

Final Summary: Faculty Development Grant

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The purpose of this project was to integrate information literacy education into an English 200 class. This project sought to introduce these students to the increasingly complex world of information literacy. Beginning in Fall 2004, this class of 22 students (a mix of first- and second- year students) sought to use a more systematic approach to writing research papers. During the first class session, students were asked to complete a brief questionnaire that measured their habits in doing research, writing papers, and using the library. (See Appendix A)

Jan visited the class a total of 4 times:

9/1/04 Introduction and information literacy survey

Students responded to 14 questions (see Appendix A)

9/17/04 Thesis statement construction

While the initial survey revealed that most students could define a thesis statement, Dr. Hicks found that the depth and quality of thought had been augmented after a class period was dedicated to this process. Students had been given exercises to complete, and worked in small groups to fine-tune a thesis statement for a fictitious newspaper article.

10/15/04 MLA Style

Similarly, while most students were familiar with MLA Style, a portion of class devoted to the practical need for and use of a style manual netted better quotations, citations, and bibliographies. Students were reminded that the purpose of writing papers was to write clearly, truthfully, and to convey enough information so that other scholars could build on their scholarship.

11/8, 11/10, 11/12 Library Research Classes

In addition, the students and Dr. Hicks spent three class periods in November in the library. The purpose of these sessions was to allow students time to do research, ask questions about library resources, and get help with more complex questions. Students were asked to set a goal for each class period, and to reflect on whether that goal had been met. Also, students were given a note-card and instructions to write down the “muddiest point” from our research time together, and also “something they didn’t know before”.

A sample of muddiest points:

- What is acceptable as a source?
- Documenting sources like JSTOR?
- I still can't find a certain document and I don't know where else to look

A sample of something newly learned:

- Subject headings and how to use them better
- netLibrary---I never knew it existed and I think it's really useful. I also learned how to do interlibrary loans
- How to use specific search engines for different academic departments

Our conclusion is that students benefited from the dedicated class periods in the library, although our timing may be altered in future semesters.

12/6/04 End of semester survey

While the full report of the initial and final surveys are available in Appendices A & B, there are a few items worthy of consideration:

- All 21 students who took the pre-test named an "Internet search engine" as their starting point, while only 10 of those students named that at the end of the semester.
- Only ten named the library webpage as an "other resource" in the pre-test, but this number had risen to 17 by semester's end.
- Students had a good grasp on the definition and purpose of a bibliography and thesis statement, possibly because 18 out of 21 had already written a research paper at Augustana at the beginning of the semester.
- In the post-test, 18 of 22 found it beneficial to write an outline and receive feedback.
- When asked in September to name differences between scholarly and popular sources, 13 of 21 had no response. In December, only 3 had no response, and the remainder had a good grasp of the difference.
- In December, all 22 students could name at least one difference between a website and a library database.
- When asked at semester's end to name the most useful library tool for the research paper project, 12 named the library catalog, 12 named databases, 2 named a reference book, 1 the library webpage, and 1 student a periodical.
- When asked if spending the class periods in the library resulted in a significantly different paper, 8 thought not, and 14 believed it had.

Conclusion

As expected, having the students work in close conjunction with their instructor and a librarian significantly increased their ability to conduct solid and original research while examining literary texts and their historical milieu. We feel their confidence in using the library for other courses has increased.

Their abilities to think critically, scholastically, and remain sensitive to issues of plagiarism will continue to improve beyond the parameters of English 200.

Looking ahead

We may consider implementing a similar library session in Dr Hicks's section of English 110, which is composed almost exclusively of first-year students. Such a move will help them understand that we do serious scholastic work at Augustana.

Thanks to the Faculty Development Committee for funding this project.

Respectfully submitted,
Jan Brue Enright & Patrick Hicks

December, 2004

APPENDIX A --English 200H
Fall 2004
Information Literacy Survey

1. Where do you start when doing a research paper? (circle any that apply)
 - a. Internet search engine (Google, Yahoo, etc.) **21 (unanimous)**
 - b. Library catalog **10**
 - c. Print Index, such as New York Times Index **0**
 - d. Encyclopedia **5**
 - e. Library Database (EbscoHost, ProQuest, MLA etc.) **11**
 - f. Other _____ **3** (course materials, other books)

2. What other resources might you use for a research paper? (circle all that apply)
 - a. Ask a friend **10**
 - b. Ask a professor **13**
 - c. Use the course WebCT **1**
 - d. Go to the library **17**
 - e. Library webpage **10**
 - f. Other **2**

3. When would you consult a librarian for assistance? (Circle all that apply.)
 - a. You need advice about where to look for information. **13**
 - b. You need help choosing the best information source. **3**
 - c. You don't know how to use an information source. **5**
 - d. All of the above. **6**
 - e. None of the above. **0**
 - f. You don't know when you would consult a librarian for assistance. **2**

4. Since you've been at Augustana, have you written a research paper?
(circle) Yes **18** No **1** This is my first semester here **2**

5. What is the purpose of a bibliography?
 - a. **19 students mentioned "citing sources", "giving credit", "show where you got your information", etc.**
 - b. **1 student wrote, "To show what you said is true."**
 - c. **1 student wrote, "To use for location and availability."**

6. What is the thesis statement of a research paper?
 - a. **All 21 students answered in the right vein—Main point, guide for the paper, idea and reason for the paper, describes what your paper is about, the core, the purpose, the argument of your paper, tells reader what the paper is about.**

7. What is the purpose of writing a thesis statement?
- **Gives direction to the paper, provides a foundation, lets the reader know what to expect, to organize your thoughts and sum them up in one sentence, to introduce the paper**
 - **“To give your paper direction and basis and make it clear to others what you are writing about”**
 - **“To more clearly focus research, define paper, organize thoughts, draw attention to subject.”**
 - **“It helps you as a writer to know what direction you are heading and it also helps our readers understand what they are reading.”**
8. Can a thesis statement be revised? Why or why not?
- **19 indicated that yes, a thesis statement can change--- because your focus may change, your point of view can change, it's YOUR thesis, you can sometimes find better words that convey a thesis, ideas can change, everything can be revised**
 - **2 no's—paper should follow your thesis, and it's hard to revise your thesis after you have written the paper; it's the main point and needs to be supported throughout the paper.**
9. When you write a paper, do you usually make an outline?
YES **6** NO **2** SOMETIMES **13**
10. What is the purpose of an outline?
- **All answered along the lines of---way to organize your paper, provides structure, guides the writer, its' the skeleton of your paper**
11. Have you ever been required to use **scholarly** sources for a research paper?
YES **10** NO **6** SOMETIMES **5**
12. Can you name two or three differences between a scholarly (refereed/peer reviewed) source and a **popular** source?

13 had no response

Remaining answered

- they are accurate
- scholarly has been edited
- popular may be by someone who isn't an expert
- credentials of author
- scholarly usually does their own research
- scholarly is usually published
- scholarly is credited
- in-depth material
- scholarly has credentials listed on the source
- popular sources can be false
- scholarly is more likely to be true
- scholarly is not just a random guy making up info
- papers should use scholarly sources

13. Do you think that research papers should include both popular and scholarly sources? Why or why not?

No response 2

Yes 14

- different views can be added to research papers
- people can draw influence from many different areas
- to get other views of topic
- general opinion is also helpful in today's society
- because you need different ideas of reference
- both sources are useful in certain situations

No 5

- popular can be fake
- only scholarly because popular sources can be false
- popular sources aren't always correct or have all the information
- scholarly guarantees facts are correct. Anything found in a popular should be available in a scholarly source if true

14. Excluding New Student Seminar, have you received library instruction?

(Circle) YES 12 NO 9

APPENDIX B English 200H
Fall 2004
Information Literacy Surve

1. Where do you start when doing a research paper? (circle any that apply)
 - a. Internet search engine (Google, Yahoo, etc.) **10**
 - b. Library catalog **11**
 - c. Print Index, such as New York Times Index **1**
 - d. Encyclopedia **3**
 - e. Library Database (EbscoHost, ProQuest, MLA etc.) **13**
 - f. Other _____

2. What other resources might you use for a research paper? (circle all that apply)
 - a. Ask a friend **7**
 - b. Ask a professor **11**
 - c. Use the course WebCT **6**
 - d. Go to the library **19**
 - e. Library webpage **17**
 - f. Other **4**
(Find an expert, Mom)

3. When would you consult a librarian for assistance? (Circle all that apply.)
 - a. You need advice about where to look for information. **11**
 - b. You need help choosing the best information source. **4**
 - c. You don't know how to use an information source. **9**
 - d. All of the above. **5**
 - e. None of the above. **2**
 - f. You don't know when you would consult a librarian for assistance.
(When I can't find a book or the computer is yelling at me.)

4. Did you find it beneficial to write your outline and receive feedback on it before writing your research paper?
Yes 18
No 2
Yes & No 1
No response 1

Why or why not?

Comments included :

- helps me stay organized
- gives me a better understanding about what my paper would be about, also new ideas about the subject
- helps me see if I'm missing any important points or repeating myself
- helps narrow focus, possible branch into new ideas, gave professor and me an idea of where I was heading so prof could assist me if needed

- gives reassurance I'm on the "right track", but if I do mess up and everything needs to be reworked then I am not too far into the process.
- My outline is primarily just for me. I would rather get feedback when I have 3 pages to show, because an outline doesn't show your thoughts or ideas as well as a first draft.
- I think it helped me find what were the strongest parts of my paper and what were the weakest parts. I at least knew where to go with my paper.
- The first paper I wrote in this class, the feedback was trash it and start over. Without this, I would have done poorly on the paper.
- It helped me push my paper in the right direction by writing down points and subpoints and then having feedback on my ideas.
- I don't like outlines because I never stick to them. They make me feel very confined and personally I think I write better without one. I would usually not follow my original outline. However, it did help to block themes and visualize order of the paper.

5. What is a difference between a scholarly and a popular source?

- 3 students had no response
- The remainder had a good grasp of the difference, citing the type of research and education behind a scholarly source, that experts verify the information (peer review); and that popular wasn't necessarily as credible or well-documented

6. What's the difference between a website and a library database?

- All 22 students responded that websites can be written/posted by virtually anyone, and that library databases require credentials, more scholarly information, and have more dependability

7. In writing this research paper, what was the most useful library tool (reference book, periodical, database, library catalog) that you used?

- Library catalog **12**
- EbscoHost, ProQuest **4**

- NetLibrary 1
- JSTOR 2
- Reference book 2
- Database 5
- Library webpage 1
- Periodical 1

8. How did this help you as a researcher and writer?

- Several commented on being able to find information quickly and efficiently
- “It taught me to focus more and to realize what good research is”
- “Better sources equal a better paper.”
- Several reflected that it was a new way to locate information, where to find credible information
- “I understand that there are more sources than just outside the book we read.”
- “Having the book(s) on hand made it easier to find info I wanted, as opposed to clicking on a webpage or an article on a database.”
- Some commented that there was more information than they had assumed
- Internet is “far more handy”, but it might not be credible “It provides less wasted research on information that may be wrong.”

9. Would your research paper have been significantly different if we had not spent 3 class periods in the library? Why or why not?

- No –8
 - Several mentioned they were already familiar with library resources, that they did their research as they normally do, one indicated it was “a waste of my time”.
- Yes –14
 - Some mentioned that this helped them develop and/or change their thesis, found materials through the library, “I wouldn’t have known where to start”, “My paper would have been weaker, not as well supported”, strengthened research, gave time for interlibrary loans to arrive

10. Excluding New Student Seminar, was this the first time you received library instruction to enhance your information literacy skills?

- No –13
- Yes --9

11. Anything else?

- No -- **14**
- “Thanks for all your help and for all the candy!”
- “I felt that spending the time in the library was not that beneficial and if students needed further researching help they could have gone to the library and asked.”
- “I would like to comment that this class was wonderful, however, the library portion of it seriously detracted from the quality. If you’re 20 years old and you can’t use a library, you have more serious problems to worry about.”
- “I have had so many this is how you research, this is how you write a thesis that it was redundant.”
- “Earlier instruction for this study tool would be beneficial in writing and research for all classes! Neat opportunity! Thanks.”
- “I enjoyed the in-class presentations.”
- “I found this whole process very beneficial. Now I feel much more confident about doing research.”
- “Consistency on grading seems to not be well defined so writing papers is paralyzing for me! When I think I have done well, I get a bad grade, than when I just throw something together I get a good grade! It doesn’t make sense! Being in the library helps one to be more confident.”