

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

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Abstract

This chapter presents the main premise of this book: that information literacy efforts need to address the ways that information is used in various learning contexts. Informed learning, which emphasizes “learning” as the key outcome of using information, is suggested as a more appropriate approach for addressing information literacy in higher education. The chapter outlines the three parts of this book. Part 1 focuses on the need for information literacy efforts to focus on enabling students to learn to use information as part of engaging with course content. Part 2 describes how academic librarians at Purdue University have adopted an informed learning approach to integrating information literacy into courses when participating in a course redesign program. Part 3 offers three essential elements that may guide academic librarians' informed learning efforts at other campuses.

Keywords: Information literacy, Informed learning, Higher education, Academic librarians, Educational initiatives.

In the report that famously introduced the concept of information literacy, [Zukowski \(1974\)](#) concluded with a call for education for “...all citizens in the use of the information tools now available as well as those in the development...” (p. 27). Heeding this call, academic libraries have taken the lead in creating information literacy programming on higher education campuses. Over the last several decades, academic libraries have expanded their educational role by

developing information literacy curricula and new positions and policies. Academic librarians have cultivated new professional skills related to pedagogy, instructional design, and assessment. In the United States, this work has largely been guided by the Association for College and Research Libraries (ACRL) through their efforts to define information literacy (ACRL, 2000, 2015), and support academic libraries in developing programs (ACRL, 2000, 2003). A testament to the efforts of the library community, today information literacy is included in educational standards documents across the Western industrialized world (Bradley, 2013).

In spite of these achievements, the academic library community currently faces major challenges in advancing information literacy in higher education. Guided largely by ACRL, academic libraries adopted a definition of information literacy that emphasizes discrete information skills. Typically taught by academic librarians, the information skills approach to information literacy in higher education focuses on creating learning activities and courses to cover the new content of information skills. An information literacy course taught as part of a general education curriculum may have students learn to search databases, recognize types of information (e.g., peer-reviewed articles, news, government documents), evaluate sources by specific criteria, and properly cite sources. In learning specific information skills, academic libraries' efforts do not encompass important educational aims, such as teaching students to use information within disciplinary contexts, or making students aware of the social and political aspects of information production and use.

New models have been proposed that place the learning of information skills and concepts into broader contexts. ACRL's (2015) *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* is one such model intended to address some of these concerns. For example, the *Framework* emphasizes communal aspects of scholarship, extending evaluative criteria to have learners consider how a community construes the authority of a piece of information. However, other new models go further, calling for a closer connection between information literacy and the societal or professional learning goals that are part of a higher education curriculum (e.g., Bruce, 2008; Lloyd, 2010; Whitworth, 2014). Accomplishing this requires that students use information within the broader learning context of the disciplinary classroom. As such, these

approaches require changes to the current higher education information literacy practices developed by academic libraries.

Drawing from information literacy scholarship, the argument set forth in this book is that academic libraries need to reconceptualize information literacy to make it central to their institution's mission for learning. Rather than thinking of it as a set of prescribed information skills that students must acquire, informed learning (Bruce, 2008) is an approach that emphasizes “learning” as the key outcome of using information. This approach is a more appropriate guide to fostering information literacy outcomes in higher education. Recognizing that what students are able to learn is influenced by how students use information when learning (Maybee, Bruce, Lupton, & Rebmann, 2017), informed learning focuses on having students engage with information intentionally (Bruce, 2008). For example, a teacher of a language and gender course who was frustrated with students finding sources that aligned with their preexisting views of a topic decided to have the students trace the scholarly literature to map the evolution of a the topic (Maybee et al., 2017). In line with the teacher's goals for learning, changing how they used information allowed the students to learn different things about the topic they chose to investigate than if they had been assigned the typical research paper.

Adopting an informed learning perspective in higher education would require changing how we approach information literacy education. Academic librarians, with their knowledge of how information is used to learn in higher education learning environments, would continue to be key actors in developing information literacy education. However, they would need to work more closely with classroom teachers to advocate for, and design, learning experiences that integrate information literacy into course curricula.

Illuminating the need for changes in how academic libraries approach information literacy, this book also provides an example, outlining how the Purdue University Libraries adopt such an approach to integrate information literacy into undergraduate courses on their campus. Purdue is a large research university in the Midwestern United States, with over 30,000 undergraduate students and 9000 graduate students. Purdue Libraries is part of a group that spearheaded “Instruction Matters: Purdue Academic Course Transformation” (IMPACT), an initiative to redesign large foundational courses to

make them more student-centered, by shifting away from a lecture-based model to create learning environments in which students are actively and fully engaged (Barr & Tagg, 1995). Across thirteen weekly meetings, teachers work with librarians, instructional designers, and technologists to make courses more active and engaging. Correlated with a small, but statically significant, increase in grades, 79.4% of the 225 courses redesigned between 2011 and 2016 were perceived by students to be student-centered.

In addition to fostering student-centered learning, Purdue Libraries recognizes that the IMPACT program provides an opportunity to integrate information literacy into foundational courses. Rather than advocating the value of information skills generally, librarians work with teachers in IMPACT to identify how learning to use information in specific ways fosters content learning outcomes. This book outlines a number of key aspects of advancing the integration of information literacy used by Purdue librarians when working with the teachers participating in IMPACT.

Teaching and learning initiatives such as IMPACT, where higher education teachers are applying new pedagogic ideas to course curricula, provide tremendous opportunities for academic librarians to advance informed learning. For example, a statistics teacher who participated in the IMPACT program worked with a librarian and an information technologist to design an assignment in which students evaluate statistics they encounter in the news. To encourage the application of critical evaluation in real-life settings, the assignment has students discuss their conclusions with other students in posts to a Facebook-like social media tool (Gundlach, Maybee, & O'Shea, 2015). A technology teacher worked with a librarian to have students engage with information from both scholarly articles and original research data to inform their designs. While both are examples of informed learning, the first draws disciplinary methods of evaluating information into an everyday situation (Facebook discussions), while the second example prepares students to use information as they might in their future professional lives.

Drawing from Purdue Libraries' experiences of partnering with teachers in the IMPACT program, the book outlines an approach that academic librarians can use to integrate information literacy into

course curricula on their campuses. Adopting the approach described throughout this book will place academic libraries' information literacy efforts in a central role in contributing to the societal and professional learning goals being called for in higher education.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

This book is for information literacy librarians, researchers, and teachers who are interested in addressing the situated and critical aspects of information literacy in formal educational settings. Grounded in scholarship, the book provides an approach to guide academic libraries' efforts to integrate information literacy into higher education curricula. Drawing from efforts to integrate information literacy into course curricula through involvement in an innovative teaching and learning initiative, the book offers practical guidance concerning how to advance this approach in higher education. With the greater goal of empowering higher education students to use information to learn and accomplish things within the various contexts in which they work and live, the book aims to inform information literacy practices in higher education.

1.2 STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

This book is comprised of three parts. Part 1 describes the need for information literacy education to allow students to practice using information in the contexts in which they are learning. It proposes teaching and learning initiatives as a target for librarians to focus their efforts to integrate information literacy into course curricula. To provide an example of how academic libraries can leverage such initiatives to integrate information literacy into disciplinary courses, Part 2 describes Purdue Libraries' partnership to create a course redesign program to foster student-centered learning that integrates information literacy into courses. Part 3 draws from lessons learned from the Purdue Libraries' experiences with the IMPACT program to offer three essential elements to guide efforts to integrate information literacy into the disciplinary classroom. This part also outlines the development needed for academic librarians to support them in the pursuit of such efforts.

1.2.1 Part 1: Fostering Learning Through Librarianship

Part 1 sets the stage for the second and third parts of the book by drawing from scholarship to outline ways to advance information literacy in higher education. [Chapter 2](#) examines information literacy education and research, suggesting that current information literacy practices in higher education overemphasize learning discrete information skills at the expense of students practicing using information in specific contexts. Informed learning, an approach developed by [Christine Bruce \(2008\)](#), is presented as an alternative to the current information literacy practices in higher education. Viewing learning as a major outcome of using information, informed learning offers a pedagogic approach that enables the creation of learning environments in which students become aware of new ways of using information within the context of learning in a disciplinary course.

[Chapter 3](#) outlines how teaching and learning initiatives on college and university campuses provide opportunities for academic librarians to work to integrate information literacy into course curricula. The chapter also highlights aspects of collaboration that can support academic librarians in their efforts to integrate information literacy into courses using an informed learning approach.

1.2.2 Part 2: Course Development at Purdue: A Case for Fostering Learning Through Information Literacy

Part 2 describes Purdue Libraries' involvement in the IMPACT program, an educational initiative at Purdue that focuses on creating transformative learning experiences for undergraduate students. The purpose of Part 2 is to offer an example of how academic libraries can integrate information literacy into disciplinary courses. Each chapter in Part 2 of this book contains a profile written by a librarian or classroom teacher, in which they describe their experience working with the IMPACT program.

[Chapter 4](#) provides an overview of IMPACT, describes Purdue Libraries' interest, and aims in participating in the creation and development of the program. It also outlines the role of individual librarians as team members working with classroom teachers and staff from other units at Purdue to redesign courses. [Chapter 5](#) describes

the approach Purdue librarians have taken in their work on IMPACT teams, recognizing the need not to advocate for information literacy until a pedagogic issue is identified in which learning may be enhanced by students using information more intentionally. Librarians' efforts are supported through the use of the backward design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), an instructional design model that provides a shared structure to discuss aspects of the course.

Chapter 6 describes classroom teachers' views of information literacy, including the findings from a study conducted at Purdue of teachers who had completed the IMPACT program. The teachers in the study reported having students use information, either in general or discipline-specific ways, to learn about course content. Chapter 7 provides vignettes highlighting partnerships among teachers, librarians, and others to create informed learning in courses redesigned through the IMPACT program. Three of the four vignettes outline informed learning assignments, such as a statistical literacy course in which students critically discuss statistical information found in the news, and changes to an assignment in a biology course designed to make information literacy more relevant to students. The chapter concludes with a description of a new research project conducted at Purdue to determine the relationship between information literacy, student perceptions of motivation, and course grades.

Chapter 8 outlines how librarians have drawn from educational theories and models they are introduced to through their work in the IMPACT program to develop new information literacy tools. The last chapter in Part 2, Chapter 9 outlines lessons learned from Purdue Libraries' participation in the IMPACT program. One lesson learned was that advocating for information literacy in and of itself is unproductive. The second lesson learned was that integrating information literacy into courses required that the librarians focus on issues or challenges faced by a classroom teacher, and when appropriate, introduce information literacy as a potential solution. The third lesson learned was that the librarians participating in IMPACT teams needed to be open to a broad range of possible ways that a teacher and students might construe what is useful information and how it may be used in the learning process.

1.2.3 Part 3: Reenvisioning Information Literacy Education

Part 3 focuses on applying the ideas introduced in Parts 1 and 2 to advance the integration of information literacy into course curricula at other institutions. [Chapter 10](#) introduces three essentials for working with departments and faculty to integrate information literacy into courses. The first of the three is that academic librarians must focus on student learning when working with classroom teachers to integrate information literacy. The second is targeting high-profile educational initiatives as a place where teachers may be open to new educational ideas, such as information literacy. Lastly, academic librarians should use consulting approaches that focus on creating shared goals when partnering to integrate information literacy into course curricula.

[Chapter 11](#) outlines the knowledge and skills required by academic librarians to participate in educational initiatives on their campuses. Existing professional development options are identified as possible ways of bridging potential gaps. [Chapter 12](#) concludes the book with a call to change information literacy practices in higher education by adopting an informed learning approach utilizing the strategies outlined in the previous chapters.

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