

Let's Work Together:

Developing a Shared Instructional Identity

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The development of a shared instructional identity at our library involved a collaborative effort among research and instructional team leaders, instruction librarians, and teaching faculty. We took advantage of a time of change and growth at our institution to systematically reimagine our expectations and practices, solidifying a multipronged approach to information literacy instruction that involved experimentation and risk-taking, partnerships across campus, and buy-in from instruction librarians and teaching faculty alike.

DISORIENTING DILEMMAS AND TRANSFORMATIVE CATALYSTS

Our reimagining of information literacy at our institution was spurred by transformations and dilemmas. In December 2018, the Carnegie Classification reclassified our university as a Doctoral University with High Research Activity (also known as an R2 institution). While this reclassification was more of a recognition of the transformation that had been happening at our institution for some time as opposed to a sudden change in focus, it initiated a process on campus to re-envision and transform support for research and scholarship.

Within our library, this shift to R2 status highlighted a growing dilemma: with the rapid expansion of our student population and a renewed focus on research production, the numbers of our library faculty were not currently sufficient nor growing in proportion to our needs. Liaison librarians, previously focused almost exclusively on information

literacy and student research support, now needed to devote an increasing proportion of their time to supporting faculty research. At the same time, existing campus needs for information literacy instruction were not going away.

A second, subtler campus transformation was the evolving role of information literacy. After a lot of hard work and advocacy from librarians, in 2012 the campus University Studies committee added information literacy to the general education curriculum. Students are required to take six credits' worth of classes bearing the information literacy (IL) designation, including one class in their major. However, because information literacy as a general concept has been established on our campus for quite some time, the University Studies IL student learning outcomes (SLOs) were based on the ACRL *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*. With the publication of the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* in 2015, we had begun seeking opportunities to establish the Framework and its corresponding threshold concepts on our campus to replace the Standards-based SLOs.

Further complicating the dilemma, faculty on our campus had grown reliant on one-shot librarian-led sessions to meet the information literacy requirement. Yet, the one-shot model was not sustainable due to the aforementioned expansion in our student population; our changing expectations for what information literacy knowledge, skills, and abilities students should be gaining in college; and changing professional perspectives on the traditional one-shot instruction model. It was clear that information literacy at our institution needed an overhaul.

These changes necessitated a structural change in the Research and Instructional Services division of our library. Prior to 2019, the structure of our library's Research and Instructional Services division was flat. We had one associate director responsible for visioning and for the supervision and management of our (at the time) seven subject liaison librarians, one distance education librarian, one first-year engagement librarian, and one outreach and engagement librarian. In 2019, our associate director was able to advocate for two new coordinator positions promoted from within; both of these coordinators would retain their former roles as well. In these new roles—coordinator of instruction (Tammy Ivins) and coordinator of Liaison Librarian Services (Stephanie Crowe)—we reimagined information literacy by building partnerships across our campus in order to move from a model in which information literacy is solely the purview of “the library” into a model where librarians, campus offices, and teaching faculty are partners in information literacy education.

EXAMINING, EXPLORING, AND REFLECTING

In *Transformative Learning through Engagement*, Jane Fried explicitly connects the concepts of transformative learning theory and experiential learning.¹ Fried views transformative learning as holistic, in which transformative experiences are integrated throughout a student's college life via their lived experiences both in and out of the classroom.² The theory of transformative learning as interconnected, integrated experience is echoed elsewhere in the literature from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Tamara Kear demonstrates that nursing students experience the greatest level of transformation

via direct interactions with patients and caregivers.³ Study abroad and other international experiences are also often situated as transformative learning for participating students.⁴ Finally, Emma Savage et al. demonstrate that students' lived experiences can be transformative for both academic competencies and personal development.⁵ As we began to examine our existing information literacy model, we knew that we wanted to strengthen its alignment with experiential learning, associated high-impact practices, and metacognition and reflection, all of which were already well-established and emphasized throughout our campus as part of students' holistic, transformative learning experiences. We wanted to do so not only via our library instruction but also by helping the disciplinary faculty at our institution to experience transformative learning of their own. We wanted to transform the way they saw or thought of information literacy—from skills-based database search training to Framework-aligned knowledge practices and dispositions.

What Could We Stop Doing?

When navigating change, the thought of everything we could and should start doing was overwhelming. So, we started by examining our current state and looked first for what we could *stop* doing—specifically, to stop burning out both ourselves and our students.

We wanted to stop burning out our students with library instruction that was focused on the dumping of research skills en masse, trying to teach too much in a single one-shot instruction session. A growing body of researchers is showing that the one-shot model of information literacy instruction is ineffective and may actually be harmful.⁶ Cognitive load theory posits that people have a limited capacity to take in and apply new information.⁷ Our librarians needed to trust in our existing scaffolded information literacy curriculum and learn to effectively deploy it across the curriculum through curriculum mapping.⁸ The same philosophy could be applied to our virtual instruction as we wanted to move away from creating ten- to twenty-minute videos that merely replicated a traditional face-to-face library session. Instead, we wanted to embrace microlearning to create shorter, bite-sized videos that could be deployed individually or collectively to scaffold virtual instruction.⁹

Meanwhile, we also wanted to stop burning ourselves out. As described in the introduction, changes on our campus meant more and more was being demanded of our liaison librarians without reduction in our existing responsibilities. Vocational awe is a serious occupational hazard for librarians, and for our librarians, it manifested in the expectation that we could indeed take on additional responsibilities without sunseting others.¹⁰ Research suggests that low morale is rampant in academic libraries, and it was easy to see that our library had the potential to foster burnout in our liaison librarians if nothing changed.¹¹ We had to accept that we could not do everything. We would need to collaborate with and empower teaching faculty on campus to support information literacy alongside the liaison librarians.

How Could We Move Forward?

Our goal to stop burning out ourselves and our students was admirable, but how on earth would we actually do it? We explored three mechanisms for facilitating the changes we wanted to see: the Framework, backward design, and small teaching. First and foremost, we needed to reorient our instructional program around the Framework, from the micro (instruction learning outcomes) to the macro (campus-wide awareness).¹² Centering the Framework in our instruction planning was a natural first step in committing to a process of intentional instruction design for information literacy instruction that is oriented around meaningful learning outcomes. We leveraged the instructional theory of backward design (or understanding by design) to serve as the backbone of systematic instruction planning in our department.¹³ Finally, we embraced Lang’s “small teaching” philosophy, which reminds us that we do not have to change everything about our instruction at once.¹⁴ Embracing this philosophy was illustrated in the development of a new “small changes” oriented web page that supported faculty integration of information literacy into courses.¹⁵ As a department, we also embraced the “small teaching” philosophy internally, and it guided us as we built skills and planned and piloted initiatives. Our department was not going to wake up tomorrow with a transformed library instruction program, but we could commit to an ongoing series of small changes.

BUILDING SKILLS AND CONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE

To begin moving beyond a traditional, one-shot, database-centered demonstration model and toward a more collaborative and systematic approach, we needed to build our departmental competencies in regard to the Framework, our university curriculum, virtual learning resources, and campus collaboration.

Building Familiarity with the Framework

Our first priority was to delve more deeply into the Framework ourselves and provide structured opportunities for our liaisons to build their fluency with it. Our Information Literacy Faculty Fellows program (described in more detail in the subsequent Planning and Piloting in Practice section) was one of our methods. As part of this program, individual research and instructional services librarians—including both of us—volunteered to take responsibility for becoming conversant enough in one of the six frames to facilitate a conversation about it. We each gained expertise, then, in at least one of the frames, and by participating in the facilitated discussions, we all became more conversant in the others as well.

Building Curriculum Familiarity

Our second priority was building our librarians’ expertise and familiarity with their liaison academic departments so they could efficiently scaffold information literacy skill development intentionally through specific curriculums. Curriculum mapping was the

answer, as it forced our librarians to collect in-depth information about their departments, to see in which courses information literacy would ideally be integrated, and to identify instructors for collaboration.

As the liaisons dove deeply into researching their departments, sometimes they discovered that they knew less about their departments and their courses than they thought; these gaps caused them to have difficulty completing the curriculum map. The cognitive dissonance of not being able to answer the questions led to the occasional bout of frustration and criticism of the mapping process. Tammy Ivins, our instruction coordinator, dispelled these feelings through coaching interventions. She reminded librarians that curriculum mapping was a process instead of a one-time project. Furthermore, gaps and unanswered spaces in the map were actually helpful as they functioned as a to-do list of things to learn and document. Librarians were also encouraged to place annual reminders on their calendars to revisit the maps and update them.

Building Virtual and Asynchronous Learning Confidence

Yet another tactic was improving our capacity to offer alternatives to traditional synchronous one-shots by means of virtual learning resources (such as video tutorials and learning management system modules) to replace or supplement synchronous library instruction. First, we addressed the technical needs of the liaisons by providing access to needed technology and equipment, such as high-definition microphones and webcams, software licenses, and access to Canvas LMS. We met the liaisons' intellectual needs through training and documentation on how to create high-quality learning objects that complied with ADA requirements and aligned with universal design principles.

Finally, the librarians needed to develop confidence in building effective, scaffolded virtual information literacy resources as well as in determining when a virtual information literacy resource was the best instructional modality for a particular course. This confidence was developed through a combination of group discussions, one-on-one consultations between Tammy in her work as instruction coordinator and the librarians, and a year-long departmental conversation around instructional scaffolding.

Building Collaborative Campus Partnerships

Finally, a collaborative model of information literacy could not work without gaining trust and buy-in from teaching faculty on our campus. Our institution's Office of Applied Learning provided a mechanism for us to connect with faculty across the disciplines interested in improving their teaching; for instance, Stephanie Crowe leveraged her expertise as the coordinator of Liaison Librarian Services to lead a lunch-and-learn conversation about the Framework and its applications with the Research Methods Educators community of practice.

In addition to partnerships with campus offices, it was important for liaisons to develop confidence that their relationships with teaching faculty should be collaborative rather than service-based. We began to encourage liaisons to see instruction requests as the beginning of a conversation about the class and its needs, not a simple yes or no question.

While the COVID-19 pandemic was disruptive in the extreme, one outcome is that liaisons were forced to think outside the traditional model when providing information literacy instruction.

PLANNING AND PILOTING IN PRACTICE

As outlined, we have undertaken several approaches to transforming information literacy at our institution with the goal of moving from a model in which information literacy was solely the purview of “the library” into a model where librarians, campus offices, and teaching faculty were partners in information literacy education. These approaches manifested as three distinct projects: an annual Information Literacy Faculty Fellows program, a collection of applied learning activities designed to teach information literacy skills, and a redesigned suite of virtual information literacy resources.

Information Literacy Faculty Fellows Program

To help both liaison librarians and teaching faculty begin to approach information literacy as a shared responsibility, we launched an Information Literacy Faculty Fellows program in 2018. This “train-the-trainer” program introduces ten to twelve teaching faculty annually to the threshold concepts from the Framework.

While the structure has varied slightly over the four years of this program, at its core it has remained the same: liaison librarians take responsibility for introducing frames via a facilitated discussion. For the first three years of the program, these discussions took place in person in the library; due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 program was run remotely through Canvas LMS modules and discussion boards. At the end of the program, faculty fellows are responsible for developing and submitting a project that updates some portion of a class they teach to reflect one or more of the frames. These projects have been made available on a publicly accessible page on our library’s website for other faculty to reference.

This highly successful program has been funded for all four years not just by our library but also by our university’s Center for Teaching Excellence and by our institution’s Undergraduate Studies department, thus demonstrating to the faculty fellows that the campus at large is invested in information literacy. Fellows have expressed an appreciation for learning not just from liaison librarians during the program but also from each other as participants discussed various ways that different disciplines have approached similar problems. Some of our fellows have gone on to publish and present on their information literacy initiatives, at times partnering with librarians in this work. In general, this approach to information literacy has resulted in further collaboration and an enhanced view among our teaching faculty of librarians as co-equals, with expertise in information literacy as a field of study.

Applied Learning and Information Literacy Activity Collection

The current Quality Enhancement Plan at our institution focuses on applied learning, and we have looked for ways to partner with our campus’s Office of Applied Learning

on initiatives that tie together information literacy and applied learning. Stephanie was awarded a fellowship in the Office of Applied Learning in the 2019–2020 academic year to develop an extensive suite of thirty applied learning activities focused on individual Framework-based knowledge practices and disciplines that faculty could use in their classes.

She developed this resource using a variety of published and online resources as references and in consultation with an applied learning faculty mentor from the School of Social Work. When complete, the document was added to the library website for use by librarians and teaching faculty. It was also adapted into a Canvas module to become part of a resource and training bank developed by the Office of Applied Learning. She was able to use the resource in a collaboration with faculty in the Sociology department, who asked her for help in developing information literacy content for a set of new applied research courses in their department. The existence of this resource further cemented information literacy as a field in which library faculty have expertise while also demonstrating that liaison librarians can act in a consulting or advisory capacity as opposed to defaulting to a one-shot method of delivery.

Virtual Information Literacy Resource Suite

While our library had an existing collection of virtual information literacy resources, it was not designed as a self-service suite that teaching faculty could easily use. Superfluous vendor videos, outdated content, and confusing video naming conventions made it difficult to easily find a useful resource. After a careful inventory of the collection, we updated outdated videos, removed most links to vendor training, renamed videos, and redesigned the collection's organization. From there, we filled collection gaps with new videos—ones that tended to be bite-sized learning objects focused on a single topic. Instead of one Boolean video, for example, we now have individual videos about *and*, *or*, *not*, truncation, and other related ideas. Finally, we moved all existing videos from YouTube to Screencast* so we could push updated versions of videos without affecting the embed codes or hyperlinks. This change meant that teaching faculty could use our videos with confidence that they will always be up-to-date and functional.

These shorter, more targeted videos supported our second revision step, which was to create new virtual resources that were engaging, multimodal, and scaffolded. To achieve this change, Tammy collaborated with liaison librarians to create Canvas LMS modules and courses. These modules complemented rather than replaced our videos. The modules can effectively scaffold content, structure the learning content across several pages, and intersperse with interactive self-assessments/quizzes. Teaching faculty can download our modules into their own courses from the Canvas Commons and will receive a push notification from the Canvas LMS whenever we update the module.

As a result of this work, we now have an updated self-service suite of virtual information literacy resources that teaching faculty can confidently find and use. Our librarians can also leverage the resources to supplement or replace unnecessary traditional face-to-face instruction.

* Other platforms, such as Vimeo, also support this functionality.

TAKING TRANSFORMATION FORWARD

Working with Faculty

From the beginning, we wanted to transform our teaching faculty's perception of information literacy, how it can be taught, and their role in the development of their student's information literacy skills. We plan to continue this transformation forward through the continued Information Literacy Faculty Fellows program and the evolution of new liaison-faculty partnerships.

The Information Literacy Faculty Fellows program continues to be successful after its fourth year, and we plan to continue the program as long as we have funding to do so. We have learned, however, that an asynchronous virtual model is not as successful—even though it was essential during the COVID-19 pandemic. Faculty got a lot out of the in-person facilitated discussions of previous years, and the 2021 asynchronous discussion boards were not able to foster the same level of engagement. Additionally, without the face-to-face element, some fellows lacked the motivation to actively participate in the program. With that said, there is potential to retain the asynchronous content created for the 2021 program and use it in the future as part of a flipped model that allows more time for discussions. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program is virtual again in spring 2022, and we will include synchronous virtual meetings in an attempt to more closely replicate the successful in-person conversations of years past.

Meanwhile, our liaisons are continuing to come to terms with the limitations of the one-shot, service-based model and to see the value of a more cooperative approach. While some took to it immediately, others have been less comfortable moving outside of their comfort zone. Through the continued curriculum mapping initiative and via lessons we have taken away from the COVID-19 pandemic, we plan to continue to encourage liaisons to push back and suggest other options when warranted. Stephanie has created a model for her liaison areas for how she will provide information literacy instruction for which courses, and we will be encouraging other liaisons to do something similar for their areas. With a continually increasing focus on higher-level faculty research at our institution and a growing student population, liaisons will need to learn how to establish these collaborative relationships to avoid becoming burned out.

Growing and Promoting Resources

A key component in taking transformation forward is refusing to allow the tools and resources that we developed to molder from disuse. By continuing to expand and promote them in our library and on campus, they can make our continued transformation more effective.

Our bank of applied learning information literacy activities continues to be available both in our Office of Applied Learning Canvas repository and on our department's guide to effective library assignments.¹⁶ The next steps are to continue promoting this resource directly to teaching faculty as well as to empower our liaison librarians to leverage the resource bank when suggesting information literacy exercises to teaching faculty, helping to continue to move away from the one-shot model.

Our revised suite of resources continues to grow, with newly created and updated videos and modules being added regularly. To support the growing skillset of our librarians, a new physical space was established in our library for recording video tutorials (including sound dampening, an HD camera, high-definition mic, and a blue screen). To maintain the stability of our Canvas Commons module collection, we developed a procedure for archiving and transferring ownership of modules in the case of an employee leaving the library. Our example serves as a model even outside of our department, as we are called upon to support and consult with our Digital Makerspace and Center for Southeast North Carolina History and Archives to support their video tutorial and Canvas course development.

Transformation in Your Setting

Whether or not you are ready to transform your librarians' instructional identity at your institution, we encourage you to visualize the possibilities. Ask yourself, What can we stop doing? What guiding principles and theories can guide us as we move forward?

Having a strong vision of your desired outcome is key so that you can be responsive and ready to seize the opportunity when catalysts for change occur in your library and on your campus. As you move forward with transforming your team's instructional identity, honestly reflect on the strengths and weaknesses (of individuals, the department, and the library) in order to guide both internal development and the specific outputs/steps that your team will take in order to facilitate change.

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL IDENTITIES

- How familiar are the teaching faculty on your campus with information literacy?
 - If faculty already have a baseline understanding of its importance, they may be more willing to collaborate with you on ways to apply it to their disciplines. If they don't, you might need to work a bit harder to find ways to integrate it into their teaching workflows.
- Is the scholarship of teaching and learning valued on your campus?
 - Faculty may be more interested in a collaboration with you if they can produce research output based on their information literacy-related work. Many disciplines have journals focused on teaching in those fields.
- How empowered do your librarians feel regarding collaborating with teaching faculty?
 - In the same way that teaching faculty are experts in their field, instruction librarians are authorities on information literacy. Encourage your librarians to think of themselves as sharing their expertise rather than providing a service.
- Is your library culture conducive to risk-taking and experimentation?
 - Librarians need to feel safe trying something and supported in making realistic assessments of new projects—they need to be able to acknowledge that something isn't working without being penalized.

- Do you have natural partners on campus that could be willing collaborators in new initiatives?
 - For example, at our institution, our highly valued Center for Teaching Excellence is located in the library and is a strong supporter of library initiatives. We were able to leverage this connection for financial and promotional support for some of this work.

NOTES

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