FYS Library Instruction Report
Fall 2013

This report includes two sections. The first is a summary of the librarians’ reflections on FYS, what worked well and what could be improved. The second summarizes the FYS faculty survey results along with faculty comments.

FYS Student Learning Outcome: Evaluate information using select criteria in order to select the most substantial and appropriate source

Our goal is to reach 100% of FYS classes. We came very close to our goal this year:

- 92% of sections came for library instruction (55 out of 60)
- 92% of instructors requested library instruction (34 out of 37)

Librarians’ Reflections

The librarians want to continue to use a pre-assignment to prepare students for the session. It is a challenge to cover any topic in-depth during a one-shot instruction session, especially when they are 50 minutes. The pre-assignment video and activity at least introduce the students to the concepts discussed in the class. The filter bubble TED Talk has worked well these past two years, but all agree that it’s time to refresh the session with something more up-to-date, for the students’ benefit and also for the librarians, who can begin to experience burnout from teaching multiple sections of the course. The article evaluation activity is still relevant, although there were varying levels of engagement. Some librarians reported that the standard three articles chosen worked well with their classes and others reported that the examples were not relevant due to the nature or timing of the class. For those classes, it is especially important to select more relevant articles to evaluate. One librarian asked students to write down at least one point to share with the class on an index card. At the end of class she asked them to write something they learned that was useful. She felt this made the students more accountable for paying attention and participating during class.

Some challenges still persist, such as faculty expectations. A small number of faculty still want a “library orientation” and more time spent on searching the databases. Many librarians do include a very basic database search, time permitting, but this is difficult to do in the 50-minute classes. The focus of First Year Writing is searching for information, so most students are getting that content elsewhere, but we might consider ways to integrate OneSearch into the session next year. Several visually impaired students had trouble following the session format. The librarians reached out to each student to offer one-on-one assistance after class, but we should keep accessibility in mind as we revamp the sessions for next year.
Faculty Survey

The survey was sent to 37 instructors at the end of the semester and was completed by 20 instructors for a response rate of 54%.

Only 3 out of 20 respondents did not include the TED Talk.

Almost every question was rated “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with just a few exceptions. Overall, instructors were very happy with the content of the sessions and the in-class activity. Many reported that the quality of their students’ sources improved. Several mentioned the challenge of covering the material in one class session, especially the 50 minute session. Some students did not seem to make the connection between the class activity and the research paper requirements, still using many low quality websites. The session seemed to improve their work, but there is a lot more follow up needed. The comments indicate that many students struggle with the transition to college level research requirements. For example:

"I think students need to be challenged even more- while they seemed to understand the distinctions made in the sources, their source choices for the paper were seriously deficient. Somehow they didn't make the connections for the activity to the research."

"The quality of student work didn't meet my expectations. I think this had to do with some basic misunderstandings about what a research project really is. In other words, I think the students believe that research papers are essentially descriptive summaries of existing ideas rather than analytical investigations of a particular problem. The sources the students used were good in nearly every case, but there was a startling lack of originality in the questions they asked. (Most every paper added up to a summary of four or five articles on a particular topic. I would have rather seen the students formulate their own research question more carefully and then put the sources to use in their inquiry.) This is a problem that probably can't be addressed in a session like this and needs work on my end."

Students are definitely struggling with the transition to college level research. They all come with varying degrees of experience. Some have never written a paper before and have never read an academic journal article. Others understand how to select articles for their topics but struggle to integrate and synthesize the information. The librarians have heard similar feedback from First Year Writing faculty. It will take a continued collaborative effort to improve the research and writing skills of our students. One way the librarians plan to contribute to this effort is by developing a workshop on creating high quality information literacy assignments that will guide students through the research process.

During spring 2014 the instruction team will work to revamp the “flipped” portion of the FYS library instruction session. We will have materials ready for the May FYS faculty meeting.

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