

First Year Seminar Assessment

Fall 2014

Introduction

Each year, the library participates in the First-Year Seminar experience by assisting faculty members with integrating the college's goals that first-year students "critically analyze information and ideas" and "develop discernment, facility, and ethical responsibility in using information." These goals are addressed in different ways, depending upon what exercises and assignments each instructor chooses to embed within his or her course. Librarians strive to ensure that students in each seminar get a firm grounding in basic information literacy skills that will serve as a starting point for any project requiring research.

Various elements of the information literacy component are examined each year. For the fall 2014 semester, a five-point evaluation was completed:

- Inputs – librarians self-reported what type of instruction took place in each seminar, and how students' information literacy practice was evaluated.
- Faculty survey – this annual survey asks faculty about their impressions of librarians' effectiveness in their first-year seminars.
- Comparison of student work – annotated bibliographies were gathered and compared from the several seminars with similar assignments. Although these classes operate from the same syllabus, information literacy instruction differed by professor. The results of this assessment will be reported separately.
- Results of Academic Integrity Tutorial – this annual assessment of the academic integrity tutorial is designed to determine whether the content presented to students is new and useful to them.
- Student comments – these representative comments from students help librarians determine whether instruction was useful and effective.

Important findings in this year's report include:

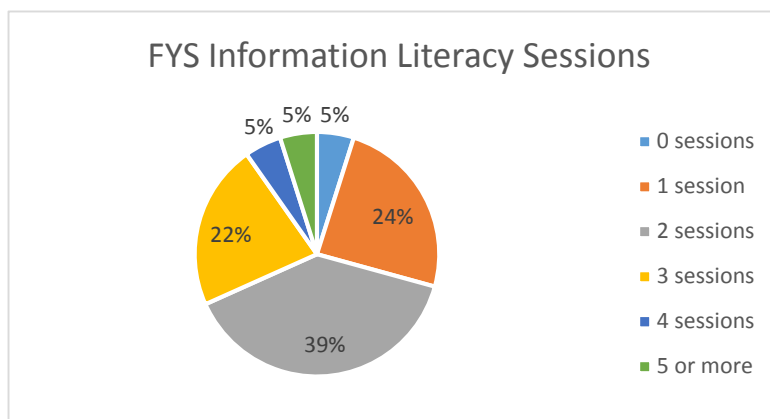
- Library instruction and research activity has shifted focus toward higher-order research skills. Whereas in 2007, many classes were emphasizing search mechanics, in 2014, more classes were practicing source analysis and discernment.
- Information literacy instruction remains inconsistent across the seminars, meaning that students are exiting seminars with different research skill sets.
- Librarians should develop out-of-classroom solutions to teaching research mechanics, in order to allow more classroom time to be spent on higher-order skills.
- Librarians should use multiple strategies to explain to students what the role of the librarian is and how librarians can be helpful at all stages of the research process, while encouraging out-of-classroom follow-up.
- There will no longer be an extension offered to students who miss the deadline for completing the Academic Integrity tutorial.

Overview

In fall 2015, 41 first-year seminars were offered and eight librarians were assigned as liaisons to the classes. They taught a total of 88 sessions. Librarians visited all but 2 of the seminars. Each of the remaining 39 seminars met with the librarian at least once, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1- Number of FY Information Literacy Sessions

# of Seminars	# of Sessions
2	0 sessions
10	1 session
16	2 sessions
9	3 sessions
2	4 sessions
2	5 or more



For more detail about library class visits, see Appendix A.

Librarian Survey

Prior to other information gathering for this report, librarians were asked to report what information literacy skills they taught in each first-year seminar. The skills that librarians identify as important for first-year student to learn are adapted from the library's information literacy rubric in Appendix B:

- *Seek - The author selects sources that relate directly and clearly to the investigation.*
- *Gather – This is the students' ability to obtain full-text copies of required material once a source citation is identified. This skill is implied though not listed specifically listed in the rubric; the first-year seminar is the logical place to teach this skill.*
- *Analyze - The author justifies the use of each source in the body of the work.*
- *Cite - The author cites according to the rules of the required standard and appropriately acknowledges borrowed material, uses sources ethically, and avoids plagiarism.*

Inputs

Table 1 shows the skill sets that were taught in first-year seminars during fall 2014, and the means by which they were taught.

Table 1- First-year Information Literacy Skill Sets Taught, Fall 2014

Skill	# of Seminars	Means
Seek	39/41	Library Catalog – 33/41 Jumpstart or other general purpose database – 38/41 An encyclopedic source – 5/41 A subject specific database – 8/41 Google – 9/41 Other – 3/41

Gather	37/41	Journal locator – 20/41 Downloading/emailing digital copies of sources – 36/41 Print books in stacks – 28/41 Print copies of journals – 1/41 Interlibrary loan – 15/41 A/V material – 4/41 Other – 7/41
Analyze	38/41	Choose a topic by researching – 21/41 Discern among source types – 33/41 Annotate a source – 16/41 Other - 1
Cite	32/41	APA – 8/41 Chicago – 9/41 MLA – 13/41 Other – 2/41

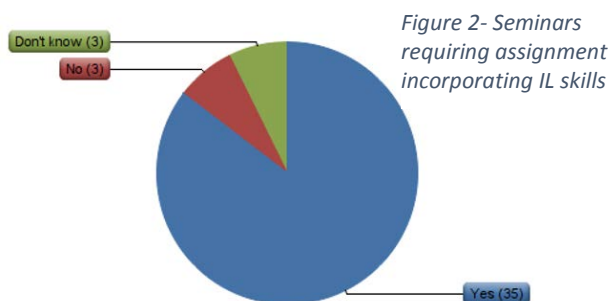
In another part of the survey, librarians were asked, to the best of their knowledge, whether students were given a chance to practice research skills following their class visits, and if so, how. The results shown in Table 2 indicate that 91% of the classes included some practice following instruction.

Table 2- How was student work evaluated following your sessions?

Answer	Response	%
In class exercise (graded by librarian or professor)	7	11%
In class exercise (non-graded)	20	31%
Homework exercise (graded by librarian or professor)	28	43%
None	6	9%
Other (please specify)	4	6%

“Other” included non-graded homework exercises and required individual consultations with librarians.

Librarians were also asked if they knew whether students were required to incorporate the sources they found as a result of library instruction into a class project, such as an annotated bibliography (“source analysis”), a short research paper, or an exploratory essay. For thirty-five of the seminars, librarians said yes, as illustrated in Figure 2. They said no for three and did not know for three others.



Skill Sets Comparison: 2014 and 2007

For assessment purposes in the fall of 2007, librarians kept track of specific skill sets that were taught in each seminar. This process was repeated in fall 2014 and the two semesters were compared. As shown in Table 3, the results of this comparison suggest that librarians are currently focusing more on

outcomes rather than tasks, and that more emphasis is being placed on the evaluation of material rather than the mechanics of discovery.

Table 3- Skill Set Comparison, 2014 and 2007

Skill	2014		2007	
Library Catalog	33/41	80%	37/39	95%
Jumpstart/General purpose database	38/41	93%	38/39	97%
Google	9/41	22%	18/39	46%
Journal locator	20/41	49%	35/39	90%
Interlibrary loan	15/41	37%	19/39	49%
Choose a topic by researching	21/41	51%	6/39	15%
Discern among source types	33/41	80%	22/39	56%
Annotate a source	16/41	39%	7/39	18%
Cite a source	32/41	78%	25/39	64%

Faculty Feedback

Each year, faculty members who teach first-year seminars are asked to complete a short survey about the effectiveness of library instruction in their classes. This year, 30 faculty members, or 73%, responded.

When asked whether their students had given an assignment that required the application of information literacy skills, 29 faculty members responded “yes” by way of various types of assignment per course, as shown in Table 4. (As noted above, librarians were aware of 35 seminars requiring such assignments.)

Table 4- Assignments Incorporating Information Literacy Skills

Answer	Response
Annotated Bibliography/Source Analysis	16
Research Paper	21
Exploratory Essay	8
Other	6

“Other” assignments included video projects, biographical profiles, research presentations using digital platforms, and research prospectuses.

In the free-form section of the survey, faculty members were asked: “How did your students’ performance on research-based assignments demonstrate their application of information literacy skills?” This question will be reworded next year as some faculty members took this to mean process rather than result. Twenty-five faculty members responded to this question; representative comments appear in Table 5.

Table 5- How did your students' performance on research-based assignments demonstrate their application of information literacy skills?

Positive Responses	Negative Responses
Students were required to choose appropriate sources and analyze their credibility. They did this multiple times. Their understanding of the process improved each time.	Generally speaking, their performance was disappointing, as they did not take the assignments seriously enough
They quite successfully found more than the number of sources required for the assigned annotated bibliography.	They were less successful, I'd say, in analyzing the relative quality of the various sources they found.
Students are generally able to identify sources as primary/secondary and are generally able to evaluate the reliability of a physical source (journal articles, books, encyclopedias).	In their research papers many students continue to rely heavily on online sources (of varying degrees of quality and reliability), either because of the ease with which they can find such information and/or the difficulty of evaluating such materials.
By the end of the semester, the students were citing more relevant sources from peer-reviewed journals. In general, they learned how to incorporate outside sources into their work without losing their own voice.	I still struggle to get some of them to stop Googling! I take the time to devote two classes, but some of them still Google=non-peer-reviewed crappy websites.
In a series of digital research presentations, students had to create various types of data visualizations (such as word clouds or data maps) that illustrated their ability to process and present information. In a critical essay project, students had to revise and expand on all of their previous work to demonstrate the ability to put a classic text into context through the use of primary and secondary source research and to visualize some element of their project with a multi-media tool	Finding scholarly journals was a bit of a problem.
My students did a really good job researching to find outside articles for their papers.	
They were very good at "traditional" types of readings, or readings that they had some familiarity with.	
They had to choose a primary source, identify a question, and then identify other primary and secondary sources that helped them answer the question. They learned to use the archives, ask questions of the librarian, identify search terms, use the databases, and evaluate sources.	

Finally, faculty members were asked how the library staff might improve the library's information literacy program for first-year seminars. Representative comments include the following:

“Perhaps consider having a core curriculum for FYs that all students have to take part in?”

“Recommended assignment types to reinforce the goals? Since faculty don't teach FYS very often, we don't have the same kind of recursive experience with coming up with assignments that meet the specific FYS goals. As librarians who interact with FYS more regularly, maybe these assignments or activities are something you can envision more easily than we can?”

“Perhaps some time can be spent on how to assess the quality of sources in the various categories.”

“None in terms of explicit aspects of the program, more learning how differently our students come in prepared these days.”

“It can't. Professors need to have clear ideas about what they want the students to learn about research and then ask the librarians how they can be supported.”

“Once is not a charm. Repetition is important.”

“Gaps arise when I neglect to turn info literacy ed over to you and instead try to do it all myself.”

“I'm not sure that my students consulted with our library liaison when they actually had a problem with their research. Maybe this should be this should be made more clear -- that he's available to help if they get stuck.”

“I find that students acquire information literacy most successfully when they have a particular question or problem in mind and can then confer with a librarian in strategizing to answer the question or solve the problem.”

This feedback will be discussed at the first-year seminar faculty training in May 2015.

Student Feedback

Student comments this semester were largely limited to their work with particular resources, such as a specific database they used. However, in one class, students were asked how confident they felt about using library resources following the librarian's sessions. All 15 said they felt at least fairly confident about using library resources, and all of them acknowledged that learning to cite sources for their class was important.

Representative comments from other sections include:

“I learned how to use databases for research.”

“I learned the difference between summarizing and paraphrasing.”

“I learned the distinction between scholarly and popular sources.”

“I learned that information has various ways of presenting itself to people, and depending on how closely people look at details, information can be easily misperceived.”

Some students expressed specific concerns that indicate the need for further consultation:

“Honestly, I’ve gotten almost nothing useful out of Jumpstart or JSTOR.”

“I felt like for some things we didn’t get a definitive answer.”

“Do this lesson earlier in the year so we know how to cite for our first essay, not our last.”

“I think if we had one or two more sessions it would be helpful.”

Several said they need more help using print sources. Librarians will work with faculty in the fall to mitigate the frequency of some of these concerns and misconceptions.

Academic Integrity

Fall 2014 was the ninth year in which all new students – first-years, transfers, and internationals - were required to complete Academic Integrity instruction. This year, 643 students completed the tutorial.

The purpose of this tutorial is to inform students about the basics of properly attributing the works of others and about Dickinson’s policies regarding suspected cases of plagiarism. Since registration holds are placed on the accounts of students who do not complete the tutorial in Moodle, we have achieved 100% participation.

The tutorial consists of an interactive online presentation with a short survey and quiz. It takes most students between 10 and 20 minutes to complete the tutorial.

Effectiveness

Assessment results suggest that the tutorial continues to be informative and effective. When asked near the beginning of the tutorial, “Have you ever committed an act of plagiarism?” 73% responded that they had not. Near the end of the tutorial, when asked the same question a second time, only 48% responded the same way. In the comment sections, some students stated that they did not know that certain practices like failing to cite when paraphrasing or failure to cite visual materials were violations of academic integrity. Many noted that did were not aware that using a paper twice without permission from both instructors is a violation of college policy.

As part of the built-in assessment component, students are asked to indicate how much of the material is new to them. Their responses are noted in Table 6.

Table 6- Academic Integrity - How much of this information was new to you?

All of the information was new to me	9	1%
Most of the information was new to me	34	5%
Some of the information was new to me	254	40%
Very Little of the information was new to me	267	42%
None of the information was new to me	79	12%
	643	

Representative comments about the usefulness of the tutorial include:

“I thought the presentation was useful. Some of the aspects regarding the quotations as opposed to paraphrasing was new to me.”

“I thought it was useful that the tutorial emphasized the need to cite pictures. That is something that was always confusing to me, but now it's clear that I have to cite absolutely everything I consult and use in my paper.”

“I did not realize that I had to cite from sources when I paraphrased. I thought the whole reason for paraphrasing was to avoid plagiarism and avoid having to cite sources. That section was very helpful for me.”

“I found it helpful that the Tutorial listed that turning in the same paper but for a different class is against school policy unless you talk to the professor.”

“This tutorial really helped my understanding of academic integrity as a whole, instead of just the basics.”

“I did not know that a Librarian could be used as a resource if I am having trouble with citing works in my paper. I thought that was a useful tip to know.”

Additionally, students are asked if they found the tutorial to be effective. Those responses are noted in Table 7.

Table 7 – Academic Integrity - Did you find this tutorial to be effective?

Not at All	24	4%
Only a Little	78	12%
Somewhat	230	35%
Very	274	43%
Extremely	37	6%
	643	

Appearance

After several years of complaints about the odd appearances of the characters in the prior version of this tutorial (Figure 3), different images were used this year (Figure 4). Previous images came from a free cartoon generator. For the 2014 version, the library hired a Dickinson student to draw a new storyboard. As a result, this year, not only did we get no complaints about the drawings, but, without prompting, some students commented that they thought the artwork was well done.

Figure 3- Old Storyboard (2010 – 2013)



Figure 4- New Storyboard (2014)



Suggestions for Improvement

Students often offer helpful suggestions for improvements to the academic integrity tutorial. Some that we will explore this year include:

- Adding an audio feature so that students with impairments or learning differences can listen to the text.
- Preventing the comics from scrolling offscreen/formatting for different platforms.
- Including a printable version of basic citation rules and options for further help.

Faculty Feedback

As the Academic Integrity deadline loomed in September and about half of the students had not yet completed it, the library staff elected to extend the deadline and requested further prompting from the first-year seminar professors. Some faculty members expressed concern that the extension undermined their credibility in the classroom, and as a result, the library staff agreed to stop offering deadline extensions. Students who do not complete the Academic Integrity tutorial by the date noted in early September will have registration holds placed on their accounts until they complete it and report back to the liaison librarian and the Registrar.

Conclusion

Because professors approach their seminars differently, there remains a lack of consistency in student information literacy learning across the FYS program. Students learn different information literacy skills based upon the goals of each seminar professor; therefore, some students lack basic research skills. This year we lost some ground in reaching students. For the last several years, librarians visited each seminar at least once; this year as noted, two professors declined library support. We cannot therefore accurately assess whether the students in those classes gained any sort of grounding in the research process.

However, in classes where there was an active information literacy element, students appear to be challenged with higher order objectives such as structuring a search, finding relevant peer reviewed journals, and writing source analyses. The mechanics of searching must be addressed at some level in the classroom, but our skill set comparison suggests that librarians are using different methods of teaching, such as graded homework and out-of-classroom consultations, to provide students with learning opportunities that reach beyond the 50- or 75- minute session that librarians are often afforded. These alternative teaching methods should be encouraged and continued, as it allows librarians and students to focus on first-year seminar objectives, such as critical thinking, analysis, and

evaluation that are more intellectually challenging and immediately relevant to goals of individual classes. Feedback from both faculty and students support the librarians moving more intentionally in this direction.

Each year's first-year seminar information literacy assessment identifies areas for improvement for the following year. Based on the analysis, next year's emphases will include:

- Additional instruction on assessing the quality of sources relative to the project needs.
- Out-of-classroom solutions for search mechanics such as citing and determining if the library owns specific material.
- Finding multiple venues to explain and promote the role of the librarians in first-year seminar.
- Encouraging or requiring students to follow-up library instruction by having personal consultations with the liaison.

Appendix A – Class Visits by Professor

Professor	Librarian	# of Sessions
Barber	Lonergan	2
Beaudry	Ferer/Triller	6
Bilodeau	Doran	1
Bombaro	Bombaro	5
Cogliano	Arndt	3
Delutis-Eichenberger	Kozlowska	4
Diduk	Ferer	2
English	Lonergan	2
Forrester	Howard	3
Guss	Lonergan	2
Hill	Lonergan	2
Hoefler	Kozlowska	3
Johnson	Triller	1
Kersh	Bombaro	3
Key	Lonergan	2
Kim	Howard	2
Lape	Bombaro/Triller	3
Laurent	Ferer	3
Lewis, L.	Triller	1
Lewis, R.	Arndt	2
McGaughey	Doran	2
McNulty	Kozlowska	3
Moten	Triller	2
Muston	Arndt	2
Pagano	Howard	2
Phillips	Doran	1
Pinsker	Bombaro	0
Pulcini	Ferer	1
Reedy	Ferer	1
Reiner	Kozlowska	4
Sartwell	Doran	1
Schubert	Kozlowska	3
Sias	Doran	0
Skelton	Lonergan	1
St Angelo	Lonergan	2
Strand	Bombaro	1
Tynan	Arndt	2
Webb	Kozlowska	3
Wilson	Doran	1
Wohlbach	Lonergan	2
Wronski	Doran	2

Appendix B – Information Literacy Rubric

	Accomplished		Developing		Emerging	
Rank	6	5	4	3	2	1
Source Selection <i>The author selects sources that relate directly and clearly to the investigation.</i>	Sources selected for the bibliography relate directly and clearly to the investigation.		Sources included in the bibliography are broadly relevant.		Sources included in the bibliography are irrelevant to the argument or are tenuously related.	
Analysis <i>The author justifies the use of each source in the body of the work.</i>	The presence of sources referenced is justified in the body of the work. Sources support or disprove assertions. Biased or contrary opinion in selected sources is noted and investigated. Assumptions are questioned.		Source content is supportive of an assertion but analysis is unsophisticated (e.g. explanation is a string of quotes). Other views are acknowledged but not challenged or further investigated.		Author misunderstands or misrepresents the meaning or significance of some sources. Author pushes an argument while ignoring evidence to the contrary.	
Integration <i>Selected information is incorporated into the author's knowledge base to support assertions or further arguments in context.</i>	Sources are judiciously engaged throughout the work and are used in dialog with one another. Clear relationships are drawn among the author's work and the sources.		Author attempts to engage with sources but in a way that is superficial or incomplete, or that results in specious conclusions.		Sources are marginally or weakly engaged in the writing. No connection is made among sources. Sources are forced into the work illogically.	
Scope <i>The author uses a suitable breadth of material and incorporates primary/secondary and scholarly/non-scholarly material as appropriate.</i>	Primary source material is consulted when appropriate. AND/OR Author makes appropriate choices in source types (scholarly/nonscholarly, news, web, etc.) and contextualizes the authority of all sources used. AND/OR		Author acknowledges primary source material but does not acquire it (i.e. cites citations). AND/OR Author uses appropriate source types and may acknowledge the difference but without contextualizing. AND/OR		Author relies on secondary or tertiary source material only. AND/OR Author does not distinguish among source types. All sources are afforded equal authority. AND/OR	

	An appropriate number and variety of sources is used.	A variety of sources may be listed but some are overused.	Insufficient sources are used to support the work.
Citation Style <i>The author cites according to the rules of the required standard.</i>	Citing style is correct and/or consistent.	Citing generally conforms to style rules and consistency. Citations contain few errors.	Citations contain many errors with lack of conformation to style rules or consistency.
Acknowledgement <i>The author appropriately acknowledges borrowed material, uses sources ethically and avoids plagiarism.</i>	Links between the text and the source material are evident. References to the work of others are acknowledged.	Sources are cited but direct links between source material and quoted text are unclear. The author broadly assumes acknowledgement with sparse citation.	Sources are not cited, or evidence of plagiarism exists.

