Embracing challenges in times of change: Academic librarians identify opportunities presented by the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy in higher education.

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Abstract

Many academic librarians in the state of New Jersey have successfully integrated information literacy (IL) into the curriculum using the ACRL IL Competency Standards for Higher Education. These standards have formed the underpinnings of IL curriculum mapping and assessment plans. They have also been adopted by administrators in higher education institutions across the state.

In light of the new ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, the presenters seek to find out how NJ institutions are embracing the opportunities presented by the challenge of looking at information literacy through the new lens provided by the frames.

This presentation will discuss the results of a statewide survey of coordinators of information literacy instruction in New Jersey. It will highlight challenges, opportunities, and new approaches to integration of IL as well as new considerations on how the frames influence assessment of student learning. It will also focus on areas such as gaining buy-in from relevant campus partners as well as library colleagues and library administration.

Methodology & Results

• An online survey was distributed to librarians involved in the coordination of IL instruction at 46 academic institutions of higher education
• The survey received 34 complete responses
• 79% of respondents are responsible (solely or in part) for the integration of IL into the curriculum at their institution
• 35% are confident that they can communicate the changes needed for IL programs in light of the Framework

Results

• Information Literacy (IL) is stated in institutional goals, library missions, course and departmental learning outcomes, Gen. Ed. goals, campus wide assessments, and library strategic plans
• 50% are working with librarians and 22% are working with teaching faculty on adopting the Framework
• 6% do not have support for IL from teaching faculty
• 90% identified fellow librarians as being ready to work on adopting the Framework, while 37% identified teaching faculty as being ready
• 18% have identified ways of aligning their IL assessment plan with the Framework
• 57% have an upcoming Middles States (MSCHE) accreditation visit 2016-2019 and 53% state that the Framework will influence their preparation

Discussion

• There are still gaps in the knowledge/understanding of the Framework among librarians that will influence the gain of buy-in from teaching faculty. It will take a long time to involve relevant constituents (outside the libraries) in the adoption of the Framework
• IL integration still revolves mostly around Freshmen classes and Writing programs which are also appropriate for the Frames. It appears that the Framework has the potential to support IL integration across the curriculum including Capstone and Science courses
• There appears to be a dichotomy where all the respondents indicate IL among formal institutional/library documents, yet IL does not currently have high priority at this time at an institutional level and many MSCHE self studies do not have IL. Perhaps a new campaign on IL involving the Frames will bring IL back into the conversation at an administrative level

Conclusions

• The conversation of the Framework is happening among librarians and will then move outward to teaching faculty since librarians are still becoming conversant with the Frames
• There are strong faculty partnerships revolving around the Standards that can be leveraged to adopt the Framework
• The Framework provides new opportunities to form partnerships with faculty who are not yet on board with IL
• There is a need for more education (from ACRL and peer-sharing) on how to integrate the Framework in light of the fact that most IL instruction is a one-shot session
• The majority of institutions will begin the process of integrating the Framework in the next academic year 2016-2017
• Getting administrators on board with new terminology will be very difficult since other issues, like retention, have high priority and MSCHE self studies are not focusing on IL

Background

In New Jersey, the transfer of credits from a community college to a public four-year institution has been guided since 2008 by the Lampitt Law’s Comprehensive Statewide Transfer Agreement (New Jersey’s Presidents’ Council, 2008). It includes IL as an integrated course goal using the language of the Standards thus firmly establishing IL as a learning outcome for general education courses in New Jersey post-secondary schools.

With statewide support for IL in the curriculum three New Jersey library committees worked together to develop the Information Literacy Progression Standards (Progression Standards) (New Jersey Library Association, 2009). The Progression Standards have been used by NJ institutions for curriculum planning and course mapping, and for articulation agreements in transferring credit between institutions. They have also been used to discuss IL expectations with faculty to help integrate IL into the general education curriculum (DaCosta & Dubicki, 2012).

NJ institutions that are not using the Progression Standards have still used the Standards for outcomes development, collaboration with faculty, and assessment. (Charles, 2015; Hsieh & Holden, 2010; Hsieh, Dawson, Hofmann, Titus, & Carlín 2014; Scharf, 2014).

Comments

The most challenging step in adopting the Framework is...

- “teaching and assessing the ‘big picture’ concepts conveyed in the Frames”
- “everybody gets’ standards because they are already everywhere in higher education”
- “communicating the concepts to students, faculty, and administration”
- “developing classroom activities that reinforce the concepts”
- “opportunity to compare approaches within an existing course”
- “Examples of how to implement it in one session”

References


