Gloria L. Robbins

DETT 611

Assignment 5, Information Literacy Learning Module Project

The Learning Module, *Information Literacy: Library Research Basics* is a computer-mediated two-credit course, designed for college freshmen and middle school-aged children in using library and internet resources. The university's mission is to integrate a cohesive learning literacy plan in all facets of course design with freshman receiving library literacy basics. Sophomores will receive information, computer and library literacy basics and juniors and seniors will receive advanced information and technology literacy methods.

The purpose of the course is to raise student awareness regarding the importance information literacy plays in developing critical thinking, analytical, and problem solving skills. Although the assignments ask students to select from a list or provide multiple-choice responses to questions, students work in teams of three to five students. Through discussion, texting, and critical analysis with peers, students are evaluating information acquired. *Good ideas!* The assignments are time sensitive to stress time management and effective study skills. This brief tutorial will prove useful as it allows students to begin building information literacy skills essential for reviewing academic and reliable sources, thereby, addressing the problem of open access to information. In addition, students receive a more informed and literate first-time research experience. Although this paper focuses only on the freshman library-literacy plan, all students receive training in Internet use as a precursor to the computer-literacy skills overview. Students use computers to maneuver library search engines through the World Wide Web to learn to conduct library searches and evaluate scholarly works.

The basic module provides students with links to research guides and database information from the public library as well as the university library. The course design does not require students to conduct actual searches; faculty felt this approach would allow students to focus more on critical thinking processes and analytical evaluation of the information given. Students use search engines such as google, Ebsco Host, and Sailor that are provided by the academic librarian to determine which databases or links are appropriate for which research.

This teaching/learning process is also the format at other universities conducting library-literacy training for freshman students.

The objectives of the course are to determine if students are learning not only basic research skills but also understanding and processing the information by applying and building upon critical thinking skills, thereby, becoming information-literate students and lifelong learners. As mentioned in the Association for Colleges and Research Libraries (ACRL) (2000), information-literacy standards, student's think through problems, using information-literacy processes, implying that the student acquired the "ability to access, evaluate, and use information effectively to solve problems and make decisions" (ACRL, 2000). In addition, the information-literate student will know where to look and what to look for in the search process.

Students will become skilled at making better and informed decisions while filtering information from a variety of sources and analyzing the information to determine if the information is trustworthy and unbiased. Students will learn the skills necessary to search for information, not only in the classroom, but when making life choices. This course is in line with the ACLR (2000) standards requiring students to become lifelong learners, which reflects better career choices: decisions to attend college, become parents, or leave school and go into secular work; therefore, being more prepared for the global workforce.

An assessment of student knowledge, incorporated at the end of each module determines if skills acquired met course objectives, and to determine if and/or how learning changes student values or habits for completing course assignments and as applicable in everyday choices.

Analysis of examples of learning modules on similar information literacy topics:

Several universities and colleges instituted best practices for incorporating information-literacy training modules in their course design. Each university mentioned below has extensive assessment tools to evaluate and continuously update in-house information literacy standards in its core curriculum. The course assessments show how students develop as critical thinkers and information-literate learners and citizens. These include:

1. Eisenberg, M. & Berkowitz, R. E. (2002), who introduced the Big 6 information literacy-learning model have several learning modules, aimed at grades from three to 12. The authors use animation and video clips to engage the younger and older children by making the modules fun and student-friendly (Big6, 2002).
2. University of Windsor's Leddy Library in Ontario, Canada and Wartburg College Vogel Library provide students with information literacy learning each year of his/her academic career. The Wartburg College also offers mandatory information literacy courses for all students to introduce information literacy skills then as reinforcement beyond the freshman level (Brasley, 2008). It is standard matriculation for freshman and transfer students to receive basic or generic information literacy courses with faculty using presentational teaching seminars, orientation sessions and first-year composition courses, taught by either the librarian or the instructor (Brasley, 2008, p. 77). It is also best practice at Wartburg College to offer accelerated library-literacy courses after the basic course to provide students with a more comprehensive library research class. The class design provides a thorough basis for achievement outcomes and assessment of student learning, in line with the ACRL (2000) performance standards for learning (Brasley, p. 77).
3. UCLA also integrates information literacy into its freshman orientation clusters providing early intervention in augmenting library skills in locating books and other research materials (Lindholm, 2007)
4. Sonoma State University also integrates information literacy competencies starting with freshman classes. Sonoma State integrates information literacy into the required English 101 composition courses, which is a general education requirement and fulfillment of all students entering the university (Brasley, p. 78). This is an excellent model for best practice for implementation at all intuitions of higher learning.
5. California State University Northridge and Los Angeles, like University of Maryland University College, offer two courses in information literacy. These courses not only enhance learning, they also strengthen student library skills. As standalone or independent to any course, each has its specific focus: one course provides library basic skills and the other is more research extensive, like UMUC's graduate library research course, USCP 611.

6. Lock Haven University (LHU), offers information literacy training with a focus on writing. LHU offers information literacy courses in conjunction with the introductory biology courses as a general education requirement. This project has proven quite successful, as stated by Winch and Hunter, (2007). Brasley (2008) also supports the success of subject-focused literacy, stating, "Authentic learning is promoted in the form of topic selection from public health issues," (p. 82). Brasley (2008) further states that the poster project was an excellent example of how Information and Computer Technology (ICT) assignments challenge students to transcend text-based representations of information allowing meaningful collaboration" (p.82), which is a critical component for budding information-literate learners.
7. At the Community College of Vermont (CCV), they developed a program that embeds the Librarian into the course design, as UMUC's learning management system. This program provides basic library services to students and is similar to the model developed for this paper, although, much more extensive. CCV also integrates many electronic-media into its information literacy library session, such as email use in research, interlibrary loan programs and tutorials. Matthew and Schroeder's (2006) library-literacy online forum provide students with knowledge of basic library structure, as well. Students can access library databases to conduct research on the World Wide Web; however, the tutorials function is twofold. The tutorials seem to replace instructors who normally conduct classroom instruction while at the same time provide real time library assistance to students. This course is ideal for promoting information literacy as it, like several universities above, combines information literacy's in their programs. Information literacy, computer literacy and media-literacy programs incorporated into specific courses provide meaningful learning experiences for students. CCV says the campus-based program works well with students. The university is beginning to develop a similar online course where students' will use a variety of resources—graphics, statistics and other media incorporated in the library literacy program for conducting researches (p. 61).

In conclusion, information is ubiquitous in this, computer-driven society. However, student competency levels or skills require constant updating and accomplished through

various library-focused assignments. Information literacy is the key to deciphering, analyzing and processing information in the storehouse of data. Students must acquire the skills to become critical thinkers in a data-driven world of internet, social media, and the World Wide Web. Information literacy will play major roles in student choices and decisions, especially for preparing as better citizens and members of a global and diverse workforce. It must be ingrained at all levels of teaching and learning to produce better workers and citizens, as the models developed above show, information literacy is a better tool, per Matthew and Schroeder (2006) when connected to an academic subject.

References

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