Strategic Planning: First Steps in Sharing Information Literacy Goals

with Faculty Across Disciplines

Jennifer J. Little and Jane H. Tuten

Abstract: Grounded in a campus-wide strategic planning effort and funded through a campus-wide lottery-based grant, the library at a small state-supported institution began a year long initiative with the primary objective of familiarizing faculty with the concept of information literacy. All librarians facilitated a series of hands-on, discipline-based workshops offered to faculty. The workshops served as the groundwork for the initial steps toward embedding information literacy concepts into the general education curriculum with the majority of classroom faculty participating in one of the workshops by the end of the academic year. This article outlines the history and steps taken in the process.

Keywords: Information literacy, strategic plan, interdisciplinary instruction, library instruction, library workshops

Author Information:
    Jennifer J. Little (MLS, University at Albany), is Senior Assistant Librarian, Coordinator of Instruction, SUNY College at Brockport, Brockport, NY 14420 (address email to: jlittle@brockport.edu).
    Jane H. Tuten (MLS, Pratt Institute) is Associate Professor, Director of the Library, University of South Carolina Aiken, Aiken, SC 29801 (address email to: JaneT@usca.edu).

A strategic planning initiative can provide both an opportunity and a solid structure for the integration of information literacy into the curriculum of an institution. Beginning with a solid understanding of the concept of information literacy and the impact that it can have on faculty and students when integrated into the curriculum, librarians can employ the strategic planning process supported by the administration. Through the utilization of a process involving the entire campus, librarians were able to successfully develop a greater understanding of information literacy among the faculty at large.

The success of the initiative directly correlated with 1) collective commitment to the goals and outcomes developed through the institution's collaborative strategic planning process; 2) funding through external sources and allocated through a competitive internal process to purchase technology; 3) research-based workshop curriculum design; 4) librarian/facilitator training and preparation; and 5) incentives for faculty participation.

Context and History

The incorporation of information literacy standards into the general education requirements is a priority at the University of South Carolina Aiken (USCA), a small-to medium-sized public baccalaureate institution. The concept of integration gained momentum after a library faculty member attended the Association of College and Research Libraries' (ACRL) Information Literacy Immersion Institute and plans began to unfold. Since the campus was involved in a strategic planning effort, the library faculty began a discussion about information literacy and started the process of educating faculty and administrators within the Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC). The Strategic Planning Steering Committee consisted of

representatives from all campus constituencies, with their own agendas, but also with the common goal of mapping a workable and vibrant future for USCA.

While the Library Director served on the SPSC, additional library representation in the planning effort was achieved when working groups were appointed. The Instruction Coordinator (IC) was tapped to serve on the Academic Programs Planning Team (APAT) which was charged with making recommendations with regard to curriculum and programs. A lack of understanding of the concept of information literacy on the part of some faculty and staff who served on the Strategic Planning Steering Committee was the basis for an extended discussion about information literacy utilizing the ACRL *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (2000). The final version of USCA's Strategic Plan (USC Aiken 2003) presented to the campus community charged the campus with developing and implementing an information literacy program.

The goal of establishing and implementing campus standards for information literacy (the ability to locate, evaluate, and use information to become independent life-long learners) in support of USC Aiken's curriculum is specifically stated in USC Aiken's Strategic Plan. Several strategies were utilized to meet this objective. First, a mechanism was be established for a series of discussions of campus standards and the expected performance levels for development and demonstration of information literacy in the General Education curriculum. Library faculty and faculty who deliver the general education curriculum worked together to develop a common core of expectations for students in the general education curriculum: to locate, evaluate, and use information.

Second, a mechanism for a series of discussions of campus standards and expected performance levels for integration of information literacy into the major methods courses was

needed. This discussion would include library faculty and the faculty who regularly teach the

discipline based research methods course with the goal of developing discipline-specific

standards appropriate for the major research methods courses. Thus, with the support of both the

administration and numerous faculty across many disciplines, the project began in fall 2003.

Use of wireless technology in the library and the acquisition of laptops to supplement

library instruction and for patron checkout were goals of the library for a number of years. Space

for the expansion of library computing capability and a shortage of state funding for technology

prevented initiatives that would significantly target computing needs in the library. The majority

of the computing capability offered in the library had been funded through private resources and

grants because annual campus-wide competition for the small pool of money to address

technology needs was significant.

During 2003, South Carolina's Education Lottery (SCEL) established a competitive grant

program targeted to four-year colleges to receive lottery money for technology. USC Aiken

submitted a proposal to establish ubiquitous campus computing, thereby significantly increasing

technology resources on campus. In addition to providing a campus-wide wireless infrastructure

and a series of competitive faculty grants to enhance teaching, the grant included the purchase of

twenty-four wireless laptops and one laptop cart for instruction in a variety of disciplines.

USCA's application for the Ubiquitous Campus Computing grant of $798,000 (USC Aiken

2002) was funded through the SCEL.

The instruction coordinator (IC) also submitted a grant application to the faculty

committee charged with awarding lottery-based grants to individual faculty. Although thirty-two

applications were submitted, the committee funded only twenty granting $3,800 each. The grant

to the library underwrote faculty participation in a series of workshops, and served as a starting

point for the introduction of information literacy to the faculty utilizing the laptops. This was the first step for the incorporation of information literacy into the curriculum.

Targeted outcomes for the grant were:

1. Faculty will demonstrate increased knowledge and searching techniques of library and information resources, thus comprehending the students' need for formal instruction.

2. Faculty will determine where information literacy fits within their classes and will develop partnerships with library faculty and others in their discipline in order to ensure library instruction across the curriculum.

3. Faculty, and, in turn, students, will gain an understanding that information literacy goes beyond basic "computer literacy" to include understanding the form, format, location and access methods of information resources as well as how information is socially situated and produced (scholarly publication processes).

Throughout the 2003-04 academic year, the library hosted information literacy workshops for ten departments on campus reaching a total of ninety-four faculty. During each workshop, two library faculty presented a brief definition of information literacy followed by a discussion of faculty observations and concerns regarding student research skills. Faculty then used both desktop computers and the new wireless laptops to search a topic with which they were unfamiliar, replicating the experiences of beginning students. Librarians taught more complex search strategies using topics within their respective fields and introduced new databases and resources available to faculty via the library web page. At the close of each session, faculty completed a formal assessment of the workshop by answering eight questions on

a Likert-type scale and also submitted comments or suggestions. The results from this assessment affirmed the usefulness of the information for faculty and their classrooms, and served as the impetus for changes in subsequent workshops.

Methodology

During the summer of 2003 the library faculty met together several times to discuss the purpose of the grant and the expectations for each individual. Before the initial meeting, librarians read Shapiro (1996) regarding information literacy as a "liberal art" and an article discussing a similar project at Milwaukee Area Technical College (Mathias and Heser 2002). This meeting included information about the grant, discussion of the articles, and the expectations for each librarian's involvement. After reading several articles, such as those by Cunningham, Level, and Mosley, detailing other successful faculty workshops, the IC created a basic outline and identified the components for each workshop. A PowerPoint presentation introduced the basic definition of information literacy skills, the five major goals from the ALA definition, the parts of the strategic plan, which charged the campus with developing information literacy standards, and the ways in which faculty could incorporate information literacy into classroom and departmental goals. Before the fall semester started, the librarians gathered to practice running the workshop and to receive their department assignments. Librarians were paired with the IC for each of the thirteen departments and schools on campus. The IC contacted each academic unit head via email in order to schedule times most conducive for individual departments. While not every person responded immediately, workshops were scheduled throughout the fall and spring semesters.

The librarians approached the workshops as a chance to create a dialogue between faculty and librarians. Prior to each workshop, a reminder was sent to the department's members pointing them to the information literacy website on the library web page (Little 2003a). Regarding the workshop stipend, faculty could choose to receive twenty-five dollars through payroll or have the money deposited in their travel account. Each workshop was structured in the same manner, with the hands-on portion modified to meet the individual needs of the departments.

The first part of the workshop began with the PowerPoint presentation and a discussion about students' misconceptions regarding information literacy. Several quotes and statistics were shared from OCLC's *White Paper on the Information Habits of College Students* (2002) as well as from Schmersahl's article, which, although somewhat dated, still conveyed the feelings of students today: "We who find libraries so congenial often forget how intimidated many students are by even the smallest academic library, with its floors of stacks, Library of Congress catalogue numbers, ….and armies of librarians" (1987, 287). The librarians also added comments from their observations of students who are helped on a daily basis at the reference desk. Giving examples from reference transactions enabled faculty to see how the role of the librarian mandates teaching. Faculty shared the trends they had seen in students' papers such as poor choice of sources or use of Internet sites only. These often humorous remarks and stories helped to open the discussion with faculty and determined where information literacy skills are included in the curriculum, in both general education and upper division courses.

The next section of the workshop included a search by faculty for an article in a database outside their discipline. Their frustrations mirrored what students experience when asked to

search for articles without prior instruction. After receiving feedback from the first two workshops, librarians added a hands-on search in a database in their discipline.   They then introduced advanced searching strategies and database features.   Faculty enjoyed this part of the workshop because they explored new databases in their field and worked together to improve search strategies. Following the searching time, faculty learned about research guides available from the library web page (evaluating Internet resources, comparing scholarly journals and magazines, and determining whether or not a full-text article is scholarly). Many expressed appreciation for the workshop and asked for sessions to be taught in their classes. The workshop ended with the participants filling out a web-based evaluation form (Little 2003b). The allotted time passed quickly, and most departments engaged in a lively discussion regarding information literacy skills and ways in which students' performance might improve on research assignments.

Results

The library held workshops for the three schools on campus: business, education and nursing, and seven departments: biology/geology, communications, English, history/political science and philosophy, psychology, sociology, and visual and performing arts. While participation from the history/political science/philosophy department was not as high as desired, the IC was pleased with the numbers of faculty who represented each department. (The remaining three departments, mathematics, foreign languages, and chemistry, did not participate.) More than ninety faculty attended, with fifty-one choosing travel stipends, thirty-nine choosing payroll compensation, and four declining any sort of compensation. As the end of the academic year approached, faculty were more likely to choose the payroll option.   However, distribution to the faculty travel funds was much easier than the paperwork required for payroll. Librarians are also included in this figure, as each earned a prorated stipend based on the number

of workshops they led.   The IC received the remaining amount as compensation for the extra

work and hours spent working on the project. Because the IC had emailed only the academic

unit heads, librarians were dependent on their support of the workshop in motivating their

professors to attend. In hindsight, the IC should have contacted other members of the

departments when the unit head did not respond. The participation rate was directly correlated to

the monetary incentives.

The feedback received via an evaluation form was overwhelmingly positive. Table 1 lists

both the evaluation form questions and results.

TABLE 1. Evaluation Form and Results

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The purpose of the workshop was clear.	71.1	28.9	0	0	0
2. The amount of material presented was appropriate for the time period.	71.1	27.7	1.2	0	0
3. The workshop content was related to my teaching needs.	66.3	31.3	2.4	0	0
4. I understood the organization and the subject matter of the workshop.	71.1	28.9	0	0	0
5. I will be able to apply some of the information to my classroom teaching.	72.3	25.3	2.4	0	0
6. There was enough time for hands-practice during the workshop.	54.2	37.3	8.4	0	0
7. The overall quality of the workshop was excellent.	63.9	34.9	1.2	0	0
8. What was the most helpful aspect of the workshop? What was the least helpful? What suggestions do you have for improving the workshop?					

N=83
Numbers indicate percentages.
Note: Question #8 was an open ended question with many results discussed in the paper.
Not every participant completed the survey at the end as it was optional, or they had left early.

For the seven evaluation form questions rated on a Lickert scale, at least 90% of faculty

responded with "Strongly agree" or "Agree" for each item. The greatest variance occurred with

the sixth question; only 54% marked "Strongly agree" while 37% chose "Agree." Many

emphasized this lack of time in the open ended questions as well. Question five received the

highest "Strongly agree" rating at 72%.   Three other questions received a "Strongly agree"

rating over 70%.

The three open-ended questions helped us to understand faculty needs and questions more fully. In response to librarians' request for suggestions for improvement, faculty wrote, "Make it longer. The lack of research and writing skills is very important and often overlooked problem on this campus. We should begin a crusade!" Others were not quite as humorous but did indicate the pressures faculty feel on their schedule: "Having more time on the part of the participants. Our schedules are so tight it is tough to find the time needed for this excellent workshop." Librarians were encouraged by comments from faculty who learned new ways to incorporate information literacy into their own classrooms. When asked which section was most useful, two faculty wrote: "Understanding the need to help students differentiate between 'internet and database searching' " and "Learning the definition and meaning of information literacy was very helpful. It was also useful to do the hands-on practice. I did learn a bunch, so I'm most appreciative. I also found myself thinking about ways to incorporate info literacy into our department goals." Some participants concluded that the least useful aspects were the definition of information literacy in the beginning and the lack of time to ask questions specific to individuals' needs.

Discussion/Assessment of the Results

In assessing the proposed outcomes goals, insight was gained from faculty comments, statistics of classes taught, and increased use of individual databases. Faculty gained an increased knowledge about the library which was the goal for the first outcome. Over forty wrote specifically about new database knowledge; over twenty five said that the most useful part of the workshop was the hands-on segment. Many said they would like to see more workshops of a similar nature offered. On a specific note a significant increase was seen in the number of JSTOR searches as well as faculty requirements for students to use "library" databases.

In response to the second learning outcome to determine where information literacy fit into the curriculum and to develop partnerships with faculty, requests for instruction increased by 25%. Faculty who had never requested instruction integrated it into their class schedule during the academic year (from the business, education, English, communication, history, psychology, and sociology departments). Faculty from two departments (visual and performing arts and nursing) indicated that they had not known about scheduling library instruction sessions but would do so in the future. Both departments did include library sessions in a subsequent year. Librarians experienced a stronger collegiality with departments because of the intentional and non-threatening interaction.

The IC served on the first year experience committee which made recommendations for the first year experience program and revised parts of the curriculum for the current one hour first year seminar. USC Aiken recently hired a First Year Experience program director who embraces the information literacy concept and its importance to students. Prior to fall 2005, the seminar did not introduce the library; however, the director and librarians piloted a new library scavenger hunt for the students, which was revised during the summer of 2006 and reaches almost 300 students in fifteen sections.

The third outcome is perhaps the hardest to measure and the one which requires continuous work and collaboration. Most faculty agreed that students should learn basic skills in English 101 (USCA's freshman English class). However, not every section of English 101 enters the library or receives formal instruction in basic information literacy. The IC met with the English department several times to examine their departmental goals for information literacy. The IC has already tapped into measuring standards in English 101 classes by using pre and post-tests with two sample classes. Student comments from those classes indicated a stronger grasp

of information retrieval and knowledge of library resources. The biology, English, and history departments had functioning upper level research courses incorporating information literacy goals which pleasantly surprised us. As a result of the workshop, the communications faculty try to include some type of library component in each course. They also recently added a course, Communications Colloquium, which includes a large research component and a lengthy annotated bibliography. The business and nursing departments indicated they would continue to explore avenues for the inclusion of information literacy in their upper division classes. Finally, a new honors course, Interdisciplinary Inquiry, incorporated a substantial information literacy component.

Future Goals

Although the workshops were "completed" in one academic year, the library hopes to offer a faculty workshop once or twice a year for those interested. Library participation in the new faculty orientation each fall had dwindled, but a workshop was added to the official schedule in 2005-2006. Because the participation rate was so high, the priority rests now in targeting new faculty and continuing to dialog with faculty in each department. Librarians have held additional workshops without incentives other than refreshments. The library faculty continue to work in English 101 and the first year seminar by examining assessment goals and objectives and trying to find a way to measure them effectively. Current efforts specifically target education and nursing.

Conclusions

Overall, the laptop initiative combined with the faculty workshops was a successful venture. As the University of South Carolina Aiken moves forward with the revision of the general education goals and outcomes, library faculty have the opportunity to infuse information

literacy goals into campus standards for students. As a member of the academic assessment committee, the IC has had the opportunity to work individually with departments as they worked on refining their program goals and objectives. Small strides have been made in nursing, sociology, and biology where objectives resembling information literacy ones are articulated. Several departments surprisingly had literacy goals in their major methods courses, although they were not articulated as well as might be hoped. The library's outreach efforts to all faculty, students, and staff continue as librarians work with professors who had never requested library instruction, in general conversations with faculty, and in web page and publication efforts.

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