

## Integrating Information Literacy in the First Year | 02.5.2014

### Anne-Marie Deitering

Please find a list below of additional resources from the “Integrating Information Literacy in the First Year” webcast. These complimentary resources include a case study that highlights a successful collaboration that integrated information literacy into a first-year seminar course as well as additional resources that will help you better integrate information literacy into first-year programming on your campus.

#### Pre-Webcast Resources

1. [University of Wisconsin Case Study](#) – *Pages 2-5* – This case study describes a successful collaboration between a first-year seminar course and first-year librarians at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
2. **Resources List** – Anne Marie Deitering has created a website specifically listing out resources used during this presentation and that can be found at:  
<http://info-fetishist.org/2014/01/29/information-literacy-in-the-first-year-experience-updated/>

## **Integrating Information Literacy Into the First Year | 07.23.12 Webcast**

### **Integrating Information Literacy Into the First Year at University of Wisconsin-Madison: A Case Study**

*This case study describes a successful collaboration between a first-year seminar course and first-year librarians at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.*

UW Madison's Office for the First Year Experience and General Library System are collaborating around a seminar class that helps transition freshmen from high school to college success. The partnership is built on a shared understanding of university learning outcomes (using the LEAP framework) and similarities in the mission and function of the institutional partners involved.

#### **The Center for the First-Year Experience and A Wisconsin Experience Seminar**

The Center for the First-Year Experience at the University of Wisconsin – Madison started its first-year seminar in the spring of 2006; the first offering of the course was a ten-week curriculum focused on exploration of college transition. The first instructor for the course was the Center's Director, but as opportunities to offer the course grew, other members of the office began serving as instructors, along with graduate students from the Counseling Psychology department. In 2008, the Center for the First-Year Experience created a new position to focus on the course and other academic programs. The advent of this position allowed for expanded exploration of the curriculum, with an eventual movement towards a full-semester course taught by staff and faculty from across the UW – Madison campus. The course, *A Wisconsin Experience Seminar*, is taught once a week for 75 minutes and is recognized as one of the campus's High Impact Practices.

It is important to note, however, that this is only one of many first-year seminars offered at UW – Madison. In addition to A Wisconsin Experience Seminar, the campus offers new students a chance to enroll in a series of linked courses (called First-Year Interest Groups), participate in seminars tied to residential learning communities, and take seminars within the various schools and colleges that explore themes of transition to a college or major.

#### **The Undergraduate Library**

College Library is UW Madison's undergraduate library. As one of more than 40 libraries on campus, its service mission is to "... facilitate discovery and learning by creating a welcoming environment for all, especially those new to academic research." The staff of 24 FTE, including 11 librarians, supports an education mission through "dedication to teaching effective and appropriate use of current and emerging technologies and information resources."

Librarians at College Library provide integrated information literacy instruction (in coordination with a central information literacy office for the General Library System) to all students taking their Communications-A requisite coursework in introductory English, Communications, or English as a Second Language. College Library also has a long history of partnering with the campus Writing Center, Greater University Tutoring Center, Cross College Advising and other academic support services whose missions have synergy with its own. When approached by a coordinator within the Center for the First Year Experience, librarians saw an opportunity to get new insight about the challenges and services needed by freshmen while increasing the scope of their traditional information literacy audience.

### **Transformative Partnerships**

When the Orientation and New Student Programs office evolved into the current Center for the First Year Experience, one of its key goals was to enhance the transition of new freshmen and transfer students. This broad look at the first year at Madison allowed for the office to begin building new partnerships across campus; some of this initial work included identifying potential partners to serve as members of a search and screen committee for the hiring of a Coordinator of Academic Initiatives to focus on building stronger connections with faculty and staff as related to academic experiences of students. One of the members of the search and screen committee was a member of the campus libraries' centralized Library and Information Literacy Instruction (LILI) office, which gave him the opportunity to learn about the workings of the new Center for the First Year Experience and to understand the role of the Coordinator he was helping to hire.

Upon being selected for the new position, the Coordinator of Academic Initiatives held meetings with members of the search and screen committee to gain an understanding of each committee member's roles on campus and identify potential collaborative possibilities in developing and implementing curriculum for first-year students. Conversations with the LILI librarian on the committee helped clarify to the Coordinator, the College Library's role in undergraduate education at UW-Madison, and led the coordinator to add a course assignment on the library to the First Year seminar's course syllabus. The assignment evolved through ongoing conversations between the LILI librarian and the Coordinator of Academic Initiatives and College Library was targeted as a key point of contact for providing the instruction for students to complete the assignment.

The original assignment was intended to expose students to the breadth and scope of the libraries on the Madison campus. Sections of the course visited the library and learned about library services from the librarians who instructed this session, accessed online resources, and explored how libraries support the research mission of the university. After visiting the library, students wrote a two-page reflection about their visit, highlighting how the library could be of importance to them during their undergraduate careers. While some students were able to reflect thoughtfully about the experience, others simply "reported" on the libraries. After discussions with the LILI librarian and the Coordinator of Academic Initiatives about this initial assignment and possible future directions, they determined that the course could introduce an enhanced assignment to better focus on student learning and provide more opportunity to develop information literacy.

As a result of these collaborations and further networking efforts on the part of the Coordinator of Academic Initiatives, librarians from LILI and College Library began to serve as primary instructors for entire sections of A Wisconsin Experience Seminar. Based on their first-hand experience with the course, these librarians provided feedback on how to change the library visit into a research assignment that both reinforced existing outcomes and encouraged information literacy. This new assignment gave students an opportunity for students to apply skills they learned during their library visit to course research.

Students continued to visit the library as part of this new assignment, but instead of a reflection paper, students completed a three-page research paper on a topic related to college transition. This new assignment provided students with a practical, hands-on assignment, applying the tools they learned during their library visit.

Moreover, the librarians instructing these one-time sessions now appeared as experts, willing and available to help students with research for this and other courses. The strong partnership between the Center for the First-Year Experience, LILI, and College Library was the key to subtly integrating information literacy into A Wisconsin Experience's curriculum in a way that supported the course's overall student outcomes while adding a useful information literacy component. The shape of the assignment has changed, from reflection to research paper and most recently to research process as we continue to assess and fine-tune.

### **Assessment**

Improvement to the information literacy assignment results from ongoing assessment of the seminar. Assessment of *A Wisconsin Experience Seminar* includes evaluation of course components, student and instructor experiences, and longitudinal evaluation. Student assessment of the course begins with them completing a pre-examination prior to the start of the semester, which is intended to gather baseline understanding of concepts that are discussed through the curriculum. The students then complete a post-examination, which assesses student learning gains over the course of the semester and asks them to identify what they believe will "stick" with them over the course of their undergraduate career. One year after completing the seminar, students complete another survey, asking them again to reflect on what they learned in the course; they are also asked to identify what attitudes and behaviors have changed as a direct result of enrolling in the course and whether they have maintained relationships with students from the class. Instructor assessment of the course occurs throughout the semester and through a follow-up meeting a month after the seminar ends. During that final feedback meeting, instructors and peer leaders share reflections, thoughts, and ideas for curriculum changes. The course coordinator also meets with the LILI coordinator and the Writing Center each semester to evaluate this particular assignment so that they can adjust the library research assignment as needed.

### **Evolution**

The partnership between the UW Libraries and the Center for the First Year Experience has continued to evolve over three years of A Wisconsin Experience Seminar. Librarians continue to teach sections of the seminar while assessing the nature of the information literacy component for the course. The most recent iteration of the assignment has removed the research paper in favor of focus on the processes described in "The Craft of Research" (Booth, et al. 2008). Efforts to

balance information literacy outcomes with course workloads and to develop new and innovative student-library interactions remains a focus of the seminar, just as librarians remain committed to teaching one-time information literacy sessions for each section and teaching the seminar as primary course instructors.

As assessment has indicated that A Wisconsin Experience Seminar is a high impact practice for student success on campus and has obvious parallels to College Library's teaching mission, the undergraduate library director (after teaching the class herself) committed to assign at least two librarians each year as primary instructors for several of the more than twenty total sections offered. The undergraduate library director supports the instructor assignments by granting release time and work flexibility. The message to librarians – teaching A Wisconsin Experience Seminar is excellent professional development, supports the undergraduate library mission, and gives insight into the lives and minds of freshmen. The message to the First-Year Experience office – librarians are eager to collaborate on curricular design and knowledgeable in the ways information literacy can be integrated meaningfully into overarching curricula.

#### *About the Authors*

##### **Ian Benton, Public Service Librarian, Undergraduate Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison**

Ian provides library reference services and information literacy sessions for undergraduates in College Library, the university's undergraduate library. He teaches the first-year student experience course called the Wisconsin Experience and has helped shape the course's information literacy component. Ian's current research interests include how best to create collaborations between librarians and first-year seminar faculty and staff.

##### **Adrianna Guram, Director, First Year Experience and Learning Communities at the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater**

*Adrianna has taken on a new position at UW-Whitewater overseeing First Year Experience. She was previously the Coordinator of Academic Initiatives, Center for the First-Year Experience, University of Wisconsin–Madison where she was responsible for developing curriculum for the Center for First-Year Experience, and for faculty/staff professional development. She served as a liaison on behalf of the Center to help campus units develop initiatives for new students and assisted the Institute for Biology Education (IBE) develop and implement a boot camp program to engage new students in exploration of the biological sciences. She continues to engage in teaching and training, and chaired the Commission for Academic Support in Higher Education at College Student Educators International (ACPA).*