

Research as a Résumé Builder: Delivering a Career-focused Information Literacy Certificate Program

Megan Blauvelt Heuer, Southern Methodist University

It is a dearly held wish for those of us teaching students research skills that we are inspiring lifelong learning and an ability to navigate the world of information, not just as students, but as employees and citizens. However, how well does that learning transfer to the workplace after graduation? It is not a simple corollary that teaching information literacy within an academic context will easily translate to good information skills in the workplace. This is because information literacy is not a discrete set of skills, but rather a complex set of behaviors that are dependent on socially constructed principles and understanding (Lloyd, 2010). According to a Project Information Literacy study, it was found that employers were generally disappointed with recent graduates' information skills beyond simple searching, and furthermore, they lacked "patience," "persistence," and "a high tolerance for ambiguity" (Head, 2012). As Alison Head notes, information problems recent graduates encounter in the workplace are ill structured and rely on knowledge of an information environment that is very contextual and derived through social norms. This can be problematic for students who have not had practice with this kind of information environment. Think about the reluctance of many college students to ask for help with their research. This same reluctance does not bode well in a collaborative work environment that emphasizes social learning.

At Southern Methodist University, we had our own experience with employers who bemoaned the lack of research acumen in recent college graduates. In response, we have created an information literacy badging program that addresses the research skills specifically needed in the field of advertising. In its current form, the Temerlin Advertising Institute Information Literacy Certificate Program offers two levels of badges that are earned by students who complete a mix of both online and live instruction as well as pass a final assessment of authentic information problems in advertising. Details about the development of the program follows, as well as recommendations for similar programs.

Initiating the Program

Embarking on a career-focused badging program is not a challenge to be undertaken lightly, and finding campus partners is critical to success. Conversations about the program for Temerlin Advertising grew organically out of discussions about curriculum mapping as well as an interest on the part of the faculty to be able to represent what the students learn for employers. Aligning a program with a specific discipline is beneficial because it provides a context for the types of skills and concepts that will be learned. Furthermore, you potentially gain faculty partners with connections

in the industry. This may be easier with departments that are more focused on their students' transition to the working world that is typical in professional programs like business, journalism, health services, etc. However, there may be other departments that have a similar interest in the development of career-specific research skills for their students. For example, Tucci, O'Conner, and Bradley (2014) developed a seminar program focusing on career skills for chemistry, including information literacy. The campus career center is another likely partner, which may afford collaboration on a workshop series that focuses on more generic information skills for career rather than discipline-specific ones.

There are a lot of moving parts to a program like this, and having a plan that designates everyone's role in the process was helpful to the success of the Temerlin program, particularly since we decided on a somewhat ambitious curriculum. Even if the librarian is performing the bulk of the planning and instruction, it is helpful to everyone involved to confirm the librarian's level of commitment. Here is what we included in our project plan:

- The intended audience and the scope of the program
- Who tracks the registration of students and completion of modules
- Who develops the learning outcomes, assessments, practice tests, lesson plans, and online learning objects
- Who grades the final assessments and delivers the badge
- Management of marketing and web presence

Developing the Curriculum

While there may be aspects of career-focused information literacy that are somewhat similar to traditional, academically-focused instruction, it is crucial to address the authentic tasks and habits needed in a work environment. Cues as to the content of the curriculum can be gained from the research literature, particularly from articles on the information behaviors of practitioners. Faculty may be aware of the needs of the industry or may have connections with employers. The campus career center can also be a great source of information, and they may even conduct formal surveys of area employers.

Workplace Information Literacy

Workplace information literacy represents an entire avenue of research that can be helpful in determining curriculum. While some professions have specific information needs, conclusions can be drawn as to some general infor-

mation literacy skills needed in the workplace. Head (2012) notes that the ability to solve ill-defined problems is needed. A study of employer expectations found that the research skill most lacking in recent hires was the ability to determine what information is needed, as well as the ability to recognize that immediately available information sources may not always be the most suitable (Cyphert & Lyle, 2016).

Teaching for Transfer to Work

As noted before, the expert application of information skills and behaviors requires understanding of the information environment or the context. If we only teach how to think about information for academic research, students will be ill-equipped to negotiate information in the work world. Setting students to work through information problems like those they may encounter at work can be one step towards helping them develop the behaviors of learning they will need to be successful. It is not possible to teach a student to perform at an expert level in the career they may have in future since we cannot perfectly recreate that social context. As Cyphert and Lyle note, there is “no effective way to separate IL from the social skills that allow individuals to gain that literacy within a knowledge community” (2016, p. 74). In the Temerlin program, we create an environment in which students are exposed to the type of research they may do in the workplace and emphasize the development of skills that will enable them to adapt to a new information environment in future. We look for emerging behaviors in these areas:

- Knowledge of disciplinary types of information and the ability to assess new types of information, regardless of the container of that information
- Ability to connect information needs to types of information in a purposely strategic way
- Tendency to seek out multiple perspectives
- Perseverance through information problems
- Recognition of the weaknesses of a piece of information given the need
- Tolerance of ambiguity in information and emerging abilities in synthesis of contradictory sources
- Ability to break out all aspects of an information problem

Of course, this very much resembles some of the knowledge practices and dispositions in the ACRL Framework, just situated within a workplace information environment. For example, in evaluating sources, our class discussed recognizing information sources valued by the advertising community. We also delved into evaluating information from surveys and from free market reports online. Students practiced drawing conclusions from multiple sur-

veys that had conflicting results. Other possible areas of instruction for the workplace are basic data literacy, internet research skills, evaluating visual information in charts and graphs, evaluating statistical information, understanding copyright in the workplace, finding articles for business purposes, and summarizing the main points of a piece of information. One of the most important factors in transfer is to actively engage the students in that transfer. This can be achieved through activities that require them to apply what is learned in other contexts or to their everyday life.

Logistics of Delivery

For the delivery of the Temerlin program, we decided on a mix of online and live instruction to make the program as scalable as possible given that it is an intensive program. The online tutorials offer an introduction to research tools in advertising, concepts in information ethics in the workplace, and an introduction to how business information is structured. In the style of a flipped classroom, the introductory learning online allowed for practice in class on developing research strategies and working through information problems. Much of the class work was done within small groups, given that the focus in many workplaces is on social learning and communication.

The elements that were developed to support this program are:

- Plan for the roles of everyone involved
- Formal learning outcomes
- Outline of all learning modules, both online and live, with specific learning outcomes
- Online learning modules and practice activities (done in LibWizard)
- Lesson plans for the live sessions
- Final assessment and practice tests
- Rubric for the final assessment
- Badges (done in Credly)
- Web presence for the program that can be linked to the badge

Creating Legitimacy

There is a great responsibility in making a promise to a potential employer that a student has developed information literacy skills that are meaningful to their work. Transparency to employers is essential in developing legitimacy for the badge. We provided this in the form of a website for the program that documents the learning outcomes, the various modules, and an example assessment like the one the students must pass. The assessment has various research scenarios that represent real world information problems, like those that might be encountered in the profession of adver-

tising. It is essential that the kind of research the students are asked to perform resonates with a potential employer; therefore, gaining feedback from professors and practitioners in the industry is helpful for creating a final assessment.

The emerging abilities and behaviors the students are learning are captured in the rubric for the final assessment (Appendix B), and this is shared and discussed with the students at the beginning of the program. In the future, we plan on having the students evaluate practice test answers, both good and bad, using the rubric so that they develop a better understanding of what good research looks like. Really, practice with responsive feedback is the most important aspect in the development of their ability to see solutions to information problems.

References

- Cyphert, D., & Lyle, S. P. (2016). Employer expectations of information literacy: Identifying the skills gap. In Barbara J. D'Angelo, Sandra Jamieson, Barry Maid & Janice R. Walker (Eds.), *Information literacy: Research and collaboration across disciplines* (pp. 53-79) University Press of Colorado.
- Head, A. (2012). *Learning curve: How college graduates solve information problems once they join the workplace*. Retrieved from http://www.projectinfofolit.org/uploads/2/7/5/4/27541717/pil_fall2012_workplacestudy_fullreport-1.pdf.
- Lloyd, A. (2010). *Information literacy landscapes: Information literacy in education, workplace and everyday contexts*. Cambridge: Woodhead Publishing.
- Tucci, V. K., O'Connor, A. R., & Bradley, L. M. (2014). A three-year chemistry seminar program focusing on career development skills. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 91(12), 2071-2077.

APPENDIX A

Temerlin Information Literacy Program Student Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to...

1. Recognize established and emerging sources of information in the field of advertising
 - Identify the uses, advantages, disadvantages, specificity, and means of access for various business, consumer, and media information sources
 - Identify the limitations of information on companies, industries, markets, and consumers
 - Determine how the limitations of various types of information impact research
2. Identify how information systems are organized in order to access relevant information
 - Locate library advertising resources
 - Demonstrate knowledge of basic functions of advertising databases including subject searches, limiters, and Boolean operators
 - Demonstrate skill in using typical information tools to establish consumer demographics/psychographics, media consumption, and brand/category indexes
 - Identify how internet search engines function and how that impacts search
 - Identify strategies for locating statistics
3. Demonstrate strategic and critical thinking and persistence in solving information problems
 - Match research needs to potential information sources and search tools
 - Develop and refine search strategies and terminology
 - Break down complex information problems to solvable questions
 - Recognize and synthesize competing perspectives and data
4. Choose appropriate sources of information with an understanding of the context of application
 - Compare proprietary and free sources of information and determine appropriateness
 - Develop methods of evaluating statistical sources
 - Recognize perceived industry value of specific information sources
5. Apply ethical practices in the use of information in advertising

(LOEX 2017 Report...continued from page 13)

classes at a time while also putting a limit on the number of sessions per day and time slot that librarians would teach (scheduled via SignUpGenius: <http://www.signupgenius.com>); if a FYW faculty’s classes are unable to attend, faculty can teach on their own utilizing a librarian-created “Instructor’s Toolkit” with lesson plans and activities from which the faculty can choose. Additionally, to make the session preparation less stressful for all public services librarians, they created unified active learning lesson plans.

One of the most thought provoking and inspiring parts of the presentation was a think-pair-share reflective exercise in which the audience was asked to consider how we could solve our sticking points. Attendees were encouraged to consider how they could lead by letting go by considering

not only the worst that could happen, but also the best that could happen.

 For more information about the conference, and the PowerPoints and handouts for many of the sessions, including from all the sessions listed in this article, visit the website at <http://www.loexconference.org/2017/sessions.html>

(Research as a Résumé Builder...continued from page 6)

APPENDIX B

Criteria	Performance indicator	Proficient	Emerging	Little or No Evidence
Understanding of information ethics	Ability to recognize ethical choices in the use of information academically and professionally	Student demonstrates good judgment and reasoning when making ethical choices.	Student sometimes demonstrates good judgement when making ethical choices. Reasoning about ethical choices may be lacking.	No understanding of ethical choices.
Search strategies	Ability to match research needs to information sources. Search strategies and terminologies are refined as needed.	All relevant source types are identified and understanding of the uses, advantages, etc. of source types is demonstrated. Effective search strategies are identified. Strategies and terminologies are refined as needed.	Some relevant source types are identified and understanding of the uses, advantages, etc. of source types identified. Search strategies may be limited and may not be refined as needed.	Relevant source types are not identified and little understanding is shown of the uses, advantages, etc. of source types. Search strategies are ineffective.
Use of information tools	Effectiveness at using databases, search engines, and demographic and psychographic tools	All information needed is located. Effective use of information tools is demonstrated.	Some information needed is located. Use of information tools is sometimes effective.	Information is frequently not located. No evidence of effective use of information tools.
Application of information	Ability to choose information that is authoritative and relevant. Multiple perspectives are sought and synthesized.	All sources are appropriate, current, and credible. Information used is specifically relevant. Possible limitations or bias of sources are acknowledged and analyzed. Multiple sources are found and synthesized to establish perspective.	Most sources are appropriate, current, and credible. Information used is somewhat relevant. Possible limitations or bias are sometimes acknowledged. Multiple sources are sometimes found but may not be synthesized.	Poor choice of sources. Information provided is limited, superficial, unreliable and/or irrelevant. Possible limitations or bias are unrecognized.