

Information Literacy Task Force Report

Strategic Plan Goal 4.1.A: Build information literacy programs to achieve college learning outcomes

Submitted to the Library Executive Group -- 15 January 2013

Task Force Members: Camille Andrews, Gabriela Castro-Gessner, Lance Heidig, Chris Miller, Thomas Mills, Mary Ochs (co-chair), Jaron Porciello (co-chair); Kaila Bussert joined the team in September 2012.

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The CUL Information Literacy Task Force was assigned to develop a plan to implement Strategic Plan Goal 4.1.A: *Build information literacy programs to achieve college learning outcomes* outlined in *Toward 2015: Cornell University Library Strategic Plan, 2011-2015*.

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I. Introduction

The information literacy skill set, i.e. the ability for students to find, use, evaluate, and manage information, is a critical skill set for all students. It is not enough for students to graduate with an understanding of the current thinking in their discipline; rather, all students must be equipped with strong information literacy (IL) and critical thinking skills to remain competitive and up-to-date in today's complex information-rich landscape and to solve real-world problems.

Information literacy instruction is not a one-way street from the library, but must be a collaboration between library teaching staff, faculty members, and other campus partners in teaching and learning based on an understanding and respect for each person's role and expertise. Library teaching staff must engage with faculty at all levels -- from the new junior faculty up to the college deans, and beyond -- if we are to be truly successful achieving our goal to embed information literacy into Cornell's College and School curricula.

While CUL has boasted strong library instruction programs for decades, the CUL Information Literacy Task Force undertook significant activities to lay the foundation for a more integrated and comprehensive information literacy program across the multiple unit libraries at CUL. Activities, which included professional development of instructors and outreach to stakeholders who are active in faculty teaching development, are described in more detail below. The Task Force also produced and disseminated several working documents outlining the goals and activities for a comprehensive information literacy program; these compose a portion of this final report. This report also describes a set of new Information Literacy initiatives in the Unit Libraries and recommends a leadership structure for CUL Information Literacy and follow up activities to continue the momentum of the work of the Task Force to enhance information literacy at Cornell.

Learning@CUL, the Task Force's foundational document completed in May 2012, outlines a full plan for developing a comprehensive information literacy program for CUL. The full document can be found in appendix A. Key objectives of the plan are as follows:

- I. Establish an integrated and developmental information literacy sequence that is coordinated with CU curriculum by discipline and level.

- II. Engage stakeholders from across campus in implementing information literacy instruction.
- III. Build an environment that promotes effective, capable and confident library instructors.
- IV. Consider changes in organizational structure to better support and maintain our library IL program.

The activities undertaken by the Task Force, PSEC Instruction and individual units outlined below are the beginning of a process to accomplish the objectives outlined in Learning@CUL, and have begun moving the Library toward an integrated and comprehensive information literacy program. It is a complex task, and the Task Force has set in motion a series of activities that will be ongoing, and will ultimately lead to the achievement of the overarching goal of developing an IL program for Cornell.

II. Activities in support of the CUL Information Literacy program

A. Outreach to faculty through participation in Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) sponsored events. (January 2012, May 2012, December 2012).

Information literacy has been incorporated into CTE's faculty and junior faculty course redesign institute, which has taken place each spring and fall, respectively. Library staff provided information to faculty about the benefits of incorporating information literacy into their assignments, as well as offered an opportunity for faculty and library liaisons to meet one-to-one. This has facilitated ongoing dialogue and collaboration with other campus partners involved in the community of teaching and learning at Cornell.

B. ACRL Immersion Program (May 2012)

Faculty members from the ACRL Immersion program worked with the Task Force to customize an Immersion experience for **37** CUL teaching staff. The three-day program emphasized teaching skills for individual instructors, assessment tools, and strategies for a unified information literacy program, giving instructors a common vision and foundation for continued professional development. Feedback from the Immersion faculty and CUL staff appears in the appendix.

C. Assessment

Assessment at CUL is developing at three levels: programmatic, unit/department level and within each librarian's instruction.

Programmatic assessment: As a first step, the Library has begun mapping its instruction sessions since 2010 against Cornell University's curriculum, in order to determine the scope and reach of our instruction by highlighting areas of effort and close collaboration between librarians and faculty, and to identify learning outcomes created by colleges, departments and faculty in order to integrate them with Library learning outcomes. Curriculum mapping will allow us to identify high-enrollment, high impact, and required classes for college majors to efficiently and effectively target our information literacy program. Mapping of library instruction is in

progress for all colleges, and completed for Mann Library and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Unit/Departmental assessment: In further supporting a culture of assessment-as-learning, individual units such as [Olin/Uris](#) have crafted departmental learning outcomes, serving as a guide for individual librarians as they teach their own courses. Individual librarians have also modified and piloted new teaching approaches with pre- and post-assessment instruments developed with RAU's support for their own collaborative courses with faculty, such as *Music 1313: A Survey of Jazz* (Fall 2011) and *Writing 2100: Undergraduate Research Institute* (Spring 2013).

Library Teaching Staff development: Librarians have been asked to embrace change, and library instructors have enthusiastically accepted the challenge. Participants of the Immersion program have garnered an understanding and acceptance of assessment as a tool and vehicle for bolstering student learning. Library instructors are profoundly rethinking their instruction shifting the emphasis from 'what they teach' to 'what students learn.' Instructors are now thinking about and writing learning outcomes for their courses. Monthly and ongoing readings on information literacy, teaching, pedagogy and assessment are well-attended and engaging, furthering the discussion and reflexive teaching practices of library teaching staff across all units.

D. Unit Library Information Literacy Initiatives

The co-chairs of the Task Force met with all unit instruction coordinators during Fall 2012 and gathered additional input from them via an online questionnaire. Unit libraries were asked how they planned to enhance their instruction programs in the coming semester/year, with the Task Force focused on integrating these initiatives to advance the larger goal of also building CUL's overall Information Literacy program. (For the full results, please see Appendix B.) While the Library is working to build a broad-based CUL information literacy program, just like much else at Cornell, the work that will make the larger program successful is designed and carried out at the unit level. The new initiatives described below offer a starting point in our work to build the CUL program and to establish measurable outcomes and indicators showing how well a CUL-wide information literacy program addresses the multiple college learning outcomes. Each program is part of the whole, while at the same time acknowledging and accounting for the unique needs, strengths and challenges of each unit library and its constituency.

The Task Force asked each unit library to consider how their program could evolve to meet some or all of the following key criteria.

An effective and efficient information literacy approach:

1. Will ultimately reach either a critical mass of students, e.g. all students in a large major, or reach a critical group of students, e.g. undergraduate research fellows.
2. Has the potential for transferability.
3. Is integrated within the curriculum and carried out in partnership with faculty.

4. Develops instructional strategies and learning technologies to be shared with the wider CUL instructors' community.
5. Includes a well-designed course and/or program assessment component that will be in place through 2013-2015.

Basic information about each unit library's initiative for the coming year, including department or audience information (where applicable) is below. Each library was also asked to identify additional resources they may need in order to achieve their goals.

- 1) **Africana Library** is continuing their instruction program to help students find, use and evaluate information. They do not request additional support for resources at this time.
- 2) **EMPSL** is focusing on the development and incorporation of learning outcomes for instruction sessions. They are also working with faculty members in the various disciplines in order to share more information with them about information literacy and how librarians aid in the research process. In particular, the **Engineering Library** is planning to approach all instructors of "common courses" in the Master of Engineering graduate program. They will initially focus on the Master's level students because they have a greater need to use outside information resources in their coursework than do the undergraduate engineering students. They do not request any specific support at this time.
- 3) **Fine Arts Library** is planning to increase their outreach efforts to new faculty. They are also working closely with faculty to incorporate information literacy learning outcomes into faculty course syllabi. Currently, Fine Arts does not have a teaching classroom or collaborative teaching/learning area that allows them to conduct instruction. They request support for a classroom or flexible teaching space in order to support the teaching and learning activities of the library. Future plans should include a larger and more flexible teaching space in the library. In addition, they see value in FAL representation on AAP advisory groups.
- 4) **Hotel, Labor and Management Library (HLM)** is planning several activities, including development of a peer-review teaching excellence program among HLM teaching staff, as well as curriculum mapping for HLM. Additional activities emphasizing staff development can be found in the survey responses in the appendix. HLM requests support for technology and equipment that can promote "teaching on the fly" as well as time away from other projects in order to focus on information literacy activities.
- 5) **Law Library** has a well-established instruction program because law librarians teach required courses in Legal Research. In support of enhancing the overall CUL instructor skill base, Law is interested in pursuing the development of basic-to-intermediate legal research workshops for CUL Instructors. In addition, law librarians are collaborating with the undergraduate law class "LAW 4122: Judging the Jury" in order to provide an introduction to legal research to undergraduates. The Law Library requests time away from other projects for teaching librarians in order to focus on information literacy activities.
- 6) **Mann Library** plans to target the Department of Nutrition in the College of Human Ecology, specifically the introductory course NS 1150/1160. NS 1150/1160 enrolls over

550 students each fall, and is a required course for many students in majors such as Animal Sciences (CALs), Food Science (CALs), as well as Nutritional Sciences (CHE). Mann Library will investigate how to embed discipline-relevant information literacy components in a virtual environment that is fully integrated into the course. They are also actively working to identify upper level, high enrollment nutrition classes for the next level of information literacy instruction for nutrition majors. Mann librarians involved in the initiative will request time away from other projects in order to focus on information literacy activities, such as preparing online learning modules. Mann requests support from RAU to develop an assessment plan and tools.

- 7) **Olin/Uris Library** plans to carry out curriculum mapping within the Department of English, including exploring required and core courses for the major, identifying the key people in the department to communicate with, inventorying the classes they are currently providing instruction for, analyzing syllabi and assignments, conferring with the department liaison, and tracking faculty involvement. In order to undertake this activity, Olin/Uris requests support from RAU to develop an assessment plan and tools.
- 8) **Rare and Manuscript Collections (RMC)** offers a range of instruction programs for teaching all levels of students about the relevance and use of historical resources and original artifacts on a wide range of topics. RMC staff work with instructors to design advanced student assignments that encourage the research use of primary materials, and collaborate with other CUL librarians to promote archival research and to integrate the use of primary sources into their information literacy goals, objectives, and activities. Renovations to RMC classrooms currently underway will soon allow the better integration of sound, video, and other technology into traditional "hands on" methods of teaching with artifacts which is the hallmark of their program.
- 9) **Sidney Cox Library of Music and Dance** is planning to work more closely with faculty and courses that are specifically part of the music major sequence, particularly with emphasis on music majors in years 2-4. Music Library staff have a strong and cordial working relationship with the Department Chair and faculty, and will continue to work within the department to find possibilities for standardizing information literacy efforts for music majors.
- 10) **Veterinary Library** will continue to teach the 1-credit D.V.M. curriculum distribution course titled VTMED 6726: "Introduction to the Professional Literature [of Veterinary Medicine]" in its current format for the last time in 2013. In 2014, Erla Heyns in collaboration with Dr. Julie Felipe will redesign and co-teach the course. We will continue to offer orientations for new graduate and a group information session at the beginning of each year. Specialized instruction sessions will include instruction in labs for all staff and faculty working in the lab, tailoring the instruction session to the work of the lab; instruction for faculty who are tutor group leaders; as well as instruction for interns and residents. Library staff collaborates with the CARE (Cornell Center for Animal Resources and Education) Department in creating and updating instructional material in the best practices for animal experimentation for the IACUC (Instructional Animal Care and Use Committee).

III. Recommendations for CUL Information Literacy

In order to build a strong, cohesive and effective Information Literacy program for the Cornell University Library, the Task Force recommends:

A. Program Development

1) **Instructional approach:** The Task Force strongly encourages embedding information literacy components across core and/or high enrollment courses in majors, disciplines and graduate/professional programs. This approach offers strong possibilities to support college learning outcomes and meets the criteria for developing efficient, effective and transferable programs the Library can sustain with existing staff. Working with these types of courses offers the benefit of reaching a critical mass of students at multiple points in their academic careers, thus offering several potentially sequenced opportunities for connection and learning. In addition, this approach capitalizes on the strong history of College and Library collaboration, in addition to dovetailing nicely with our liaison program. More importantly, however, student learning research demonstrates that students are much more responsive to and benefit more from information literacy that is embedded within the courses of their major/discipline, as opposed to ancillary, standalone courses in information literacy.^{1,2}

2) In the case of some units/programs, a credit course integrated into the curriculum, e.g. Law has been the model of choice. The Task Force fully endorses this option in cases where this approach meshes with the overall curriculum and is supported at the College or School level.

3) The Task Force recommends that the Library administration review the support requested at the unit level in the initiatives outlined above and identify sources of funding for needs requiring financial investment. Investment in these programs will help to ensure their success.

B. Organizational Structure: The Task Force recommends that PSEC Instruction provide CUL-wide leadership for Information Literacy at Cornell. In order to provide this leadership role, the Task Force believes it is important for instruction coordinators to play a more permanent and active role in this group. We recommend restructuring the membership and consider it a team, rather than a committee. The significance of the team designation is that many members will have a position on the team by virtue of their role in their library or cluster of libraries.

The Task Force recommends the following revised structure, which has been vetted and approved by the Library Directors Leadership Team and PSEC, and was shared at the Reference and Outreach Forum.

¹ *ERIAL Project: Ethnographic Research in Illinois Academic Libraries*. Andrew Asher, Lynda Duke, David Green. May 10, 2010. Available from: <http://www.academiccommons.org/commons/essay/erial-project>

² *Finding Context: What Today's College Student Say about Conducting Research in the Digital Age*. Alison J. Head and Michael B. Eisenberg, Project Information Literacy Progress Report, University of Washington's Information School, February 4, 2009. Available from: http://projectinfolit.org/pdfs/PIL_ProgressReport_2_2009.pdf

Proposed Restructuring/Membership of PSEC Instruction Team:

- One Instruction Coordinator/instruction representative from each of the library clusters: EMPSL, Fine Arts/Music/Africana, HLM, Law, Mann/Vet, Olin/Uri. Also include representative from RMC.
- Three available spaces for CUL at-large members (rotate annually)
- Institute a Chair/Past-Chair/Chair-Elect system of leadership; chairs remain on the team for a cycle of three years
- Representative appointed by AUL for Teaching, Research, Outreach and Learning Services to serve as CUL Lead for Instruction
- Representative of Research and Assessment Unit (RAU)

The Chair, Past-Chair and Chair-Elect will form the executive council. Sub-groups and task forces within PSEC Instruction and potentially including outside resource people, e.g. IT member, will be formed for specific activities, as needed.

The current PSEC Instruction Committee should review its charge during the coming semester to determine whether any changes need to be made to support the new team's additional leadership responsibilities. If this recommendation is accepted, we anticipate that PSEC and the Library Directors Leadership Team will want to examine how this change might impact their joint oversight responsibilities.

C. Time allocation for staff: The Task Force believes that enhancing our information literacy program will take additional time and effort for a number of individuals on the Library staff. The Task Force recommends that supervisors of public services staff regularly review their staff's job descriptions and commitments to ensure that the job descriptions reflect the percent effort required for a successful instruction program at each unit and that adequate time is allocated for this responsibility. This is particularly relevant for individuals who agree to serve as chair, chair-elect and past-chair of the PSEC Instruction Team, but also critical for teaching librarians who will need significant prep time for teaching in new ways and in new courses. With a move to more online learning, significant time will be needed for the initial development and updating of online learning modules.

D. Teaching Facilities—classroom technology for teaching and learning: The availability of hands-on teaching facilities varies across the unit libraries, and the quality of the available facilities also varies. The Task Force recommends a review of the teaching facilities across CUL with information literacy classrooms added and/or upgraded as needed to meet a minimum CUL classroom technology standard to be determined by the new PSEC Instruction Team in collaboration with CUL IT staff and Cornell Information Technologies.

E. CUL IT support for instructional technology and tools: The Task Force anticipates that more teaching and learning of information literacy will take place online. The Task Force recommends that the Library invest more in resources and staff with skills in the area of learning technologies and instructional design in support of the CUL Information Literacy program. This

does not necessarily require new hires if existing staff can be trained in this area and have a dedicated portion of their time allocated to support for information literacy instructional design. Support is also need for administrative tools for instruction, e.g. calendar and reservation systems and instructional repository.

F. Professional development opportunities: The Task Force has been a strong supporter of professional development activities such as the ACRL Immersion program and PSEC Instruction's bimonthly journal discussion group. We believe that these are important activities for teaching staff in order to remain current and even cutting-edge in their knowledge, understanding and integration of new trends in information literacy instruction. The Task Force supports their continuation under the leadership of PSEC Instruction. Library teaching staff should also take advantage of opportunities offered on campus, such as CTE programs for instructors, and participate in the culture of teaching and learning at Cornell.

Members of the Task Force would be pleased to discuss these recommendations with the University Librarian and members of the Library Executive Group.

Acknowledgements

The co-chairs of the Task Force would like to commend the members of this group, who devoted significant time and effort to exploring how the Library can best meet the Information Literacy strategic objective. We would like to thank them for their dedication and energy over the past year and a half. --Jaron Porciello and Mary Ochs