Instruction @ the URI Libraries   Public Services

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Assessing Students' Information Literacy (IL) Competency
New rubric developed through interdisciplinary faculty collaboration

Have you ever wondered how information literate your students really are? Do you know if they "get it" when you ask them to find and evaluate or analyze information sources for the projects, presentations and papers that you assign to them in your courses? Do they swim through library databases, expertly ride the zip-line through Google, and deep-dive the library catalog? Or, do you question why they don't go the extra mile to find the type and quality of information sources you hoped to see in their work?

The University Libraries, working with a total of 13 faculty from six colleges and Elaine Finan, of SLOAA, and Bette Erickson and Heather Johnson, of Instructional Development, have developed an Information Literacy Rubric that can be used as a tool to help you identify and assess student competency in finding, evaluating and using information sources.

The Information Literacy Rubric http://www.uri.edu/assessment/uri/guidance/documents/URI_IL_Rubric.pdf includes five IL learning outcomes with three levels of competency for each outcome. The rubric can be used to measure beginning, approaching, and competent levels of information literacy. Instructors may focus on one learning outcome for an exercise or homework practice assignment, or apply several outcomes to a more complex assignment or project.

For more information about how to support students' information literacy competency, and how to use the rubric to measure this crucial skill please contact Prof. Mary MacDonald, Head of Instructional Services at marymac@uri.edu

Suggestions for Using the IL Rubric for Assessment of IL

- Focus on one or more IL outcomes
- Discuss rubric application with librarian(s)
- Share rubric with students before assignment
- Prepare students for IL success
- Direct students to InfoRhode tutorials

Information Literacy (IL) for Engineering: A Scaffolded Approach

All incoming Engineering students take EGR 105: Foundations of Engineering I. As part of the course, students attend a 50-minute lecture and participate in a 75-minute library instruction lab (with an attached assignment that forms part of the final grade). This improves student success in early courses outside of their major, and keeps them on a par with students in other degree programs, even though Engineering students do not typically use their library skills in Engineering assignments until their Senior year.

To address this gap, "booster sessions" were added to most Engineering Capstone Design Seminars in 2011. These sessions added 30- to 50-minutes of IL instruction designed to reacquaint the students with Engineering-specific research techniques and resources. Graduate student-specific IL sessions have also been held for most of the incoming graduate students in Engineering.

Plans for the future include expanding the booster sessions, working to incorporate more IL opportunities for graduate students, and refining and expanding assessment efforts, to produce information literate Engineering graduates able to function in an information-rich professional or academic environment.

Associate Professor Peter Larsen, plarsen@uri.edu

By the Numbers
In Spring 2013...

137 LIB120 and LIB 220 students learned to conduct college level information research through the exploration and practice of information literacy concepts and skills.

973 WRT 104 and 106 students came to the library for an introduction to finding articles.

632 students in 30 additional classes attended library instruction sessions targeted to the information research needs of their classes.

Related Updates
New Electronic Resources

At the beginning of the new fiscal year, the Libraries are able to provide access to new subscriptions to electronic resources. To learn about the latest acquisitions and subscriptions, head to our New E-Resources LibGuide at http://uri.libguides.com/neweresources. Research and article databases are added to our standing lists, and ebooks and journal package subscriptions are integrated into the HELIN catalog.

Current Examples of Academic Misconduct

The Retraction Watch blog is not new, but it provides current and timely examples of academic misconduct that can be useful pedagogical tools. Recent posts include "Plagiarism: It's just an 'approach' to writing papers, right?" and "Oh, the irony: Business ethics journal paper retracted for plagiarism." Written in a conversational style, these reports can spur lively discussion. For more, see http://retractionwatch.wordpress.com/.