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Information Literacy at Johnson & Wales University 2011-2012

Ariela McCaffrey

Johnson & Wales University - Providence, amccaffrey@jwu.edu

Lori Micho

Johnson & Wales University - Denver, lmicho@jwu.edu

Nicole Covone

Johnson & Wales University - Florida Campus, NCovone@jwu.edu

Joe Eshleman

Johnson & Wales University - Charlotte, jeshleman@jwu.edu

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Information Literacy at Johnson & Wales University

2011-2012

Joe Eshleman

Overview

In the summer of 2011, the JWU Library Guidelines for Excellence in Teaching were created. Some initiatives came about during that process:

- Create a document which has six key elements of effective library instruction that can be used as a practical guideline for current and future library instructors.
- Define an area within ScholarsArchive@JWU which would hold documentation for JWU Library Guidelines for Excellence in Teaching
- Work towards a physical meeting of instruction librarians from all campuses

Each of these initiatives was met and the documentation is provided here. Ariela McCaffrey created the document “Six key elements of effective library instruction”. Instruction librarians will share information using External Shared Folders instead of Scholar’s Archive since all of the Campuses do not have access. The instruction librarians (Lori Micho, Nicole Covone, Ariela McCaffrey, Joe Eshleman) met during the summer of 2012 and created a document that reviews that meeting and some further initiatives moving forward.

JWU Library Guidelines for Excellence in Teaching: Building and sustaining excellence in librarian-led instruction

Purpose: Develop, evaluate and support personnel who provide library instruction

Overview

This initial document details some ideas and thoughts related to the development of librarians who instruct at the four Johnson & Wales University campuses. A group of five librarians at the four campuses developed the document; Amanda Samland, Ariela McCaffrey, Nicole Covone, Lisa Spicola, and Joe Eshleman. Seven aspects of library instruction are addressed as well as ideas for the application of the guidelines. Finally, next steps towards application of the guidelines are listed.

Effective library instruction

Creating a definition and standards for effective library instruction at Johnson & Wales should take into consideration the unique educational culture the campuses provide for their students. Using the *Standards for Proficiencies for Instruction Librarians and Coordinators: A Practical Guide* created by The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) as a template, the core proficiencies that come to the forefront include an awareness of different learning styles, as well as understanding student assignments and the role of the library in completing these assignments. In addition, proficiencies outlined in the *JWU Competency Model* should also be considered. The *JWU Competency Model* focuses on displaying effective communications and teamwork skills, and individuals need to “focus on quality and improving performance in measurable ways”.

Primary goals of library instruction include assisting learners in assessing their own information needs, differentiating among sources of information and developing skills to effectively identify, locate, and evaluate sources. Another current concern is an understanding of how students gain access to information, for example, mobile technologies and online learning continue to grow and we must be aware of these access trends. A common refrain heard by our group is that effective library instruction connects class assignments to library resources rather than just presenting them without an understood project or paper goal for students. This tactic does take more preparation and work than a presentation that solely focuses on a review and use of library resources. This approach also underscores the need for instruction librarians to work cooperatively with faculty. Lastly, students should be aware of practical learning objectives during the instruction sessions.

Expanded and detailed information about the ACRL document [can be found online](#)

Key elements of effective teaching

The general time limitations of non-credit, “one-shot” library instruction sessions create their own set of challenges. Effective teaching can be defined as the creation of a

learner-centered teaching environment using active and collaborative learning activities, and addressing different learning styles, language abilities, developmental skills, age groups, and the diverse needs of student learners. Because Johnson & Wales has a diverse international student population, these factors need to be addressed in conjunction with cultural differences. Furthermore, effective teaching builds upon students' prior knowledge and encourages critical thinking. Effective teaching also includes utilizing appropriate evaluation methods for gauging student understanding of content, use of content, and attitude. Another element to consider is assessing the student's understanding of the value of improving their information skills in the classroom and in daily life

Evaluation of library instructors

A combination of peer review, self-assessment, and supervisory review would generate a broader picture of library instruction for evaluation than just one type, if that is feasible. The creation of a library instruction rubric which would cover the proficiencies outlined above would help to achieve a consistent way to evaluate library instructors. Specific suggestions here include performing a campus-specific SWOT analysis of the instruction program and developing a library instruction self-assessment document.

Standards for New Instructors

An informal online review of job qualifications for posted commensurable positions show that requirements include "1-3 years experience in library instruction and reference, preferably in an academic library" or "demonstrated ability to design, organize and teach instruction sessions". Completion of a graduate-level course in information literacy instruction or related certification should also be weighed. The group agrees that the hiring process should include a portion where the interviewee teaches a library instruction class to the search committee or possibly a group of students, although this is not the only criteria by which the candidate is to be measured. To create consistency across campuses, a teaching demonstration rating scale could be created to use during the interview process.

The Scholars Archive at JWU could act as a repository for documents which could be used for new instructors to access for library teaching standards. Such documents might include ACRL standards, [Best Practices for Library Instruction](#), video examples of excellent library teaching, video tutorials, and this document.

Standard training and preparation of new instructor hires

A number of training methods could be employed. These could include mentors, opportunities to observe others and to co-teach, instructional training in the form of printed materials, in person or online workshops. If we are able to create an annual meeting with JWU instruction librarians, perhaps it could be mandatory for a new hire to attend.

Standards for continuing education of library instructors

From the ACRL *Guidelines for Instruction Programs in Academic Libraries*: Support for continuing professional development helps to establish an atmosphere conducive to innovation and high morale. It is recommended that the library:

- Provide a structured program for orientation and training of new instruction personnel
- Develop a program of continuing education or make available continuing education opportunities (ACRL's Instruction Section: Professional Education Committee [provides a list](#))
- Whenever appropriate, identify opportunities for release time for staff to engage in continuing education and/or project development in technology applications, surveys, and other instruction-related projects.
- A meeting of Instruction Librarian staff from all four Campuses would be beneficial. Perhaps it could take the form of a summer type of retreat with an exchange of ideas and best practices which could be similar to ACRL's Immersion program.

Standards for library instructor communication with faculty

Standards for Proficiencies for Instruction Librarians and Coordinators defines standards for library instructor/faculty communication. In order to effectively “integrate appropriate information literacy competencies, concepts, and skills into library instruction sessions, assignments, and course content”, communication with faculty is imperative. Instructors also need to collaborate with faculty in planning and implementing customized instruction within a specific discipline. Until Campus –wide standards are defined; instruction librarians should follow procedures for communicating with faculty which are most effective for their specific campus. One facilitator for continuing improved communication would be to invite a faculty member from one campus each year to the annual meeting of Instruction Librarian staff.

Application of Guidelines

In keeping with JWU's standards for “outcomes assessment”, the library's information literacy instruction program and pedagogy should be evaluated and refined on a continual basis. The group has decided that any librarian who teaches would be subject to the guidelines that deal with instruction itself. How the guidelines would be implemented and reinforced has not yet been determined.

6 Key Elements of Effective Library Instruction

A practical guide for current and future library instructors at Johnson & Wales

Creating standards for effective library instruction at Johnson & Wales should take into consideration the unique educational culture the campuses provide for their students. Using the *Standards for Proficiencies for Instruction Librarians and Coordinators: A Practical Guide* created by The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) as a template, the core proficiencies are outlined here.

1. Effective Teaching

Librarian instructors:

- a. Create a student-centered teaching environment using active and collaborative learning activities to keep students engaged and ensure retention of knowledge and skills
- b. Differentiate learning by using instructional resources that address the preferences of visual, auditory, read/write, and kinetic learners
- c. Address the needs of the diverse student population
 - Use appropriate and clear language
 - Avoid idiomatic expressions and jargon
 - Respect cultural differences and developmental needs
- d. Build upon students' prior knowledge
- e. Encourage critical thinking
- f. Utilize instructional strategies proven to be effective (Marzano, 2003)
 - Identifying similarities and differences
 - Summarizing and note taking
 - Nonlinguistic representations
 - Cooperative learning
 - Setting objectives and providing feedback
 - Questions, cues and advance organizers

2. Communication and Teamwork

Librarian instructors:

- a. Work collaboratively with the Library Instruction Coordinator and/or individual faculty in order to understand student assignments and the role of the library in completing these assignments.
- b. Work collaboratively with the library instructors at their respective campuses for peer evaluation, best practices, and shared lesson plans and activities

3. **Assessment**

Librarian instructors:

- a. Use formative assessments techniques to check for understanding at the time of contact with students
- b. Use summative assessments to gauge student understanding of content, use of content, and retention
- c. Use surveys, questionnaires and one-minute papers to provide subjective information and attitude about library instruction and information literacy skills
- d. Evaluate effective instruction by librarians through peer assessment, self-assessment, and videotaping lessons for later review

4. **Clear Goals & Objectives**

Librarian instructors:

- a. Focus on the primary goals of information literacy that include helping students determine their own information needs, differentiating among sources of information, and developing skills to effectively identify, locate, and evaluate sources
- b. Write clearly stated, practical objectives that focus lesson plans and ensure assessable learning outcomes
- c. Inform students of learning objectives before each session
- d. Use Bloom's taxonomy when writing objectives to address multiple levels of learning

5. **Authentic Learning**

Librarian instructors:

- a. Connect library instruction to class assignments
- b. Connect library instruction to course objectives
- c. Make students aware of the practical uses of information literacy in their careers, personal lives, and for lifelong learning

6. **New Trends**

Librarian instructors:

- a. Conduct focus groups and survey students to better understand how students gain access to information through mobile technologies and online learning
- b. Participate in professional development in order to learn about new trends and innovations in teaching and learning

References

Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, Va: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Overview of Information Literacy at JWU Campuses:

Initiatives from information Literacy Retreat – June 12-15, 2012

Lori Micho, Nicole Covone, Ariela McCaffrey, Joe Eshleman

Pedagogy

After spending some time accumulating information about our respective Information Literacy efforts and having the opportunity to discuss them with each other, there appears to be a fair amount of consistency in how we teach our library instruction. Minimal lecture time is supplemented with hands on activities and the primary focus in the majority of the one-shot sessions is helping students complete a current research assignment.

The initiative that we came up with as a group here was working more with upper class students and designing a tiered information literacy strategy which delineates lower division and upper division course objectives. A template document is provided below (from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro).

Outreach

There is a desire to either initiate or continue to develop a library presence in online learning and also to meet students at the point of need with tutorials. Each member of the group felt positive about the upcoming changes brought on by the General Education Committee and the goal to implement Information Literacy as an Essential Learning Outcome.

We agreed that continuing to communicate about our own Campus Information Literacy efforts to each other and share resources was important and the way to support that Outreach effort could initially be done using External Shared library folders rather than Scholar's Archive.

Assessment

In this category, from Campus to Campus, there is the greatest variance.

To help with this, we decided to attempt to implement Denver's Assessment solution, TRAILS across all Campuses' beginning with the winter 2012 term.

Learning Outcomes for Information Literacy

	Beginning Outcome	Intermediate Outcome	Advanced Outcome
Determine the extent of information needed	1.1 Identify an information need		
	1.2 Define an appropriate research question	2.2 Construct a research question appropriate for the discipline	3.2 Refine the research question based on existing information; Construct a research question of appropriate scope based on existing information
Access the needed information	1.3 Choose keywords that retrieve relevant information	2.3 Apply vocabulary appropriate to the discipline	3.3 Apply controlled vocabulary to retrieve relevant results as appropriate
	1.4 Apply the search connector AND to combine keywords	2.4 Apply the search connector OR to broaden a search	
	1.5 Select relevant books, articles, reference materials, etc.	2.5 Identify appropriate subject-specific databases to find relevant information	3.5 Identify the core journals or resources in their specialization
	1.6 Identify appropriate virtual, human and physical information resources and services	2.6 Identify subject specialist for the major field	
Evaluate information and its sources critically	1.7 Distinguish between scholarly and popular articles	2.7 Distinguish between primary and secondary sources where appropriate	3.7 Evaluate the credentials of an author and/or publisher
	1.8 Evaluate websites for appropriateness as information sources	2.8 Evaluate articles and websites for authority, accuracy, currency, coverage and objectivity	
Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose	1.9 Communicates information from sources for a specific purpose	2.9 Communicates and organizes information from a variety of sources for a specific purpose	3.9 Communicates, organizes and synthesizes information from sources to fully achieve a specific purpose.
Access and use information ethically and legally	1.10 Apply the proper citation style to document sources	2.10 Apply the standard citation style for the major discipline appropriately	