Information Literacy at Wheaton College

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“... developing strong abilities to discover and evaluate information ... to draw conclusions, practicing analytical, quantitative, and scientific reasoning, presenting their thoughts clearly.”

—”Christ at the Core,” p. 8
(a primary learning outcome under the overarching goal of “Demonstrate holistic learning”)

Learning Outcome
Information literacy is the set of integrated abilities that encompass

- the reflective discovery of information,
- the understanding of how information is produced and valued,
- and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.

Historical Background

- Wheaton profs agree that information literacy is an important part of students’ learning, but we have not had a real place for it in our curriculum.

- Library faculty have been teaching “one-off” information-literacy sessions for many years.

- Recent milestones:
  - incorporated to some extent into English Writing 103/104, circa 2006
  - incorporated to some extent into BITH 111, circa 2009
Deficiencies of Our Current Approach

- One-off sessions that try to cover “everything” make for poor pedagogy and poor outcomes

- These sessions are
  - highly repetitive for some students; others are missed entirely
  - Currently focused too heavily on lower-order skills
  - Not developmental across the four years
Our New Approach

- Resolve the deficiencies noted on previous slide.
- Equip our students with concepts, practices, and dispositions about information, research, and scholarship as a coherent whole,
- That can help them to flourish in their studies and prepare for life, work, and ministry after graduation.
Six Threshold Concepts

- [Human] authority is constructed and contextual
- Information creation as a process
- Information has value
- Research as inquiry
- Scholarship as conversation
- Searching as strategic exploration

For full explanation, please see “Information Literacy Instruction Plan,” available from library.admin@wheaton.edu
Program Sequence

1. First-year seminar
2. Advanced seminar
3. Course in the major (or alternative)
4. Capstone course (or alternative)

Steps 1 and 2 are being handled by the Core Curriculum Task Force. The library faculty are asking each department to collaborate with us for steps 3 and 4.
First-Year Seminar

- Introductory presentation of key material that is foundational to student’s undergraduate program.
- Instruction is delivered via an online module outside of class time.
- Student must successfully complete this module as a requirement of the course.
- Library faculty participate as coaches/guides/resource people.
Advanced Seminar

- Focus on deepening and applying one’s learning.
- Instruction is delivered via an online module outside of class time.
- Student must successfully complete this module as a requirement of the course.
- Learning is applied to a research paper that meets course outcomes.
- Library faculty participate as coaches/guides/resource people.
Course in the Major

- Focus on gaining and applying major-specific skills and resources.
- Instruction is delivered via an online module outside of class time or in class with prof and library faculty member in collaboration.
- Student must successfully complete as a requirement of the course. Learning is applied to a research project that meets course outcomes.
- If there is no research-methods course in the major, we can work together to identify an alternative means of embedding in the major.
Focus on helping student to view her/himself as contributor to the discipline or profession.

Continuation of relationship between department and library, with specific goals to be determined collaboratively.

Ideally, learning is applied to a research project or other experience that meets course outcomes.