WHAT’S A JOCKEY WITHOUT A HORSE?
LIBRARIANS AND FACULTY BUILDING COMMUNITY TOGETHER
AROUND THE FRAMEWORK

RACHEL A. STOTT

INTRODUCTION

What will the disciplinary faculty teaching information literacy courses think of all this? That’s the question Old Dominion University librarians often circled back to as we grappled with how the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education fit into ODU’s information literacy general education learning outcomes. In an effort to lay the groundwork for a more programmatic approach to the instruction librarians provide for these information literacy general education courses, we decided the campus faculty teaching these courses were an essential voice in helping us understand the role of the Framework in our pedagogical approaches. These discussions seemed especially important given that the University’s information literacy student learning outcomes are still based on the ACRL Information Literacy Standards for Higher Education, but several teaching libraries were interested in incorporating the Framework in a meaningful way. The result from these conversations—structured as a six-part brown bag series—not only broadened our understanding of faculty’s perceptions of information literacy, but also led to more in-depth collaborations with outside departments. Surprisingly, they fostered more community and shared understanding of roles internally within the library, too.

INFORMATION LITERACY AS A GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENT

In 2010, Old Dominion University adopted information literacy as one of its general education requirements for students. Most of the courses are taught through four colleges: Business (Information Technology 150); Sciences (Computer Science 120/121); Education (STEM 251); and Health Sciences (Health 120/121). Individual departments and professors can also petition the curriculum committee to have an individual course count for the general education requirement.

The University’s information literacy outcomes are taken directly from the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards. Further, the University uses the VALUE Rubric to determine if the course content and assignments are designed to meet these learning outcomes (Old Dominion University, 2014). As the instruction team at ODU Libraries began exploring the ACRL Framework, we were curious if the faculty teaching these general education courses were aware that a shift was happening. The Libraries’ instruction team did one-shot instruction for most sections of these four courses, but the content and pedagogy varied greatly, as did the students’ course assignments and research goals.

WORKSHOP SERIES

In an effort to touch base with faculty teaching the information literacy courses, the Libraries had hosted semi-regular (once or twice a year) information literacy roundtables. These informal conversations allowed faculty to discuss any issues they were encountering in their courses and the Libraries could discuss new digital learning objects, lesson plans, or other types of support that
may be relevant. Once we began discussing the Framework among the Libraries’ teaching team, though, we decided it would be helpful to have more in-depth interaction with the faculty members.

Our main goal was simply to share the existence of the Framework with faculty and discuss their interpretations of it given they were currently building course learning outcomes from the language in the Standards. We knew how we talked and thought about the Framework and information literacy within the library, but we wanted insight on how closely our interpretations aligned with those teaching these concepts outside the library. Our second goal was to begin addressing ways in which our instruction could be more standardized across all the information literacy courses. We were teaching different things for each college’s info lit course and saw this as a missed opportunity to be building more scaffolding into our program, which already includes robust instruction in the 100- and 200-level English composition courses, plus subject-specific instruction in upper division courses. Third, we were preparing to pilot a new set of information literacy modules built in Articulate Storyline and embedded in the campus Blackboard learning management system. We were hoping the information literacy instructors would be willing to incorporate at least some of them into their curriculum—or investigate the possibility of using the entire set in lieu of in-person instruction where appropriate.

To begin these conversations with faculty, we set up a series of six brown bag lunch events, held in our instruction classroom on the third Thursday of the month during ODU’s activity hour. During each session, we explored the definition and knowledge practices of an individual Frame, moving through them alphabetically. Readings and handouts were provided at the beginning of each session, and active learning was built in to encourage conversation and interaction. While each subsequent session was informed by conversations from the last, the slide decks and discussion output (collected on Padlet) were made available on the Libraries’ Information Literacy Program LibGuide as a resource for anyone who could not attend all six sessions. We sent personal invitations, email announcements, and other forms of communication to all faculty teaching information literacy general education courses, and also invited members from various student support services on campus, including the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment, and the Student Success Center. We averaged about 10 participants per session, with most people attending at least five sessions.

Content

The Frames were presented in alphabetical order, with three sessions happening in the fall and three in the spring. At the beginning of each session, participants were provided with the text of the Frame, as well as a list of the Standards that most closely aligned. While the teaching librarians understood the Frames were not necessarily written to correlate directly with the Standards, we felt providing a comparison would be helpful for our discussions, given the faculty’s familiarity of the Standards. Each session included a brief discussion of what the Frame may mean in the context of information literacy instruction, followed by a combination of individual or small group activities, concluding with a full group share-out (see Appendix A for discussion questions and activities from each workshop).

Figure 1: Participants were Asked to Map “Scholarship as Conversation” to the other Five Frames

The discussion questions were designed to get at the different ways information literacy is being taught across the disciplines; to discover where our understandings aligned across departments and the Libraries; and also to pinpoint disconnects or
Difficult, and several faculty. While these courses are still its (archives, electronic resources, acquisitions) voluntarily participated in the different roles within the library. Through the College beam to that the instruction team is not the only pla workshops, the the order to begin initial discussions about adapting the University for Teaching and Learning. Also, the University's c online information literacy modules to the curriculum and assignments they were revamping with help from the University's Cen approach information literacy, other unexpected outcomes arose from the workshop series. The faculty needs we should address in future lesson plans and digital learning objects. Evaluation, in the same discipline; others were open to letting students use websites, but were at a loss for how to effectively teach websites in their research because they argued it wouldn’t be appropriate in upper level research courses. Both faculty and librarians felt these information literacy general education courses would be more effective as prerequisites for other research-based courses. Even if assignments and final projects varied from course to course, faculty felt students had the same types of struggles.

Overall, the discussions generated a lot of good will between the participating faculty and the librarians. It was encouraging to realize that while we may be addressing information literacy in silos on campus, we shared many of the same concerns and experiences. Most faculty teaching these courses had not heard about the Framework until coming to these workshops. An immediate concern was how it was going to impact ODU’s established learning outcomes. We were able to spend a good deal of time in the first session talking about how the Framework was not radically different from the Standards as far as knowledge dispositions and that faculty would not be expected to drastically change their course plans. Participating librarians were able to empathize with the feelings of change and provide some examples of ways the Framework was already being incorporated in our instruction, without changing our student learning outcomes, just some of our approaches.

We were also able to have open discussions about the challenges presented when you have large classes representing a wide variety of research skills. Because these classes are not prerequisites, they are often filled with students from freshmen to seniors, plus transfer students. Scaling assignments to meet basic information literacy needs for all levels is difficult, and several faculty members expressed interest in presenting a case to the University’s curriculum committee to consider making it a prerequisite for other research-based courses so that students would have to complete it earlier in their studies.

Additionally, faculty and librarians discussed the hurdles we commonly see students encounter. It was universally agreed upon that students grappled with topic development. Others mentioned source selection and understanding how information is created as being ideas students had a difficult time grasping. It was encouraging for everyone to recognize a set of shared challenges and discuss ideas for how our pedagogy and assignments could change to better support student learning and success. The discussions also gave us anecdotal proof that ultimately, faculty aren’t as concerned with database demonstrations and tool selection—they are more interested in students selecting appropriate sources and developing solid research topics. We had been working as a team to move away from demo-based instruction, and while we still have faculty who request it (even some who participated in the workshops), having the time to together dive deeper into what we want students to learn and transfer to other courses and beyond revealed that the tools used are not as important as understanding the research process.

It was also interesting to hear more about information literacy applied to different disciplines. While these course are still general education requirements, many faculty focused on information literacy through their discipline-specific lenses, which sparked some great conversation about what our expectations for students in these courses should be (for example, some faculty were adamant that students could not use websites in their research because they argued it wouldn’t be appropriate in upper level research courses in the same discipline; others were open to letting students use websites, but were at a loss for how to effectively teach web evaluation, in addition to the other content). Identifying these themes gave the instruction team a lot to consider as far as student and faculty needs we should address in future lesson plans and digital learning objects.

In addition to developing a better understanding of the similarities and differences in the way teaching faculty and librarians approach information literacy, other unexpected outcomes arose from the workshop series. The instruction team was invited to help restructure the information literacy course taught through the College of Business (IT 150), working with their faculty to map our online information literacy modules to the curriculum and assignments they were revamping with help from the University’s Center for Teaching and Learning. Also, the University’s curriculum committee reached out for more information about the Framework in order to begin initial discussions about adapting the University-wide information literacy learning outcomes to reflect elements of the Framework. Finally, librarians from other units (archives, electronic resources, acquisitions) voluntarily participated in the workshops, which spread more understanding and awareness of different roles within the library—ultimately helping us all to see that the instruction team is not the only place in the Libraries where information literacy education is fostered.
CONCLUSION

Overall, this workshop series was an excellent first step in moving forward with a true collaboration between the Libraries’ instruction team and the faculty teaching these information literacy courses. In the past, the Libraries had been invited in for one-shots mainly because that’s the way it had always been done. However, in most cases, meaningful collaboration on student assignments and shared learning outcomes was not happening. These workshops set up the instruction team to be a more active partner with faculty and began to cultivate a culture of shared interest in information literacy outside the Libraries’ walls. While there are many opportunities and challenges ahead, starting the conversation was essential for progress to be made.

REFERENCES

APPENDIX A

Discussion questions and activities from workshops

Authority is Constructed & Contextual
Provide handout/slide with the definition from Framework. Pair and share with the following prompts:
• What does this definition mean to you?
• What do you think it means to your students?
• How have you seen students struggle with this concept? Excel?
• How do you teach students about authority, in terms of research and information?
• How do you determine the authority of information?
• How do students determine authority?
• How can we/do we teach this concept in an authentic, experiential way?
Group discussion results: padlet.com/rlux/tc_authority

Information Creation as a Process
Activity 1: Working individually, answer the following prompts:
You must present this threshold concept to other colleagues in your department at a faculty meeting.
• Reword the definition to make it relevant to work done in your discipline OR think of one discipline-relevant example you could share to explain the concept.
Activity 2: Working with those at your table, discuss the following prompts:
• How do you teach students about information creation, format, and delivery?
• What do students struggle with most?
• How can you connect your faculty definition/example to what you teach in the classroom?
Group discussion results: padlet.com/rlux/tc_infoprocess

Information has Value
Pick two discussion questions and write down your thoughts. After 10 minutes, we’ll come back together and share with the group.
Discussion prompts:
• How can we encourage students to see value in the information they produce?
• What other concepts beyond “plagiarism” and “citation” can be taught to help students understand ethical information use?
• The cost of information is often obscured. How can we help students uncover and/or understand that cost?
Group discussion results: padlet.com/rlux/tc_infovalue

Research as Inquiry
Discuss the following as an entire group.
• What are the barriers you see students facing when developing topics?
• How can the library best support faculty and students in this process during a one-shot instruction session?
• What about embedded/more long term support? Where/what are the most logical places for partnership?
Group discussion results: padlet.com/rlux/tc_researchinquiry

Scholarship as Conversation
Activity 1: In small groups, consider the definition of this frame and think about how it “converses with” or maps to the other five frames. Share out with group.
Activity 2: Consider this frame and answer the following questions individually. Come back together to share out.
• How are we already teaching this idea to students?
• How do we help students enter/participate in “the conversation”?
• What are common pitfalls students face when learning or faculty/librarians face when teaching ideas that support this concept?
• We have some fairly establishing practices for printed scholarly material (teaching citation chaining/backward-forward searching, etc.), but what about the conversation taking place outside of the printed word?
Group discussion results: padlet.com/rlux/tc_scholarshipasconversation
Searching as Strategic Exploration
Ask small groups to come up with a list of ways we’re teaching search skills well, and then a list of ways we’d like to take students to the “next level.” Come together to share out.
Examples of what we are already doing:
- Discussing the idea of “pre-search”/using Google to get started
- Using multiple search strings and providing time for hands on practice
- Generating keywords and synonyms
- Subject and controlled vocabulary searching
- Citation searching
Examples of “next level” skills
- Convincing students not to pick the first sources that meet their assignment criteria
- Understanding that research in nonlinear, messy, organic
- Needing information to learn about your topic—even if it doesn’t end up in your reference list
- Accepting that the answer you wanted may not exist, and being able to pivot if that happens
- Understanding how and why information is organized
Group discussion results: padlet.com/rlux/tc_searchingstrategic