

Beyond Implementation: Reflections about Teaching an Information Literacy Course

Background

At York College of Pennsylvania, faculty librarians teach a required, two-credit, core-curriculum information literacy course. Started in 1997, Information Literacy 101 offers a unique blend of library and computer literacy instruction.

Evolution

A faculty task force generated IFL 101 as part of a new core curriculum. Originally, the task force envisioned a four-credit course team-taught by computer science faculty and librarians.



Key Players

Information Literacy 101 is designed and taught by seven full-time library faculty and a cadre of adjunct faculty. Whole-hearted support from the Academic Dean, President, Board of Trustees, and faculty made the course possible.

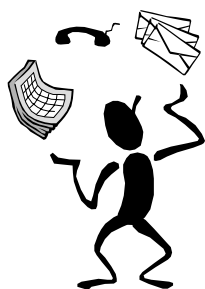
Ongoing Challenges

The seven full-time faculty librarians abruptly became teaching librarians three years ago. Currently, we offer 26 sections of IFL 101 with 24 students per section. Because of the tremendous workload resulting from this large-scale information literacy program, many challenges have been faced.

- ❖ Balancing librarian workload
Staff members positions continue to be upgraded and salaries increased.
- ❖ Learning to teach
Through professional development, practice, experimentation, reading, etc., we are learning classroom management, instructional design, and grading.
- ❖ Adapting the library classroom
The old BI classroom was remodeled at a cost of \$50,000.
- ❖ Hiring adjuncts
We continue to have difficulty finding and retaining qualified adjunct instructors. Adjuncts and full-time faculty overloads are paid \$2000 per section.
- ❖ Battling misperception as a computer course
Many members of the campus community do not understand that the primary focus of IFL 101 is on research.
- ❖ Evaluating the course
A campus-wide review of the new core is scheduled for summer 2001.

Reflections

Information Literacy 101 provides an environment where librarians can build strong new relationships. From the semester-long contact with classes of students to the new level of collegiality with teaching faculty, librarians are more connected to educational rhythm than was imaginable before IFL 101. Even so, some librarians find this classroom role an awkward fit.



In the process of taking on this huge new responsibility, the faculty librarians have had to shift the daily operations of running an academic library to the staff. Clerical and managerial duties previously performed by librarians have been transferred to staff members. This transformation continues to trigger painful moments and sometimes leaves the staff feeling abandoned by the librarians.

This painful change has been most strongly felt in the reference department. Student assistants are relied upon for some hours of service desk coverage every day, because librarians are in the classroom or holding office hours. We continue to debate new models of reference service and have yet to articulate a satisfactory new approach.

Though the adjustment process continues—good days and bad days—the course approach is valuable because it delivers information literacy instruction to every student. In setting up a course, the YCP faculty is telling students that information literacy skills and concepts are just as important as other core abilities such as effective writing and public speaking. The course also indicates to students that librarians are the campus experts on research and information retrieval. Finally, the course invites students to learn and experience a complete, unified research process.

Students' Comments

--I think that this class was one of the most useful classes I had this semester. It was very useful in that I now have a good idea on how to conduct research using the computer.

--I feel more confident about finding information now that I have taken the tour of researching on the "information superhighway." I had never known about Boolean or truncation and I also learned about the growing search engines. I have already used my knowledge from this class.

--Before I had no method and now I feel that I can take on assignments like this with more confidence and more organization.

Still Interested?

IFL eText

--<http://www.ycp.edu/library/ifl/>

Computers In Libraries, March, 2000

--"When Librarians Become Teachers."

College and Undergraduate Libraries, 6.2, 2000

--"Building the Learning Library."