INFORMATION LITERACY AS A UNIVERSITY
WIDE GENERAL EDUCATION GOAL AND THE LIBRARIAN'S ROLE

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ABSTRACT: Mediation by librarians is ongoing no matter how many online tutorials, web pages, instructional leaflets, or other educational efforts take place. A role that librarians have filled is to teach others how to find published and sometimes unpublished materials. This role is part facilitator and part educator because in the process of showing someone how to find materials other knowledge is often communicated (for instance, knowledge about the publishing industry, publishing within a given academic discipline, or the importance of certain materials over others).

The University of Connecticut (UConn) has begun to include information literacy in all four years of undergraduate study and to expect certain increasing competencies after each year. The biggest difference between traditional library instruction and the new efforts involves increased faculty involvement. This paper will explain different definitions of information literacy and efforts to achieve the following student skills:

- *Information development and structure*-an understanding of how information is created, disseminated and organized
- *Information access*-an understanding of information communication processes and a facility with the tools required to tap into these information communication processes
- *Information evaluation and integration*-an ability to evaluate, synthesize, and incorporate information into written, oral, and media presentations".

KEYWORDS: Information literacy, teaching, bibliographic instruction

Introduction
In the process of reading the library literature on Information Literacy (IL) I was struck by the on going debates about the political struggles (e.g. turf battles) when it comes to; not who has the most skills to teach IL but whether or not it is to be given adequate classroom time. As one author stated "Librarians…continue to debate the purportedly

unresolved nature of information literacy. Administrators struggle with what it is they really hope for. Faculty marches on as though no concerns existed."[1]

The inclusion of bibliographic instruction into the classroom or information literacy into the curriculum is more often than not, especially in the past, dependent on relationships developed by the librarians with individual faculty members who deem IL to be important. Universities can vary greatly as to the emphasis on IL. What has changed recently for the University of Connecticut (UConn) is that IL has become a required part of the general education requirements with evolving competencies expected after each of four years before graduation.

Because faculty now have a greater role in teaching IL this strongly encourages instructors who are teaching classes which are designated as having an IL component to ask for help from librarians. It is not required they consult with librarians but the obvious source of IL instruction is librarians and the University of Connecticut Libraries have proactively offered their services. At present those services include the usual faculty requested library instruction sessions we have always provided with a new emphasis on IL, learning modules for the English 101 classes as they have been designated the first classes to test IL, class specific web pages, and class assignment design.

One of the observations made when discussing this topic with colleagues was that some universities may not want to rely on subject specific instructors to teach IL because they are simply not as good as the librarians. While this may be true, having the instructors in various classes relate their reliance on accurate academic information can produce a climate where IL is pervasive. Expanded IL can go beyond the traditional bibliographic instruction to include such topics such as who generates the information, who pays or owns it, and plagiarism among others. It can't be stressed enough to students that IL runs throughout the various academic disciplines and their personal lives much like math, language and vocabulary, or writing and all of those skills they have been acquiring since childhood.

More than once, in the literature, there was the suggestion that a required credit course become part of any undergraduate curriculum. This obviously requires a large commitment of staff time and money. The argument that having a required course, that covers the many aspects of information literacy, would bring more respect to the profession and put IL concretely on the pedagogical map is true. The decision to take that path is dependent on the commitment of the institution to teaching IL and as time and technology move forward more institutions may find that a required course is necessary.

There are extremely detailed competencies which the university expects students to have upon leaving each year of study and upon graduation. In general they are:
    1. Define and articulate information needs.

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[1] Owusu-Ansah, E.K. (2004).

2. Compare and contrast information resources across a variety of formats (e.g., journal, book, website, database).
3. Identify and use primary sources of information.
4. Describe the procedures for using sources of information in the major field of study.
5. Select effective approaches for accessing information.
6. Implement an efficient and effective search strategy.
7. Develop expertise working with a variety of information sources.
8. Evaluate information for consistency, accuracy, credibility, objectivity, innovation, timeliness, and cultural sensitivity.
9. Synthesize main ideas to construct new concepts.
10. Ethically and legally acknowledge information sources, following discipline guidelines.
11. Incorporate the information in the planning and creation of a product or performance.
12. Use a variety of information technology applications to effectively communicate project outcomes.

For more detailed information literacy competences for students, classroom faculty, librarians, and technology staff at UConn.
http://webapps.lib.uconn.edu/Outcomes/CIProv.cfm

One of the concerns that has not been fully addressed, at least at UConn is how to measure whether or not the competencies have been met, in other words, testing. One of the preliminary steps UConn Libraries took was to use the SAILS survey (Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills), referenced below. The survey was given to 24 classes and 2 of those were at my regional campus. One suggestion I have is that the survey once given to English 101 class that mostly comprises freshman be given to juniors in an English class to see if improvements have been made. This is a typical pre-test, post-test situation and it may be viable. In any case a means of assessment has to be developed that faculty will consider rigorous and the faculty should be involved in the development of the assessment tool. One tool for assessment that may be useful and is presently being used is a research portfolio which students are supposed to keep. The survey may test knowledge and the portfolio test methods or skills.

One aspect of UConn efforts which may help long term and effective collaboration between faculty and librarians is that general education requirements don't generally get redesigned quickly because of the amount of effort involved.

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