

CHAPTER 10

Three Essentials for Integrating Information Literacy

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Abstract

This chapter describes three key elements necessary for advancing an informed learning approach. First, information literacy needs to be viewed as part of learning. When information literacy is understood to be part of learning, it follows that it needs to be integrated into courses in a way that allows students to use information to learn course content. To integrate information literacy into curricula, academic librarians must partner with teachers, who are able to make changes to courses. To locate teachers receptive to such changes, the second element necessary for advancing an informed learning approach is that academic librarians must identify where conversations about improving teaching and learning are taking place on their campuses. The third key element necessary for advancing an informed learning approach in higher education is developing collaborations with teachers.

Keywords: Information literacy integration, Information literacy and learning, Teaching and learning innovation, Teaching and learning initiatives, Librarian and teacher collaboration.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

The Instruction Matters: Purdue Academic Course Transformation (IMPACT) program provides an example of how academic librarians have integrated information literacy into courses when working

with teachers to create learning environments that are more student-centered. Drawn from both the scholarly literature outlined in Part 1, and Purdue Libraries' experiences working with the IMPACT program described in Part 2, this chapter outlines recommendations for academic libraries undertaking an informed learning approach to advancing information literacy at their colleges and universities.

There are three key elements necessary for advancing an informed learning approach (see Fig. 10.1). First, information literacy needs to be viewed as integral to the learning process. When using information is understood as a part of learning (Bruce, 2008), it becomes clear that information literacy needs to be integrated into courses in a way that allows students to use information to learn course content. The ways students use information is closely related to what they can learn about the content (Limberg, 1999; Maybee, Bruce, Lupton, & Rebmann, 2017). For some teachers, this will seem obvious, while others may need to be convinced. The best time to discuss how information literacy can improve content-focused learning outcomes is when teachers are considering making changes to a course. Therefore, the second key element involves academic librarians identifying where conversations about improving teaching and learning are taking place on their campuses.

The third key element necessary for advancing an informed learning approach is developing collaborations with teachers. As discussed in Chapter 9, one lesson learned by the librarians participating in the IMPACT program is that espousing the benefits of informed learning may not be the best approach to convincing teachers to integrate information literacy into coursework. Many teachers may be resistant to ideas that do not align with their views of information literacy, and more importantly, their views of what might improve learning in their course. In developing collaborations, academic librarians need to



Fig. 10.1 Necessary elements for advancing informed learning on college and university campuses.

approach such discussions carefully, first listening to teachers' concerns, and when appropriate, suggesting how learning outcomes could be enhanced through engagement with information.

10.2 FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Information literacy is closely related to learning. Even the [ACRL \(2000\) Standards](#) alluded to this idea, defining an information-literate individual as someone who can, among other things, incorporate selected information into their knowledge base. The information literacy efforts that most closely align with the *Standards* typically involve academic librarians teaching students information skills that include such things as defining problems, finding and evaluating information, and so forth. While these are not unimportant things to learn, when taught in this way, information skills are separated from the context in which they would normally be applied. This was exemplified by the teacher in a nursing program who redesigned a course through the IMPACT program that had students attend a lesson on searching for materials, although that activity was not directly related to any of their other coursework ([Maybee, Doan, & Flierl, 2016](#)). The programmatic efforts in higher education designed to teach information skills make information literacy the thing to be learned. From this perspective, information literacy becomes a content of its own, rather than an integral part of learning about something else ([Lupton, 2008](#)).

The approaches discussed at the beginning of the book show that information literacy may be viewed as situated within the practices of a community ([Lloyd, 2010](#)), or as part of a critical lens through which one can reveal social and political aspects of the world ([Tewell, 2015](#)). The fire fighters in one of [Lloyd's \(2007\)](#) studies provide an extreme example of situated information literacy. When working to put out a fire, the fire fighters gauge their safety by analyzing the information their bodies provide about the heat coming through their suits. A tamer example from higher education can be drawn from one of the vignettes in [Chapter 8](#) in which students in a technology course redesigned through the IMPACT program learn a design process that involves using information to identify design problems and solutions ([Flierl, Maybee, Riehle, & Johnson, 2016](#)). Students exploring a topic from a critical perspective would be asked to identify the people who

benefit from the production of information found on the subject, and the people who are not represented (Simmons, 2005). In contrast to learning activities such as these, many of the current efforts in higher education do not place information literacy into contexts that allow students to learn to use information in ways that are meaningful to them.

The academic library community is poised to change their approach to information literacy in higher education. It is likely that the information skills approach to information literacy that dominated higher education for over half a century may come to be considered the first phase. In this period, academic libraries were able to develop the necessary groundwork to bring information literacy to its current level of acceptance in higher education. ACRL's (2015) *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*, with its broader conceptualization of information literacy, provides a framework that academic librarians could use for their efforts in the second stage. Comprised of the six frames: (1) Scholarship is a Conversation, (2) Research as Inquiry, (3) Format as Process, (4) Authority is Constructed and Contextual, (5) Searching as Exploration, and (6) Information has Value, the *Framework* certainly provides a larger view of information literacy that aligns with many of the efforts undertaken in academia. However, if information can be anything that is informing (Bruce, 2008), then the *Framework's* construction of information literacy could still be limiting when one considers all of the ways that teachers and students may use information in the context of learning.

Addressing criticisms of the information skills approach (Kapitzke, 2003; Pawley, 2003; Whitworth, 2014), information literacy efforts must focus on teaching students to use information in context. In higher education, the context for using information would likely be a learning context. Using information can be considered a part of learning, but even more than that, the two can be seen as interacting with one another (Kari & Savolainen, 2010). This interaction was present in Limberg's (1999) study of high school students whose understanding of the topics they researched about the creation of the European Union were closely related to their awareness of different aspects of seeking information. That is to say, students who experienced a greater complexity in how they found information understood their topics with more sophistication as well. The study of an

upper-level writing course in which the students were asked to trace the development of a language and gender issue across time revealed that the specific way the teacher had the students engage with information influenced what they were able to learn about their topics (Maybee, Bruce, et al., 2017).

It is this interaction between learning and information literacy that demands the adoption of a new approach to information literacy in higher education. Although further investigation of the relationship between information literacy and learning is required, the evidence suggests that the ways in which students use information influences how they learn (Limberg, 1999; Maybee, Bruce, et al., 2017). Educators may improve learning outcomes by attending more carefully to how students interact with information as they learn in a course. Through both research and teaching experiences, academic librarians continue to explore how students use information as part of the learning process. Informed learning offers an approach to information literacy in higher education that focuses on using information to learn about course content (Bruce, 2008). Drawing from the knowledge of how students engage with information, academic librarians are uniquely positioned to work with teaching colleagues to develop coursework that improves learning through the intentional use of information.

10.3 FIND THE CONVERSATION

Academic librarians and teachers need to work together to teach students ways of using information that support the various goals that are part of a higher education curriculum. Librarians' knowledge of how students use information as part of the learning process can inform the development of assignments and lessons designed to allow students to learn to use information as they engage with course content (Bruce, 2008). Purdue librarians' experiences in the IMPACT program suggest that teachers who are considering pedagogic changes are more likely to be open to discussions of how their students need to be able to use information. Academic librarians should seek out venues on their campuses in which teachers and staff are exploring educational innovations. In such venues, teachers are focused on improving or enhancing student learning.

Some academic librarians already work in close collaboration with teachers. For them, the shift to an informed learning approach to integrating information literacy may involve new conversations with existing partners focused on how learning gains can improve by changing how students use information in a course. However, many academic librarians have less contact with teachers. For these librarians, integrating informed learning into courses using an informed learning approach begins with finding ways to have conversations with teachers. Of course, there may also be teachers on college and university campuses that are specifically interested in information literacy.

An example of a teacher interested in information literacy is provided in the vignette in Chapter 7 that describes a biologist who worked with Purdue librarians to make information literacy homework exercises more relevant to students. That teacher wanted to partner with librarians because she believed that their collaboration would enable significant learning for the students in her course. Sometimes academic librarians can work with such teachers individually to integrate information literacy into their coursework. If there is enough interest, academic libraries may consider creating an initiative that specifically aims to support teachers to integrate information literacy into their courses. An example is the initiative to integrate information literacy into courses at all levels of the undergraduate curriculum at Trinity University, which had institutional support from the highest levels of the university (Millet, Donald, & Wilson, 2009).

However, many higher education teachers are not interested in integrating information literacy into their courses. These teachers may express a variety of reasons why information literacy should not be included in their course. They may believe there is no room in the course to cover such material, or that students should learn to use information somewhere else (Webber, Boon, & Johnston, 2005), such as basic composition or introductory communication. While some teachers will never come to see its importance, others may embrace integrating information literacy into a course if they can be made to see how it supports learning in their courses. There are teachers who participated in the IMPACT program who came to understand the value of information literacy through discussions that took place over the 13 weeks of their involvement.

Purdue Libraries' 6-year involvement with the IMPACT program demonstrates that partnering with teachers in a faculty development program that is not specifically about information literacy can still provide opportunities for integrating it into university courses. A teaching and learning initiative that specifically focuses on information literacy, such as the one at Trinity University (Millet et al., 2009), would have been attended by teachers interested in integrating information literacy into their courses. It would not have been likely to attract teachers who had never thought about what their students might gain from learning how to use information in their course. Teachers in the IMPACT program focus on making their courses more student-centered. The academic librarians working with the teachers via IMPACT teams brought up the topic of teaching students how to use information when it was a means to accomplishing course goals for learning. The librarians working with IMPACT were able to convince teachers to be more intentional in how their students use information.

Possible venues for academic libraries to consider when determining where the “conversation” about teaching and learning may be taking place on their campuses include the teaching and learning initiatives outlined in [Chapter 3](#). The initiatives discussed in that chapter include first-year seminars and experiences, residential learning communities, writing across the curriculum, service learning opportunities, online learning, undergraduate research, capstone experiences, and faculty development programs. However, the proper venue could also be created by a smaller, less formal effort. For example, Dan Guberman, an instructional developer for Purdue's Center for Instructional Excellence, has arranged informal groups to read and discuss recent books that outline innovative ideas related to teaching and learning. His expectation is that some of the teachers in the reading group will eventually design coursework based on the theories about which they are reading. Guberman plans to form a group to read [Andrew Whitworth's \(2014\) *Radical Information Literacy: Reclaiming the Political Heart of the IL Movement*](#). The most important criterion for selecting a venue to become involved with in the hopes of advancing an informed learning approach to information literacy is that the teachers participating in it must be interested in improving student learning.

10.4 CONSULTING APPROACHES THAT FOCUS ON CREATING SHARED GOALS

Collaborations between librarians and teachers to integrate information literacy into courses using an informed learning approach must be founded on common goals. Developing common goals was the aim of the librarians involved in the IMPACT program when working with teachers to make their classrooms more student-centered or to bring information literacy into courses (Flierl et al., 2016). As educators, academic librarians may have strong views about what is important for students to learn about using information to be successful in their courses and their various undertakings after they leave their college or university. Therefore, librarians may feel that it is hard to develop shared goals with teachers, who ultimately decide what changes are made to coursework. It may be more difficult in cases when a librarian or teacher emphasizes a situated or critical understanding of teaching and learning that does not resonate with their partner's view of what is important for students to learn. While it is not essential to agree on all the specifics, both the librarian and the teacher must be able to come to consensus on key aspects of the coursework designed through the collaboration.

Integrating information literacy using an informed learning approach requires that goals for learning align with some or all of the principles and characteristics of the informed learning model developed by Bruce (2008). Through their collaboration, the teacher and the librarian must agree as to how students need to use information to learn in the learning environment they are cocreating. Recognizing that teaching, learning, and information literacy are related (Bruce, Edwards, & Lupton, 2006), it is essential that teachers and librarians working together comprehend each other's views. Academic librarians and teachers engaged in a collaboration must negotiate how their perspectives will be represented in the course they are codesigning. The librarians involved in the IMPACT program, all of whom have worked closely with teachers in other contexts, recognize that teachers trying to improve learning in their course are more likely to be open to new ideas.

Developing courses to improve student learning will not always involve information literacy. While the librarians participating in the

IMPACT program worked with such courses, they were also often able to suggest ways that intentionally using information could enhance the learning of course content. The importance of recognizing that there are multiple views of information literacy cannot be overstated. If a teacher is resistant to an idea for having students learn to use information in their course, it may be that the idea does not fit into the teacher's view of information literacy. If a teacher considers it as a new content that needs to be taught separately from course content (Webber & Johnston, 2005), they may not be open to discussing how information literacy should be addressed in the context of learning about a discipline or profession. Encountering resistance does not necessarily suggest that a librarian should offer information literacy solutions that align precisely with the teacher's views. However, the librarian will need to be strategic in how they work with that teacher. To the degree possible, librarians may attempt to work with these teachers to help them see the role of information literacy in fostering student learning.

Academic librarians working with teachers to integrate information literacy into courses using an informed learning approach are engaged in similar activities to instructional developers working with teachers in other ways to enhance student learning. Success in integrating information literacy into coursework using an informed learning approach begins with conversation. Librarians need to know what teachers are trying to achieve in their courses. As suggested by Flierl and his colleagues (2016), librarians should begin by asking what teachers want their students “to know, do, or value” at the end of the course, before asking them how students use information to accomplish these goals. Does the teacher want to prepare students for the workplace, or open their eyes to injustice? The answers to such questions frame how students need to engage with information in the learning context.

10.5 CONCLUSION

Academic librarians have the opportunity to extend their contribution to student learning in a significant and meaningful way. However, doing this means that they have to reorient part of their information

literacy efforts to find places where they can influence how students use information as they are learning. This chapter outlined three essential things that are necessary for applying an informed learning approach to integrating information literacy into courses. Academic librarians must recognize the relationship between using information and learning (Limberg, 2000; Lupton, 2008; Maybee, Bruce, et al., 2017), which may be significant for developing effective teaching in which students use information within a broader learning context.

Librarians working in higher education also need to locate the teachers on their campuses that are interested in teaching and learning innovations, and whom may therefore be open to an informed learning approach. In working with teachers interested in improving teaching and learning, academic librarians must utilize a consulting approach that allows for the creation of shared goals for student learning that include learning about using information as well as course content. Chapter 11 focuses on how academic librarians can leverage their existing skills to advance informed learning, but may also benefit by becoming aware of emerging approaches to information literacy, learning more about teaching and learning theories and models, and further developing their consulting abilities.

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