FYS Library Instruction Report  
Fall 2018

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) action steps going forward.

Section 1: Library Instruction Plan

The goal of the class was for students to become critical consumers of information. Our lesson plan addressed the following student learning outcomes:

- Students will match an information need with an information source
- Students will identify characteristics of peer reviewed journal articles
- Students will evaluate information to determine relevance, authority and bias

We used a “flipped classroom” approach to introduce these concepts. For the pre-assignment, we asked students to go to the “Evaluating Information” tab of the “Research Like a Scholar” LibGuide: [https://belmont.libguides.com/Research/Evaluate](https://belmont.libguides.com/Research/Evaluate) and complete the activities on the page before class. The in-class activity involved group work in which students used various search tools (Google, Google Scholar, OneSearch, etc.) to find information on a sample research question and discussed the credibility and usefulness of the sources they found.

Our curriculum was based on ACRL’s Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education and focused on the threshold concepts

- Authority is constructed and contextual
- Information creation as process
- Research as inquiry

Instruction Statistics

Our goal was to reach 100% of FYS classes. We remained consistent with recent years:

- 88% of sections scheduled library instruction (69 out of 78)
- We saw 1,230 freshmen students out of 1,561 (79%)

Faculty Consultations

Although we’ve always been available to consult with faculty, we have never had very many take us up on the offer. This year we tried a new approach, asking faculty to complete an online form to schedule instruction, and with one question asking if they would like a consultation on research assignment design. Librarians consulted with 6 faculty, all of them new to teaching FYS, to share information about our instruction, to answer questions about FYS in general, and on the argument
paper and other research assignment design. We also updated the “Research Assignment Design” LibGuide to use with the consultations and to share with FYS faculty.

Section Two: Librarians’ Reflections

Overall, the librarians were happy with the lesson and want to continue using it next year, with some minor revisions. Several pointed out that students were more engaged when they used a sample research question that was relevant to the class. Faculty participation is also key. One librarian asked the faculty members to describe their experience with the peer review process to help explain that concept and to set up the activity. Also, the faculty were able to add to the activity by commenting on how students might use particular sources in their papers. There were quite a few requests by faculty to schedule classes while they were out of town. While the librarians understand scheduling issues, we want to make it clear to faculty that the most successful sessions are ones in which the faculty member is present and participates.

One librarian went over evaluative criteria with students before the group activity, while others went over the pre-assignment activities or jumped right in. The focus on usefulness of the information, in addition to credibility, was important. Several groups found good quality sources, even scholarly sources, but that did not really help to answer the research question. It was good to point out that a source can be relevant but not particularly useful. Having groups of students using different search engines works well. Google Scholar is new to many students. One librarian added JSTOR as another search engine when appropriate to the class.

To improve the lesson, one librarian suggested developing a more engaging sample topic, perhaps a current news topic that would resonate with college students. It was also suggested to edit the worksheet to make the assigned search engine more prominent so students would be clear on where they were to search. The flipped approach allows more content to be covered, but the librarians want to continue exploring ways to integrate the lesson into the course, working with the faculty on assignments and other ways we can support students’ research.

Section Three: Faculty Survey

The survey was sent to 52 instructors at the end of the semester and was completed by 19 instructors for a response rate of 37%.

Almost every question was rated “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with just rating of “Neither Agree or Disagree for the questions on the pre-assignment activities and student reaction to the instruction.

Faculty comments:

- It is hard to tell about the student reaction to the session. I did not hear anything negative. It is just sometimes difficult to ascertain the level of engagement. I did feel that it was positive.
- Some of the students commented that it was a lot of information in a short amount of time.
- It is hard to fully engage students on the pre-activity. I think it was effective, and more effective for those who took it seriously.
• The pre-assignment and in-class activity certainly embody pedagogic techniques generally valuable, and I don't mean to sound sour about them and their aims and spirit, but my immediate judgment of them and the student reaction was that a slightly more intense, in-depth, scholarly dive into the most advanced resources and nature of academic research would have been welcomed, and perhaps simply alongside the lighter graphics and hands on exercise.

When asked if the quality of the students’ work met their expectations most faculty said yes, but some gave the following comments:

• The research was better but not fantastic but I believe that was an issue more so with my project than the information in the library session.
• Yes, it did. I do think that it helped some students feel more confident. When I had my individual appointments with students, I went over the process for setting up an appointment with a research librarian, and I stressed the help that such an appointment would be for them!
• They were more knowledgeable and confident in analyzing sources and doing annotated bibliographies.
• Yes, they seemed to really benefit from the library instruction, though one humorously followed up the next class with asking why they cannot cite Wikipedia.
• They are more sure as to where to go to begin and confident in having a sort of checklist for evaluation--so certainly a start to building their genuine confidence of being scholars, something requiring their continued practice, and something that I would like to see promoted by Belmont even more thoroughly beyond FYS (i.e., would love to have your expertise engaged far more throughout our students' educational treks!).
• Yes, they did. I am especially grateful that Lina Sheahan agreed to come back a second time to help reinforce what they learned in the first meeting. They also made individual appointments with her that they said were very helpful.
• Don’t know yet; they turn them in next week. It has been useful for me to refer back to it when asked about the paper assignment, but I’m not sure if they connected it with a purpose. The class with a writing fellow, which has also tended to be more engaged, also seems to have made more of the library session--so it probably isn’t the library session (which I found to be both good and directly on point), but the students that account for the difference.
• Honestly a lot of my students totally forgot everything once it was time to start their research - perhaps there could be an in class exercise where students locate an exemplary primary source for their topic?

Finally, we asked faculty if they scheduled a consultation with a librarian:

• 6 faculty consulted with a librarian to plan the instruction
• All rated “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” on the question, “The consultation was helpful to you in the following ways”:
  o To understand the purpose of the library session and how to integrate it into your course
To help you plan the argument paper into sequenced assignments
To help you choose or design an appropriate follow-up assignment to the library session

Section Four: Student Feedback

At the end of some classes, students were asked to complete a “One Last Thing!” form and answer two questions. Out of the 620 responses collected, 100 were randomly selected to be evaluated and categorized by topic.

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

- 37% mentioned how to evaluate sources to determine if something is substantial
- 23% mentioned how to find sources (OneSearch, Databases, Library website)
- 20% mentioned how to determine bias in information
- 13% mentioned something about peer review or the scholarly publication process
- 5% mentioned how to evaluate authority
- 5% mentioned knowledge of the information cycle
- 6% mentioned Google Scholar
- 3% mentioned how to read and/or use information

Question Two: What is one thing that is still unclear?

- 22% said that nothing was unclear
- 31% said they were still unsure about evaluating information.
- 28% said they were unsure about how to find sources through the library
- 5% said they were unsure about the physical library

The in-class activity seemed to make students pause and re-think how they go about evaluating information, but it also created a lot of uncertainty in students. Many may have left the session with more questions than answers, but this is to be expected. Information evaluation is complex, and there are a lot of gray areas. Students need more opportunities to practice these new skills in order to feel more confident.

Section Five: Action Steps Going Forward

- Share the report with the FYS coordinator
- Look into ways to embed the lesson into Blackboard so that faculty can integrate it more seamlessly into their courses
- Communicate with faculty on the importance of their presence and participation in the class session
• Collaborate with faculty on a SoTL project to investigate effective methods for teaching students to think critically about information.