Chapter 6

Learning/Instruction Management

The participation of library professionals in information literacy takes many different forms. The ideal one is to have a program that is part of the curricula because information literacy requires sustained development throughout all formal educational levels, primary, secondary, and tertiary. Achieving information literacy requires students to have had a cumulative experience in most, if not all, subjects in addition to learning experiences. Information literacy should be woven into the content, structure and sequence of the curricula. Information literacy cannot be the product of a single course (Bundy, 2004), therefore institutional collaboration among all learning stakeholders is crucial. Information professionals should consider participating in a teaching course or recognized qualification to be part of the institutional information literacy endeavor.

Starting the program. Students need to experience, reflect and apply information literacy at all levels of their studies. However, this is not always the case, especially at the beginning of the IL program. In some institutions, it may take some time before IL is an integral part of course offerings. Some tips on how to start and run information literacy program/course follow (Bundy, 2004; Stripling, 1999).

General guidelines. There are certain management principles that can be applied to any IL activity, including:

- A clear focus on an IL standard or standards for every IL activity
- Work on standards one by one if you cannot work on all standards at the same time
- Get assistance from faculty if you need to know how to create a course
- Promote your IL activity well—by whatever means you may have
- Work in teams—any activity can be done by more than one information professional
- Appoint a leader for all library IL efforts if possible
- Remember that IL is not the solely domain of the library—you need to collaborate with the different members of your learning community
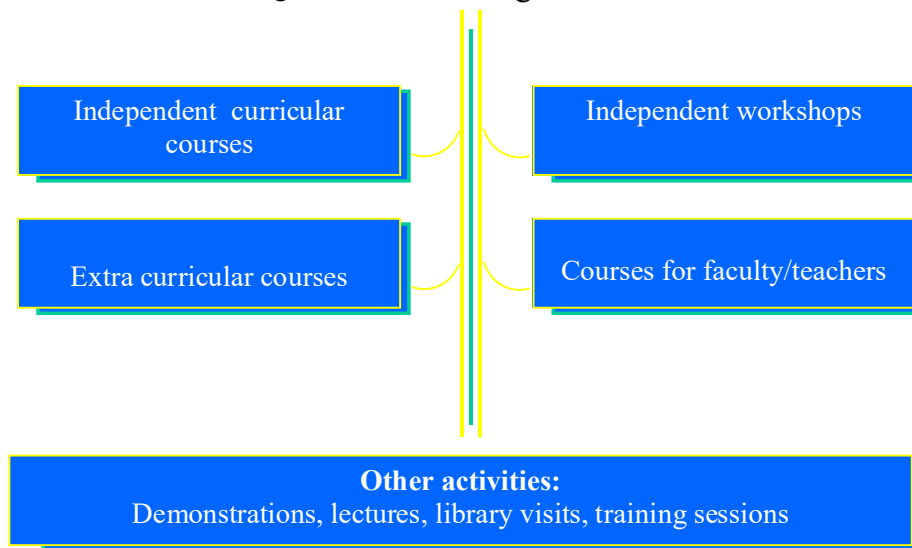- Be clear about IL objectives with any type of activity

Information literacy needs differ. Information literacy facilitators should be aware that needs differ from one person to another. Individuals and groups of individuals have very different competencies at the outset, and probably, more importantly, differing motivations regarding fulfilling needs and extending competencies. Students, for example, may appear to be a homogeneous group with similar needs, skills and motivations. However, recent experience (particularly when widening participation is taken into account) contradicts this view of the homogeneous body of students or populations. In teaching and learning terms, these factors are expressed as "presage" factors where individuals come to a learning situation with prior experiences, characteristics and conceptions of learning that, in turn, are affected by developmental factors and social factors as well as learning styles and

approaches. Writers such as Biggs and Moore (1993) suggest that it is imperative that these are taken into account (Walton, personal communication, November, 2004).

<u>Part of regular faculty/school courses</u>. This type of IL facilitation is done as part of a general course conducted by faculty or teachers. It is a good starting point for IL work and provides an opportunity to convince your academic colleagues of   IL benefits. The following are some actions you can take to facilitate this process:

- Meet faculty administrators and share IL benefits with them *(del extra spaces)*
- Meet potential information literacy professors/teacher*s*
- Distribute documents stating the benefits of a faculty-wide IL program to appropriate parties
- Offer your information literacy services to professors/teachers in their course planning
- Prepare IL learning exercises as examples of how to focus the course on information literacy learning
- Make the library the information laboratory
- Prepare a workshop for faculty/teachers where IL concepts and the importance of implementing them in the classroom are discussed

Figure 6. IL Learning Menu

Independent curricular courses

Independent workshops

Extra curricular courses

Courses for faculty/teachers

Other activities:
Demonstrations, lectures, library visits, training sessions

<u>Independent curricular courses</u>. These courses are offered independently and solely devoted to information literacy, but they are part of the students´ curricula. Full responsibility is given to information professionals in the information learning process. If you have the opportunity to plan an independent IL course:

- Plan your course or courses to coincide with the school/faculty design

- Base the course on constructivist pedagogy—incentive is on students to practice concepts
- Make the course interesting and appealing to students according to the subject
- Exercises should focus on something that will benefit students in their regular classes
- When possible, partner with a professor's course, so that your exercises are on the same subject
- Adjust course length according to the available time
- Courses should not be too long—four to ten hours is ideal
- Divide topics and distribute present them in more than one course if necessary

Extra-curricular courses. An extra curricular course is easier to plan, because it is independent from faculty/school curricula. However, your long-term goal is to have IL courses as part of the curricula. The following are suggestions for extra-curricular courses:

- Follow the format and procedures for any regular school course
- Choose course dates when students may have less academic work
- Students have less time to take this type of course at the beginning and end of terms
- Provide some recognition to those who take the course, such as a certificate
- The library can have its own information certificate program
- Take this independent road only if it is necessary, remember that embedded programs are more successful

Independent short courses. They are the means for training specific IL objectives and for updating skills of the different members of your learning community. Because they need to be linked in a deliberate way to the curriculum, these courses should only be taught as a last resort. Effective learning only takes place when it is contextualized and embedded (the very core of constructivist theory (Walton, personal communication, November, 2004). If you do offer them, a series of short courses can be integrated into a full course. The following steps can be equally applied to embedded as well as independent generic courses/modules:

- Plan information literacy workshops to enhance specific skills
- Workshops should be focused
- Time length should be short and scheduled when students have a study break, i.e., lunch periods or evenings
- Create a program for the whole term with different workshops options
- Workshop facilitation can be shared among other information specialist, if they are available
- Keep the sessions lively
- Name the workshop with catchy words focused on the actual content

Courses for faculty/teachers. They are the key actors for any information literacy program success. Lecturers, professors and teachers need to learn new information competencies, although sometimes, they may not recognize it. Therefore, offer them a diverse and flexible IL training. Keep the following in mind when training educators:

- Faculty/teachers are the most important member of any education institution to convince of IL benefits
- Create a course or courses tailored to the needs of professors/teachers
- With each course you facilitate for this learning community, you will gain IL advocates
- Design a hands-on experiential course where you can facilitate the IL learning that professors/teachers can adapt for use in their classrooms
- Offer the course before or after the term ends
- Make the course part of institutional faculty training program
- Promote the course among those faculty members who are library advocates
- Offer the course at a special time and include a coffee break
- Prepare learning activities that participants can reflect upon, taking into consideration their own teaching needs
- Remember that participants who are faculty members can be more demanding, so prepare you course content and materials well

Other activities. They can include demonstrations, lectures, library visits, and training sessions. A good information literacy program should include a broad menu of regular and complementary IL options to support learning that include:

- Offering faculty/teachers on-request information literacy training sessions
- Creating a menu of options with ready-to-go to teaching sessions
- Providing information about objectives and benefits for participants
- Preparing and distributing handouts for each type of activity
- Providing sessions in classrooms or other venues that may not be as well-suited as the library
- Recognizing academics who offer library IL opportunities
- If your time is limited, reserve dates and times *to* do this IL work

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