

HIDING PEAS IN THEIR MASHED POTATOES: TEACHING FACULTY INFORMATION LITERACY ON THE SLY

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INTRODUCTION

Despite the abundance of material supporting, guiding and encouraging information literacy in libraries, there is still a disconnect between librarians and teaching faculty in understanding and embracing what information literacy actually is and how it can be used to help students. At the academic level, teaching faculty often place their priorities elsewhere, depending on others to take responsibility for instructing their students in information literacy skills. On an already full plate, faculty forego information literacy in order to fit in something else or lack the stomach for librarians constantly trying to get them to try a little bite of information literacy. Getting faculty to embrace information literacy skills and understand the importance of these skills for themselves and their students is challenging, but a little ingenuity and creativity can give faculty healthy doses of information literacy skills without leaving a bad taste in their mouths.

INFORMATION LITERACY BY ANY OTHER NAME?

Instead of re-inventing information literacy to fit into every department on campus and catering to each and every faculty on a one-on-one basis, look at the language your college uses and you might find information literacy already hiding there. Phrases to look for include:

- Research skills
- Comprehensive research

- Appropriate selection of materials
- Analyzing and evaluating readings from a variety of textual sources
- Objectively identify and evaluate issues
- Identify, research, assess the credibility of and effectively use electronic sources

All of these phrases, from Harper College's General Education Outcomes, fit perfectly into the framework of information literacy, but "information literacy" is not listed anywhere (2012). This detail points to a constant challenge when trying to infuse information literacy into a curriculum that supposedly is already addressing the issues and skills outlined by the ACRL Standards--the concepts and skills are there, they are just going by a different name. Faculty should be aware of the skills listed above but do not necessarily see the connection to something called information literacy. In that sense, perhaps adjusting the library's own terminology is key to reaching out to the faculty. If the faculty call it research skills, then the library will get more buy-in if they also call it research skills.

At Harper College Library we had the greatest success with a workshop for faculty titled "Infusing Research Skills" that addressed information literacy skills; we just didn't call it information literacy. This workshop introduced faculty to searching in the library using assignments from a discipline with which the faculty had little or no experience. For example, psychology faculty were asked to search for an article on an Ernest Hemingway short story and biology faculty were asked to find peer-reviewed psychology articles. This introduced faculty to the feeling that their students might be experiencing when asked to do research in a new subject, and how they might approach research. This activity was very enlightening

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to most faculty, as they felt what it was like to be outside of their comfort zones. While the workshop was intended to cover how students' research skills might be a challenge, faculty were faced with barriers such as unfamiliarity with databases, how to type in search terms and whether or not items were available full-text. To the librarian, the workshop was meant to introduce the faculty to information literacy skills, but the teaching faculty thought they were learning about students' research skills.

ASKING FOR MORE, PLEASE

On the other hand, there are faculty who actively call any library instruction session an information literacy session; they have bought into the library's terminology and usually we have found the most success and responsiveness if we just go with it. Faculty that embrace the library terminology should be rewarded and valued as champions and advocates for the library and library services. These faculty members do not need to be drilled about what information literacy is or how it can help them and their students, but they are excellent resources and should be used as outside voices that interact with other faculty. Sometimes faculty can be more receptive about ideas dealing with research skills if the information is coming from a fellow teaching faculty. Take the library champions out to lunch to discuss what they are doing in their classes and what they think works best for their students. Sometimes ideas come from unlikely places and you will happily discover that librarians are not the only ones concerned about student research skills and comprehension. The most important thing to remember is to not get frustrated in the quest for willing participants.

BE VIGILANT, BE EVERYWHERE

Two of the best pieces of advice for introducing faculty to information literacy skills include: be vigilant and be everywhere. These two options are easily taken to the extreme. Being vigilant might mean that you are constantly visiting other departments, creating marketing outreach buzz with pamphlets or bookmarks detailing library instruction and information literacy. Some more extreme measures might entail secretly delivering material to offices, subliminal advertising, wearing information literacy t-shirts everyday or peppering conversations with pop culture references to information literacy. And if your information literacy department is small you might find yourself outside of the library more than you are in it.

Realistically, being vigilant simply requires that conversations be amped up a little and that you find new outlets that can reach faculty. Some simple ideas for being more vigilant involve:

- Collaborating with faculty more in-depth when they schedule a library instruction session. Find out what faculty are expecting in their scheduled sessions, what they enjoy and what they wished librarians spent more time on. If faculty are receptive to new ideas, offer new ways of introducing material and search techniques.
- Discover new outlets for getting information to

faculty. Sometimes bombarding them with emails works in order to promote a workshop or a brown bag series but can sometimes be overwhelming and/or easily ignored. E-newsletters can be a popular option, but with inboxes so over filled it might also get lost in the crowd. If your faculty association or senate has a newsletter, make friends with the editors so that blurbs about events and tips can be added into a more "legitimate" publication.

- As with any kind of outreach and collaboration with faculty, it is necessary to be innovative and proactive in your interactions. Libraries have changed and so must librarians (Rader, 2008). Libraries cannot afford to sit back and let faculty come to them. Talking to faculty via phone, email and in person are all acceptable methods of reaching out but what you talk about is of greater importance. These types of conversations work even better in a casual atmosphere centered around semester orientation programs, faculty luncheons or impromptu meetings in the halls. Teaching faculty usually love talking about their classes and disciplines and you can surely find a way to insert research skills into the conversation.
- Investigate taking the librarians out of the library completely and setting up librarians in a satellite location in a busy part of campus. These types of initiatives, sometimes called Librarians on Location or Satellite Librarians, highlight library resources, help answer questions and provide a service that is usually welcomed by the college. These types of services are also popular in department or division offices, depending on space availability.
- Reaching out to specific groups of teaching faculty can also lead to success. Take note of new faculty when they are introduced at the beginning of the year and then seek them out. These conversations can easily turn into a discussion about research skills and what the library can do to help students and faculty succeed. New faculty often do not know that they have the option of *not* bringing their students to the library for instruction! Other groups on campus that are easy targets include faculty that teach in special programs like learning communities or a first year experience course. Offer to partner with them during the planning stages of these courses/programs, in order to bring information literacy into the groundwork of the course creation. Programs such as these usually have a list of specific faculty teaching and those individuals can be accessed through a variety of methods to discuss how they envision their students succeeding in their class.

Being everywhere is a small extension of being vigilant. If you can make your face synonymous with the library or information literacy, then you are making steps to make the library more in the forefront of people's minds. Being

everywhere, again, requires a new way of thinking in terms of the library profession. Librarians must leave their comfort zone and sometimes utilize programs already in place to increase their presence on campus:

- Attend faculty events, retreats and orientation sessions that are offered on campus. Make sure that you sit with people you don't know or people who you know have not brought their students into the library. Talk about what is new in the library or what excites you about the library and how it relates to them or their students. Outreach to teaching faculty is pointless if all the librarians are sitting in the corner talking to one another. At most events all faculty are somewhat out of their comfort zone and might be more interested in talking to you about research skills or what their students are doing (or not doing) in their classes.
- Offer on-campus professional development opportunities. While this is a little less sly than other methods, the language used to market these opportunities can cater to more familiar terms used by teaching faculty. As mentioned earlier, the "Infusing Research Skills" workshop was successful in part because of its name and also because it offered stipends and food. Earlier workshops had not been well attended and if people did attend they thought it was for something else. Creating an eye-catching flyer and sending it out to all faculty helps get the advertising out there, but providing physical copies for department offices and sending weekly reminders can also help generate interest. Setting a maximum number of participants also seems to create a greater desire to participate. We capped the number of participants at 12 and had more positive response than previously scheduled events! The number cap seemed to make the event feel more exclusive and intimate. Collaborating with other departments and having actual teaching faculty participate as trainers will also help with marketing and outreach and provide more legitimacy for the workshop.
- Participation in college-wide committees also allows librarians to have exposure to administrators and faculty that might not usually come in contact with librarians. Closely examine committees on campus that might have an influence on your collections or library instruction and make sure to be a prominent and sometimes outspoken member. Making faculty and administrators aware of what the library does and how it supports the many aspects of student learning is important in increasing the library's status on campus and educating the rest of the campus about library services that will help students succeed.
- Stepping out of the library comfort zone can also make you aware of what terminology they use and

how it might differ from library phrasing. There has been a popular argument in professional literature and blogs saying that we need to "listen" to our patrons (teaching faculty) in their professional environments. Attending non-library conferences is a great way to hear how teaching faculty address research skills and what they think about the library. As Bonnie Swoger of the Undergraduate Science Librarian blog noted, avoidance of insular professional behaviors increases our understanding of faculty needs and allows to anticipate them in the future (2010).

- Finally one of the strongest ways to interact with faculty is to capitalize on programs and services that are already in place through the library and your campus. Liaison programs connected primarily to collection development and embedded librarian programs can both be expanded to include discussions of information literacy.

CONCLUSION

The main goal for actively engaging teaching faculty in information literacy initiatives and incorporating it into their classes is to let the faculty feel that they are information savvy themselves. Use words that are already familiar and don't struggle to introduce new terminology onto an already full plate. Offer numerous opportunities for learning throughout the year, including workshops, brown bag sessions and informal discussions about what teaching faculty are doing in their classes. Part of a successful program is to let the teaching faculty know how your library can help students, and to make your face synonymous with students' needs and research skills. Finally, it's not about what librarians do in the library (save that for discussions with other library professionals!), it's about what faculty and students can do in the library. Teaching faculty ultimately do not need to know how we buy books or schedule classes; they want to know that we have materials to support their curriculum and that we can help students find that material when it is needed. Whether we can incorporate information literacy concepts in a palatable way is the true challenge. If we are successful, we will ultimately be rewarded with successful students who can find and use materials in the library, as well as a dedicated group of teaching faculty that keep coming back, asking for the peas *without* the mashed potatoes.

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