the department, college, or undergraduate curriculum level. For the ENG 1304 classes, the librarian who was the consultant for the English department organized the instruction, usually teaching many of those classes herself. However, even though ENG 1304 instruction was an organized endeavor, that instruction was not standardized but instead was subject to the personal styles and pedagogies of the individual librarians who volunteered to teach.

In 2013, library administration initiated organizational restructuring that created the department of Liaison Services (later renamed “Research and Engagement”). The former RLI librarians were removed from reference desk duties and given liaison roles, with a goal of focusing the work of the librarians more intentionally and proactively with assigned academic disciplines across the campus. The strategic framework that articulated and directed the work of the liaisons included teaching and learning alongside outreach and engagement, research services, collections, scholarly communication, and subject knowledge. Liaisons were also charged with “planning, delivering, assessing, and improving library teaching and learning initiatives” for their liaison departments, with the aim of embedding information literacy throughout the curriculum. Two years after the reorganization, in 2015, the library created the Undergraduate Learning Librarian (ULL) position as a way to support and to provide resources for the liaison librarians in these new teaching roles. The ULL initially worked on a model of information literacy instruction that would be tiered throughout the curriculum. In 2018, with personnel turnover, the ULL position was tweaked and we hired a Director of Instruction and Information Literacy who, in 2019, was able to operationalize and standardize the tiered system of information literacy.

DEVELOPMENT OF A TIERED APPROACH

Beginning in April 2019, a tiered system representing the library’s approach to information literacy instruction underwent the first stages of development. The system was created to reach students at three different touch points during their undergraduate careers. During the development phase, the library looked at existing touch points, relationships, and partnerships that were already in place. The library also created a web presence to showcase information literacy instruction as a service offered and developed an information literacy instruction mission statement to guide these efforts. The mission statement was in line with the library’s mission as well as with the university’s strategic plan, *Illuminate*. The library incorporated “light” metaphors into the names of each level: lamppost, light bulb, and spotlight. The instructional content, including learning objectives, was guided by the Association of College and Research Libraries *Framework for Information Literacy*.

LAMPPOST: NEW STUDENT EXPERIENCE COURSES

As librarians began to evaluate existing touch points, it became clear that there was a need to develop a standardized program that would encourage the current touch points and allow new touch points to flourish. Creating a more standardized practice would also offer opportunities for program-wide assessment. The existing points of contact included the ENG 1304/1310 information literacy instruction sessions and the instruction by liaison librarians in the disciplines. A clear absence of standardized library instruction before first year writing (ENG 1304/1310) was identified. In response, a partnership with New Student Experience

courses was established and the first level of information literacy instruction, the lamppost, was developed. New Student Experience courses help to “engage students academically, socially, and spiritually, helping students form meaningful connections, academic community, and success at Baylor and beyond” (Baylor University, 2020). The library’s information literacy instruction offerings fit into the mission and learning objectives of the New Student Experience courses by connecting students with their librarian, helping students to develop autonomy through learning about academic integrity, and by helping students succeed academically. The Director of Instruction and Information Literacy and the Director of the Liaison Program were able to create a partnership with the New Student Experience Courses through meetings with the Director of Student Success Initiatives and the Associate Vice Provost for Academic Enrollment Management. The partnership involved the library creating a series of online learning modules embedded into a self-enrolled Canvas course that was offered as an option for New Student Experience instructors to use in their courses. The New Student Experience instructors already have a great deal of other optional outside content from departments who want to get into the courses in some way or another. The instructors also still have control over how they want to teach the classes, so it was not possible to make the library’s online learning module a required component. There were a few liaison librarians who regularly taught one- or two-shot information literacy instruction sessions to New Student Experience courses in their disciplines. However, because of the high volume of New Student Experience courses, there was no way to provide in person information literacy instruction to all sections offered.

The online learning modules for the New Student Experience courses were created using Adobe Spark web-based software and were embedded into a self-enrolled Canvas course. Additionally, individual modules were placed in the Canvas Commons to allow instructors to embed standalone modules if they chose not to incorporate the entire series. The modules included an introduction to the liaison librarians (welcome video), video tour of the library’s website, a short video covering the types of resources at the library, Search Basics module, and a four-part series on Exploring Academic Integrity, which included: the scholarly conversation, copyright, academic honesty, and attribution. If students complete the entire course and take the quizzes at the end of each section of the Academic Integrity series, they automatically earn a virtual badge and become a library lamp lighter (in keeping with the light theme).

LIGHT BULB: FIRST YEAR WRITING

As mentioned, one of the long-standing partnerships was with the first-year writing courses. In prior years, librarians within the Research & Engagement Department taught sessions for ENG 1304 (Thinking, Writing, and Research) courses as they were available. There was not a standardized curriculum or assessment plan in place and the library session was an encouraged, but not required, component of the ENG 1304 curriculum.

Beginning in the fall of 2019, after seven years of study and work by Baylor faculty, staff, and students, a new unified Core Curriculum was implemented for the BA, BFA, BS and BSAS degrees offered by the College of Arts & Sciences. This change meant that the standard ENG 1304 course would be phased out and replaced with a new course, ENG 1310: Writing & Academic Inquiry. ENG 1310 would be listed as an option for students to take under the research writing distribution list (which includes seven course options). Since ENG 1304 will still be offered for several semesters until the transition is completely in place, library instruction was still offered to both the ENG 1304 and the ENG 1310 courses the first year that the new Core was in use. One hundred sections were offered during the Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 semesters combined. Although instruction in these two courses does not reach all students at that level, it is a high impact opportunity for information literacy instruction.

As part of the re-vamping process (focusing on standardization) for information literacy instruction for first-year writing courses, the Director of Instruction and Information Literacy met with the first-year writing program director to gauge her perspective on the library’s previous practices for instruction in this area. First-year writing instructors were given a survey the year prior to assess their thoughts on the information literacy instruction curriculum, but there were no student assessments to base decisions on. After evaluating instructor feedback and reviewing learning objectives for ENG 1304 and ENG 1310 with the first-year writing program director, a new information literacy instruction curriculum was devised.

The new curriculum involved pre-class work available as a self-enrolled Canvas course. Instructors would be able to give students a link to the course, students would self-enroll and complete the required pre-session work and then arrive at the session with some basic knowledge and skills regarding information literacy. The modules would walk students through an introduction where they would find their discipline and watch a 30 second welcome video from their librarian and watch a video showcasing the highlights of the library’s website. Then, the students would complete modules on “Search Basics” and “Zotero” and have the option to complete a module on “Recognizing Authoritative Sources” (this module was recommended to instructors but was not required). The modules were tested by several library student employees prior to the launch, and on average they took a combined 20-30 minutes total to complete. Then, during the session, library instructors would engage students in active learning through a keyword generation and concept mapping activity, guided search time, and source evaluation.

The sessions included formative assessment using Mentimeter polling software and additional assessments through Canvas quizzes. Students completed an exercise where they evaluated one of the sources that they found during the session using a Canvas

quiz that walked them through some important questions that they should be asking themselves when they evaluate information to determine if it is authoritative within the context of their research. They completed a second short quiz during the last few minutes of the session that served as an evaluation. The results of these quizzes were analyzed using NVivo 12.

SPOTLIGHT: INSTRUCTION IN THE DISCIPLINES

Research & Engagement Librarians were also already partnering with faculty and instructors through their liaison roles in various departments and programs. Specialized information literacy instruction had been offered for years by librarians in the Research & Engagement Department and so looking into ways to standardize or streamline the efforts was another opportunity to reach students in their disciplines, perhaps later in their undergraduate programs. One of the ways that librarians attempted to streamline these efforts was through a redesign of the look/feel of the Subject Guides. Standardization of the guides, including showcasing that the guide was part of the third tier of information literacy instruction, “spotlight on the disciplines,” was made a priority. Additionally, librarians were encouraged to re-think their guides in terms of content and consider incorporating more teaching materials (outside of text and images). The Director of Instruction and Information Literacy and the Director of the Liaison Program developed several online learning modules on a variety of topics that could be easily embedded into a guide. A workshop was held for librarians to learn more about utilizing Adobe Spark (the software used for the creation of online learning modules) so that librarians would be empowered to create their own modules for their departments as needed.

The Director of Instruction and Information Literacy and the Director of the Liaison Program worked with the library’s marketing team to develop icons to go alongside each level of information literacy. These icons were used during the LibGuide Subject Guide re-design process in order to showcase the level of information literacy for the guide and provide a cohesive look and feel. The icons were also used on the information literacy instruction services page on the library’s website and on all promotional materials.

A new assessment survey was created for liaison librarians to distribute to students during the last few minutes of the sessions that they taught. The survey was brief and was developed to gauge the effectiveness of information literacy instruction at the discipline level. The survey asks questions about how useful the information presented was, if the session met its objectives, if it improved your skills or provided you with tools to help you, what you liked most about the session, and what could have been improved about the session. Learning this kind of information can help provide insight into students’ responses to our sessions and provide opportunities for improvement.

IMPLEMENTATION

Once the three main points of contact had been identified, the Director of Instruction and Information Literacy and the Director of the Liaison Program began identifying existing learning objectives in the New Student Experience Program and in the first-year writing courses. Once learning objectives were identified, backward design was used to create learning objectives to guide the curriculum, modules, content, and assessments for the New Student Experience modules and for the first-year writing courses. Additionally, sample learning objectives (general and not discipline specific) were created for the spotlight level. A workshop was held by the Director of Instruction and Information Literacy for all librarians covering the process of creating effective learning objectives.

Collaborations between librarians and instructional designers on campus were vital for the creation of the self-enrolled courses for both the New Student Experience modules and the pre-session modules for first-year writing. The Director of Instruction and Information Literacy and the Director of the Liaison program also worked closely with the library’s marketing team to create promotional materials to hand out at New Student Experience instructor meetings and to create the icons used to represent each level. The Director of Instruction and Information Literacy was able to speak to all first-year writing instructors at their pre-semester meeting to talk about the library’s new instructional offerings, the addition of the pre-class work, and the active learning activities that would be incorporated into the sessions.

Liaisons were informed of the LibGuides revisions and direction and had the opportunity to give feedback. Liaisons also continued to be encouraged to reach out to faculty and share the new information literacy instruction webpage, which includes opportunities to partner with your subject librarian as well as sample information literacy learning objectives for each tier.

LOOKING AHEAD AND LESSONS LEARNED

Overall, the first year of implementation was a success. There were 179 students who completed all the New Student Experience modules and quizzes and received virtual badges. There were also other faculty who included individual modules in their courses (downloaded from Canvas Commons). The First Year Writing instructor participation rate increased from 70% in 2018-

2019 to 94% in 2019-2020. Liaisons are continuing to add elements of teaching in their research guides and standardization of guides is underway.

New Student Experience Instructors were sent a survey at the end of the fall semester 2019 to get feedback on the modules and on how implementation went for instructors who included them. The survey also helped to make clear the reasons why individual instructors who responded chose not to include the modules in their courses: they did not know about them. This was helpful information because it allowed us to brainstorm new ways to market the partnership and modules.

Liaison librarians are also now encouraged to distribute a post-session survey to students when they teach in their disciplines. The survey helps librarians understand the effectiveness of their sessions and learn what things that are working well for their students and what things that can be improved.

REFERENCES

Baylor University. (2020). *New Student Experience*. <https://www.baylor.edu/nse/>