SPACE INVADERS: PROGRAMMATIC AND INDIVIDUAL IL EFFORTS WITHIN A CORE CURRICULUM

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Incorporating information literacy (IL) into university core curriculums and general education requirements has become a mainstay for many academic institutions in the last twenty years. At the same time, as Eagan, Witt, and Chartier note “Integration of information literacy into the curriculum is a process that varies wildly depending on the constraints of the institution” (2017, p. 1). Butler University is one such institution that has a long history of integrating IL with varied levels of success. This paper will share a case study of Butler Libraries’ historical and current approaches to invading the core curriculum space at both programmatic and grassroots, individual levels.

Butler University is a private institution located in Indianapolis, Indiana. It has approximately 4,950 students and undergraduates make up 88% of this student population (Butler University Office of Institutional Research and Assessment). Its strong liberal arts commitment is manifested within its core curriculum. Most students are required to take 33 credit hours to fulfill the core requirements. Core courses are taught by faculty from across the university.

Table 1: Butler University Core Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Course</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
<th>Current Library Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Year Seminar (FYS)</td>
<td>6 hours in the first year</td>
<td>Deep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global and Historical Studies (GHS)</td>
<td>6 hours should be in the second year</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Reasoning (AR)</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Natural World (NW)</td>
<td>5 hours</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspectives in the Creative Arts (PCA)</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Well-Being (PWB)</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Social World (SW)</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text and Ideas (TI)</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
<td>Planning future partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking Across the Curriculum (SAC)</td>
<td>1 course at 300 or 400 level</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)</td>
<td>1 course at 300 or 400 level</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indianapolis Community Requirement (ICR)</td>
<td>1 course</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Butler Libraries’ involvement with the core curriculum, historically, has been with the First Year Seminar (FYS). When the new core curriculum was being developed in the mid-2000s, the Associate Dean for Public Services served on the FYS Committee and led the charge for librarians to successfully implement an FYS learning outcome related to information literacy: *Students will carry out research for the purpose of supplying evidence and support for claims made in exposition and argument.* At present, eleven of the twelve librarians on staff are assigned to sections of FYS to provide them with instruction. There are 55-60 FYS sections of this year-long course and faculty are free to choose the theme and texts/media of the seminar. On average, we reach 65% of the sections with at least one instructional engagement. Our librarians are making inroads incorporating repeated instructional presence into FYS—of the 43 FYS sections reached in 2016-17, 25 classes received repeat library instruction engagement.

In recent years, through grassroots efforts discussed later in this paper, we have had success integrating IL into other areas of the core. Through digital project support, we have integrated into several sections of Global and Historical Studies (GHS) and The Natural World (NW). The ACRL Framework has provided an entry point into sections of both Text and Ideas (TI) and The Social World (SW). We have not been able to programatically reach every section of these core areas, nor have we involved every librarian on staff in these efforts. However, these piecemeal efforts have resulted in more library presence in the core than we’ve ever had before.

It is important to note that over the years, the organizational support for faculty who teach within the core has evolved. At the beginning of the core implementation, the FYS Committee played a pivotal role in providing pedagogical support for those teaching FYS for the first time. This provided the library with opportunities to articulate our role with supporting faculty in teaching the research process. With faculty now acclimated to teaching FYS, these structures have changed focus or no longer exist, making it more challenging for the library to programatically advocate for its FYS presence. As time has passed, we have evolved and come up with new methods of programmatic outreach for the core:

- **Liaison program:** Our library liaison program has become a valued service model at our institution. We rely on our liaison librarians to advocate for core instructional engagement.
- **Orientation involvement:** The university provides new faculty with a two-day orientation workshop and the library has a presence in this orientation. During the workshop, faculty have an opportunity to meet one-on-one with their liaison librarian to discuss resources and possible collaboration.
- **Assessment involvement:** Librarians have been actively involved with assessment efforts in relation to FYS. At the end of the academic year, the Core Director hosts an “Assessfest” where student artifacts are reviewed to determine if SLOs are being met. While only parts of the core are evaluated in any given Assessfest, we have volunteered to help assess FYS as well as other core areas. This has paid dividends in librarians understanding how other areas of the core can potentially address IL components.
- **Framework integration:** The ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* is proving instrumental in providing opportunities to engage with the core. During the 2017 Assessfest, librarians volunteered to assist the Text and Ideas faculty in assessing their student papers/projects. This provided librarians with the opportunity to share how “Authority is Constructed and Contextual” and “Scholarship as Conversation” map to the Text and Ideas SLOs. As a result, the Text and Ideas Coordinator and the Associate Dean for Instruction developed a learning activity drawing on the “Authority is Constructed and Contextual” frame, which has the potential to be implemented in any Text and Ideas course.

ACRL’s *Roles and Strengths of Teaching Librarians* document (2017) affirms that librarians should be aiming for “partnerships rather than support services.” Librarians at Butler Libraries have found success reaching the core through informal, “grassroots” approaches focused on building partnerships. As Meulemans and Carr stated, programmatic efforts are important, but “the quality of relationships that individual librarians have with their faculty is the major driver of an instruction program’s success” (2013, p. 84). Much of the scholarly literature agrees that the relationships are the cornerstone of instructional outreach efforts, but the same literature does not detail the “relationship-building processes that likely preceded and lay the foundation” for successful partnerships (Chung, 2010, p. 163).

Díaz & Mandernach (2017) believe that “librarians who build successful relationships used every tool and opportunity to create meaningful interactions” (p. 277). Chung puts it well by saying, “Opportunities arise when timely events are met by interest and action” (2010, p. 164). At Butler, librarians have strived to identify and take advantage of these opportunities. Many opportunities have been singular occurrences, such as attending an event. For example, the English liaison librarian has increased visibility and forged new connections with faculty and students just by attending poetry hours and author readings on campus. Technology can assist in these efforts: listservs, social media, and search alerts are excellent ways to connect with faculty or department happenings. Other opportunities are recurring, long-standing commitments such as being a member of an organization
or committee. Librarians at Butler advocated for and were awarded faculty status in 2010, and one valuable benefit from this change is that the Libraries are included anytime representation from the colleges is required. Being voting members of campus committees and other groups has not only allowed the Libraries to be a part of important decision-making processes, but it helps develop relationships in which the librarian is on the same level as the faculty members. The Information Commons Librarian has served as the library representative on the university’s core curriculum committee for four years; the first years, she felt disparaged because she was not “teaching in the core,” but by her third year of service, she had proved her value enough to be supported in taking on the role of co-chair of the group. This experience is consistent with what Hoggan (2003) reports in that our faculty status, and subsequent voting membership on committees, has made “it easier to win the respect of the faculty in other departments” (p. 433).

It is important for librarians to capitalize on attendance or participation and turn these opportunities into relationships. Librarians can take initiative to follow up with faculty and engage in discussion to identify common areas of interest or goals, and then identify opportunities for collaboration based upon these things. The Information Commons Librarian at Butler has had luck asking faculty about their satisfaction with student work, or to identify their “wish list” for the course or assignment for the future; in fact, these very questions opened the door from an FYS course into a GHS one and started a five-year digital project collaboration that has served as a model and recruitment tool for at least five other classes on campus.

Additionally, listening empathetically and being willing to brainstorm or work toward solutions to “pain points” has been another effective method of beginning relationships. At Butler, one of the most effective ways we have been able to integrate into individual core courses is via support for digital media projects. Librarians have been able to bring in the Framework in new ways as students are taught not only how to create a website or infographic, but image attribution, universal design, and more. Even faculty who have stronger technology skills have allowed us to handle nearly all aspects of instruction and support for these projects. Feedback from students has been so positive that many faculty have expanded the project into their other classes, or voluntarily shared their success and recruited colleagues to be new IL partners.

Focusing on the students and learning outcomes unites the librarian and faculty on the same team. Desire to work towards a shared goal can be a great relationship builder, but it should be noted that both parties need to be willing to invest effort and time (Chung, 2010, p. 15). Librarians should try and focus their efforts on faculty who seem likely to engage in the relationship, or who place importance on information literacy or resource-based learning methods (Ivey, 2003, p. 102) The work is not done after a good partner has been identified; one key aspect of relationship-building is the ongoing commitment to maintaining the relationship. Ivey’s work details four essential aspects of successful partnerships: “a shared, understood goal; mutual respect, tolerance, and trust; competence for the task at hand by each of the partners; ongoing communication” (p.102). Another important aspect of maintaining long-term partnerships is building in a mechanism for feedback and change. Chung asserts that “relationships require… a reciprocal openness about learning from all those involved” (p. 164). At Butler Libraries, faculty are invited to submit anonymous feedback when they collaborate with a librarian for instruction.

Relationship building at the organizational level is also paying dividends in helping Butler Libraries deliver IL instruction to the core. Nearly ten years ago, the Libraries began a student employee partnership with the Center for Academic Technology on campus. This partnership, called Information Commons, has resulted in cross-trained students peer-teaching IL sessions, including a small test-pilot into FYS sections. This successful peer-teaching model has the potential to be scaled-up to reach additional FYS sections. Due, in part, to the success of the Information Commons program, the Center is now organizationally under the Library Dean’s leadership. This organizational partnership is paying dividends in shared initiatives and support. The Center and the Library were recently awarded a grant to develop an augmented reality library orientation experience for first-years which will supplement FYS instruction. Organizational partnerships, therefore, are yet another way to drive programmatic IL efforts.

Whether our approach has been programmatic or informal and individual, we continue to face challenges with our IL integration efforts. Investing in people and putting a lot of time in relationships is difficult when both partners are not guaranteed to stay in their roles. On our campus, many of the leadership roles of the core are short-term appointments. We have lost progress and momentum when librarians and faculty left the university. Programmatically, the Associate Dean for Instruction and User Services has to be continually surveying the curricular environment to look for opportunities and partners to further programmatic approaches for delivering IL to the core. For example, one new opportunity is on the horizon because the university recently voted to incorporate a new social justice and diversity requirement in the core curriculum. The Core Director has reached out to the Associate Dean for Instruction and User Services regarding library instructional support for these courses, providing the Library with an opportunity to provide a more programmatic approach to integrating IL throughout parts of the core.

There are distribution and workload issues concerning delivering library instruction to the core. Many of our librarians are asked to perform other duties on top of their subject-liason and FYS assignments—they already have more than enough on their plates. It has been a struggle to determine how to scale up to provide instructional support in other areas of the core. So far what has worked best for us is to permit the librarians who are willing and feel they have capacity to have the freedom to do this...
grassroots outreach. These trailblazing librarians are able to be successful for a couple key reasons: 1) They can set their own boundaries and have the ability to say ‘no’ to requests; 2) They feel supported by their librarian colleagues and administrators and have the ability to ask for help at any time. Based on the successful grassroots outreach, the Associate Dean for Instruction and User Services is now exploring how Butler Libraries can create a programmatic approach to continue with these advances in core classes. This echoes what Junisabi, Lowe, and Tagge discovered: individual partnerships “evolve into an increasingly programmatic approach” (2016, p. 608).

Similarly, we experience challenges with librarian burnout and difficulty stepping outside of comfort zones. Many of the grassroots efforts begin in the one-shot realm, and it takes a lot of librarian time and effort to turn these initial forays into something more consistent and embedded. In a presentation at LOEX in 2016, Browndorf documented research studies to confirm that burnout is real in library instruction, and that “emotional labor is a key cause of burnout in library instruction.” However, she claimed that emotional labor can be directed positively if the librarian feels that they have “an institutional self-concept and feeling of authenticity and autonomy.” Library leaders can combat burnout by making “organizational change to support autonomy.” The way that Butler allows freedom to pursue individual IL outreach and works to turn successful individual efforts into programmatic ones is a good model.

So, is it worth facing all these challenges? Are Butler Libraries making progress, programmatically and individually, in branching out into its Core Curriculum? We believe that we are, and that it is worthwhile to empower individual librarians to capitalize on opportunities. Our work is certainly not done, but we have the underpinnings of both programmatic and individual faculty-relationship building to guide us towards success. We postulate that other academic libraries will be able identify with and perhaps learn from our experience. As Johnson-Grau, Archambault, Acosta, and McLean delineate in their article on building an information literacy program across a curriculum, it takes a commitment to “patience, persistence, and process” at both the programmatic and individual levels to integrate information literacy across a core or general education curriculum (2016, p. 1). Our cannons have aimed and captured some aliens (wins), but as in any good game of Space Invaders, we still have a way to go before we claim the high score.

REFERENCES


