Collaborating with Faculty to Assess Undergraduate Information Literacy in Degree Programs

David A. Nolfi, MLS, AHIP, Gumberg Library
Maureen Diana Sasso, MLS, Gumberg Library
Lori E. Koelsch, PhD, Department of Psychology

The authors would like to thank the other faculty participants in this project:
Danielle A. St. Hilaire, PhD, Department of English
Becky Morrow, DVM, Department of Biological Sciences
Duquesne University

- Catholic university
- Pittsburgh
- 10,000 students
- Ten schools
- Two libraries

Project described took place in Summer/Fall 2013
Information Literacy (IL) Learning Takes Place Outside the Library

- Researching & writing papers
- Creating presentations
- Laboratory work & preparation
- Class discussions
Collaboration Required!

“Incorporating information literacy across curricula, in all programs and services, and throughout the administrative life of the university, requires the collaborative efforts of faculty, librarians, and administrators.”

*ACRL Information Literacy Standards for Higher Education, 2000*
Positioning & Funding

- Librarians co-chair university committees:
  - Learning Outcomes Assessment
  - Information Literacy
- Associate Provost approved & funded stipends!
Project Goals

1. Document models of assessing IL relevant to a wide array of academic programs
   - Humanities
   - Professions
   - Sciences
   - Social sciences

2. Develop evidence of practice to serve as a “proof of concept”

3. Promote faculty / library collaborations to assess IL in the undergraduate curriculum
Who participated

- English
- Psychology
- Biological Sciences

“Freud analysing Shakespeare” by drawgood (CC)
http://www.redbubble.com
Faculty Participants Agreed to:

1. Identify program level IL goals
2. Map discipline-specific terminology & competencies to Duquesne IL definition
3. Create curriculum maps documenting course-level IL learning outcomes & assessment
4. Provide evidence of analysis & use of assessment results to improve learning
5. Present findings at workshop open to all faculty
Support for Faculty Participants

- Project website:
  - Duquesne IL definition
  - Accreditation standards
  - Assessment guidelines
  - Curriculum maps
  - Further readings
- Periodic individual meetings
- Help creating final project reports
Using Syllabi to Gather Data

- Two had full access to syllabi
  - Gaps in syllabi
  - Lack of explicit IL learning outcomes
- One focused on major-level courses
- One department would not share syllabi
  - But responded to online survey...

“Mmm...Swiss cheese burger with mushroom sauce” by Fae
Wikimedia Commons
Findings – Missing in the Major

- Most key IL competencies covered within the three programs’ curricula

Finding 1
- Major-level courses did not explicitly address plagiarism, copyright, ethical use of information
- Faculty assumed material was covered in Core

Recommendation
- Ask faculty to teach this material at all levels
Finding 2 – Gaps in the Scaffold

- Scaffolding assignments* used in introductory & capstone courses
- Infrequently used in mid-level courses

Recommendation
- Faculty should reinforce skills taught in scaffolding assignments at all levels

* Required structured research methods, evaluating sources, and submitting drafts
Finding 3 – Unpleasant Surprise

- Three competencies not well covered:
  1. Formulating information needs
  2. Accessing information
  3. Evaluating information sources
  - Covered in courses but not syllabi?

- Recommendations
  - Guidance on writing syllabi & learning outcomes
  - Encourage faculty to explicitly list IL learning outcomes
Separated by a Common Language...

Competency: Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose

- Clear to Librarians & Biology

- Psychology
  - Not sure how it fits undergraduate education

- English
  - Not representative of approach to information sources
  - Typical approach is close reading & analysis of texts
  - Describes approach to secondary sources
Project Outcomes

- Confirmed IL outcomes addressed within programs’ curricula
- Encouraged further assessment of IL at course and program levels
- Documented extent to which university’s IL definition fit programs’ learning goals
- Created curriculum maps that can serve as models for other programs
Faculty Workshop Outcomes

- Biology & Psychology models applicable to professional programs
- ESL faculty approached library to incorporate IL throughout its curriculum
- Mostly professional school faculty:
  - Accustomed to using assessment & standards
  - More supportive of assessment than others
Recommendations for Collaborating with Faculty

- Choose participants strategically
- Include multiple incentives
- Plan checks & balances
- Create timelines
- Hold progress meetings
- Close the assessment loop!
- Avoid “once and done”
Project Follow-Up

- Department meetings:
  - Discuss findings
  - Review curriculum maps
  - Address gaps in IL competencies

- English & Psychology
  - Planning senior capstones
# Project Benefits

**Helped Programs to:**
- Align learning outcomes with IL expectations
- Discover curricular strengths and gaps
- Use findings to integrate IL into programs
- Work more closely / deeply with each other
- Gather actionable evidence!

**Helped Library to:**
- Apply model to other programs
- Enlist faculty to educate colleagues about IL
- Assess program level outcomes for low cost

**Presenter Contact:**
David Nolfi  | 412.396.4391 | nolfi@duq.edu