FYS Library Instruction Report
Fall 2015

This report includes five sections: 1) a description of the library instruction plan for FYS; 2) a summary of the librarians’ reflections on FYS, what worked well and what could be improved; 3) a summary of the FYS faculty survey results along with faculty comments; 4) a summary of the students’ feedback; 5) recommendations for improvement.

Section 1: Library Instruction Plan
Librarians teach one in-class session, focusing on the common argumentative research paper in which all students are required to use at least “5 substantial sources.” Our goal is for students to become critical consumers of information. After the session students will be able to evaluate information in order to determine if a source is substantial and appropriate for college level research assignments.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students understand how the Internet has created a complex information ecosystem in order to appreciate the need to be critical consumers of information/skeptics

2. Students evaluate sources by considering different types of authority, such as professional status, subject expertise, social position, or special experience in order to determine if a source is credible and appropriate for their information need.

3. Students evaluate sources by considering the type of publication, creation process, purpose, and point of view in order to determine if a source is credible and appropriate for their information need.

4. Students utilize basic library database tools in order to search for scholarly books and journal articles.

Curriculum: Based on ACRL’s Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. Focus on two threshold concepts:

- Authority is constructed and contextual
- Information creation as a process

The FYS student guide used for the pre-assignment and for in-class activities is available online: http://belmont.libguides.com/fys2015

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

- 89% of sections came for library instruction (59 out of 66)
- 87% of instructors requested library instruction (33 out of 38)
Section Two: Librarians’ Reflections

Overall, the librarians were pleased with the changes made to FYS this year, especially the pre-assignment, which seemed to generate more thoughtful discussion about the authoritative nature of information. Using the new Framework for Information Literacy instead of the Standards helped us to move from a skills-based approach to a concept-based approach, and we would like to continue developing this teaching philosophy.

Using a flipped classroom approach works well for the content of FYS because it gives students time to think about the concept of information authority prior to class. Students responded well to the Wikipedia podcast, and most completed the pre-assignment with thoughtful answers. Most librarians were happy with the in-class discussion that followed. Originally, we planned to put students into pairs at the beginning of class so they could share their answers with their neighbors and then report back to the class if they agreed or disagreed. This worked well for some, but others skipped this step and started a class discussion in order to save time, especially in the 50-minute classes. Students have heard for years that they shouldn’t use Wikipedia because they don’t know who wrote it, but the idea of information creation was new to them. The discussion about using original information or something that contributes new knowledge rather than summarized or repackaged information, like from encyclopedia articles, seemed to have an impact on their thinking.

All the librarians want to keep the article evaluation activity in class, but some had more success with the sample articles than others, and some changed the articles, depending on the needs of the class. This year, for the first time, we showed the class an example of a scholarly journal article, pointing out various elements that made it scholarly. In their feedback from last year students said they needed more help evaluating non-scholarly sources, so our activity had them look at websites and articles that varied in quality. Most agreed that this was a good approach, although one librarian preferred including a scholarly source in the activity. Others wished they had more time to talk about how students would use the sources. It is always difficult to select the perfect group of sources to demonstrate the concepts we hope to teach, but we struck a pretty good balance by including an authoritative website like the one from Pew Research Center, and another source illustrated the “study shows” point perfectly.

As in years past, we had little or no time for students to search on their own at the end of class; rather, librarians demonstrated a few searches in OneSearch, showing students how to limit results to scholarly articles. Some mentioned that searching would be the focus of library instruction in First Year Writing and some directed students to the BILS tutorial for more guidance. Although the goal of the class is to teach students to evaluate information, not how to search, students and faculty alike still expect search time from any library instruction session. We need to continue to talk about how to balance expectations with the goals of the class.
Section Three: Faculty Survey

The survey was sent to 33 instructors at the end of the semester and was completed by 21 instructors for a response rate of 64%.

Almost every question was rated “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with just a few exceptions which were both related to the question, “the librarian developed the information literacy session content in consultation with the instructor,” which were rated “Neither Agree or Disagree.” This is not too surprising since we have standardized the content and even the article evaluation activity. Some standardization has become necessary as we near 70 sections, but we should strive to consult with faculty well in advance of class in order to recommend follow up assignments.

Faculty Comments:

- Many faculty reported that library instruction helped to improve the quality of their students’ work.
- Several wished for more search time, so students could search for their own scholarly articles and learn what databases they should use.
- Concepts need to be reinforced with a follow up assignment or additional library session on searching. Several faculty commented that they will follow up more next time.
- Many students reported that the library session was helpful and even scheduled an appointment with a librarian afterwards.
- Many students still used low-quality sources and turned to the Web for most of their research. Demonstrates the need for follow up.
- Some students don’t understand the purpose of an argumentative paper, and some faculty don’t feel comfortable teaching this. One commented that partnering with writing faculty would be helpful.
- Students struggle with citing their sources.

Section Four: Student Feedback

At the end of most classes, students were asked to complete a “One Last Thing!” form and answer two questions. Out of the 707 responses collected, a random sample of 100 was evaluated and categorized by topic.

Question One: What is one thing you learned in this session today?

- 57% mentioned how to evaluate sources to determine if something is substantial
- 39% mentioned the library website, databases, or search techniques
- 3% learned something new about Wikipedia
- 2% reported that they didn’t learn anything new
Question Two: What is one thing that is still unclear?

- 39% said nothing was left unclear
- 15% wanted more instruction on accessing/searching the library’s online resources. Many specifically mentioned how to navigate the website, how to find full text, and how to narrow searches in OneSearch and other databases.
- 21% were still unclear on how to evaluate a source, specifically mentioning how to determine authority, whether a source was edited, and how much time went into creating a source.
- 6% were unclear on whether or not they could use Wikipedia.
- 6% were unclear on how to cite their sources.
- 4% wanted more instruction on the physical library, especially how to find books.

Section Five: Recommendations for Improvement

- Concepts need to be reinforced. Librarians should consult with instructors well in advance of class session to recommend follow up assignments.
- Explore idea of a second library session on searching. This content is currently delivered in FYW. Is it time to change the model?
- Devote more time to the library website and OneSearch. Perhaps follow-up videos with search examples would be helpful as well as citing sources. Revise BILS to address this need and be more intentional about incorporating it into FYS.
- Continue to incorporate the threshold concepts into the discussion, “Authority is constructed and contextual” and “Information Creation as Process,” in order to align with ACRL’s new Information Literacy Framework. Work on talking points, especially with the in-class activity to clarify evaluation criteria.
- Continue to use the flipped classroom technique, using the Wikipedia podcast and open-ended question again.
- Share any student work collected, pre-assignments, in-class, or post-class surveys, with professors.