

Guidelines for Instruction Programs in Academic Libraries

Approved by the ACRL Board of Directors, June 2003. Revised October 2011.

Preamble

Academic libraries work together with other members of their institutional communities to participate in, support, and achieve the educational mission of their institutions by teaching the core competencies of information literacy—the abilities involved in identifying an information need, accessing needed information, evaluating, managing, and applying information, and understanding the legal, social, and ethical aspects of information use. The systematic delivery of instructional programs and services should be planned in concert with overall strategic library planning, including the library's budgeting process. Such planning may also involve strategizing with other campus units to deliver collaboratively designed programming.

To best assist academic and research librarians in preparing and developing effective instructional programs, the following guidelines are recommended.

I. Program design

A. Statement of purpose

The library should have a written mission statement for its instructional program that:

- articulates its purpose for the instruction program in the context of the educational mission of the institution and the needs of the learning community;
- involves its institutional community in the formulation of campus-wide information literacy goals and general outcomes;
- aligns its goals with the [Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education](#), and clearly states a definition of information literacy;
- recognizes the diverse nature of the learning community, including the varieties of learning styles, attitudes, educational levels, life experiences, cultures, technology skill levels, and other learner variables such as proximity to the campus itself (distance learning students);
- recognizes that instruction programs prepare learners not only for immediate curricular activities, but also for experiences with information use beyond the classroom—in work settings, careers, continuing education and self-development, and lifelong learning in general; and
- reflects changes in the institution and learning community through regular review and revision when appropriate.

B. Identification of content of instruction

Content for library instruction will vary among academic institutions. Instruction programs in academic libraries should have clearly articulated learning outcomes that are aligned with ACRL's *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* as well as with local institutional standards and outcomes. Ideally, the institution's educational standards and outcomes will address information literacy. If they do not, the *Competency Standards* can be used as a guideline for discussion with the institution's administrators and other academic professionals.

ACRL's *Objectives for Information Literacy Instruction* are meant to be used in tandem with the *Competency Standards*. Whereas the *Competency Standards* are meant to guide general campus discussions and identify the big picture of information literacy, the *Objectives* provide "specific

discrete measurable results." The *Objectives* should be used by coordinators of instruction programs in academic libraries to establish and articulate the program's specific outcomes.

C. Identification of modes of instruction

Instruction occurs in different modes and by using a variety of methods. The modes that are selected should be consistent with the goals of information literacy instruction. Learning styles should be considered and multiple modes should be incorporated whenever possible.

Instruction should employ active learning strategies and techniques that require learners to develop critical thinking skills in concert with information literacy skills. Planning such active learning strategies and techniques should be carried out collaboratively with faculty to increase overall student engagement and to extend opportunities for a more reflective approach to information retrieval, evaluation, and use. For useful examples of course-specific active learning exercises, see *Designs for Active Learning: A Sourcebook of Classroom Strategies for Information Education*.

Instructional modes may include but are not limited to the following:

- Reference interview
- Individual or small group research consultations/appointments
- Digital or print instruction resources
- Group instruction in library or campus classrooms
- Web tutorials or web-based instruction
- Asynchronous modes of instruction (email, social media)
- Synchronous modes of instruction (chat, audio/video/web conferencing)
- Course management software
- Hybrid/Distributed learning/Distance learning, employing combinations of these methods.

Instructional tools

Basic:

- Computer lab with instructor and student workstations
- Projector
- Printer
- Access to the Internet

Extra:

- Software for creating tutorials
- Whiteboard
- Classroom response technology
- Software for creating online guides
- Computer control technology
- Virtual sandbox
- Class recording capabilities

D. Program structures

Each institution will develop its own overall approach to instruction programming with comprehensive programs including the following elements:

- a clear articulated structure showing the correlation among components of the program;
- integral relationships with institutional curricula and initiatives (e.g., general education, first year experience, writing programs etc.);
- a progression of information literacy learning outcomes which match the complex learning outcomes throughout a student's academic career; and
- reach beyond the first year or general education courses and be present in writing intensive, discipline-specific coursework or relevant courses in the majors.

To meet these general guidelines, instruction programs should identify curricular and academic programs already in place or under development who will support evolving approaches to information literacy programming. Instruction librarians themselves should also seek opportunities for collaborative engagement in new institutional initiatives and redesigned curricula that allow for a deeper interplay between the library's instruction program and the total campus learning environment.

Examples of curricular and academic programs with which instruction programs can become engaged include, but are not limited to:

- first-year experiences;
- general education core requirements;
- research methods courses in disciplinary majors;
- writing intensive and capstone courses;
- undergraduate research experiences/internships;
- distance education, learning communities, cohorts; and
- experiential learning/service learning courses.

E. Evaluation and assessment

Evaluation and assessment of an instruction program are systematic ongoing processes that inform and guide Library strategic direction. A program evaluation plan is useful for assessing a Library instruction program's success and viability.

Program evaluation should be based on the Library's mission and goals and include:

- Measures of evaluation based on specific a) student learning outcomes and b) overall program goals;
- A variety of indirect and direct measures assessing various aspects of the program, e.g. needs assessment, participant reaction, teaching effectiveness, overall effectiveness of program;
- Regular data collection and analysis using such measures;
- Periodic revision of program based on data analysis;
- A feedback loop that assesses the sustainability of the program; and
- Coordination of assessment with library administration and teaching faculty where appropriate

II. Support

A. Instructional facilities

Libraries should have ready access to facilities of sufficient size and number that are equipped to meet the needs of the library's instruction program.

The instructional setting(s) should, at least, duplicate the equipment, technology, and programs available to users. At minimum, the facilities should allow the instructor to demonstrate information systems in a designated teaching space. Ideally, facilities will provide the technology required to provide an individual hands-on opportunity for those being instructed. The physical setting should be flexible enough to accommodate active learning and student collaboration when appropriate.

B. Instructional support facilities

The library should provide convenient access to the equipment and services necessary to design, produce, reproduce, and update instructional materials in a variety of formats. There should be both physical and virtual spaces for the preparation and storage of instructional materials.

- Instructional technologists to assist with designing and providing technical support
- Commitment to purchasing and providing support for classroom technologies
- Administrative support for staffing to accomplish these goals

C. Financial support

Instructional programs should have adequate funds identified to attain the stated goals of the program. Funding should cover all personnel which includes student, clerical, technical assistance, and other staff as needed. In addition collaborative instructional projects with other campus units should share budgetary responsibilities when appropriate. All instructional programs should also review the following budgeting considerations:

- software, equipment or access to equipment; supplies and materials;
- design, production, reproduction, and revision of materials;
- promotion and evaluation of the instruction program;
- training and continuing education of those involved in the instruction program; and
- whenever possible, instructional personnel should use the expertise of development officers and institutional staff with external fundraising responsibilities to further expand or enhance the program.

D. Support for continuing education, training, and development

Support for continuing professional development helps to establish an atmosphere conducive to innovation and high morale. It is recommended that the library include as support:

- A structured program for orientation and training of new instruction librarians
- A program of continuing education or the provision of continuing education opportunities, including release time
- Organizational support and release time for continuing education and product development

E. Human Resources

To achieve the goals set forth in the library's mission statement for instruction programs, the library should employ, develop, or have access to sufficient personnel with appropriate education, experience, and expertise to:

- teach individuals and groups in the campus community;
- use instructional design processes and design a variety of instruction programs and services;
- promote, market, manage, and coordinate diverse instruction activities;
- collect and interpret assessment data to evaluate and update instruction programs and services;
- integrate and apply instructional technologies into learning activities when appropriate;
- produce instructional materials using available media and electronic technologies;
- collaborate with faculty and other academic professionals in planning, implementing, and assessing information literacy programming; and
- respond to changing technologies, environments, and communities.

Many instruction programs will have a designated program manager, or a coordinating/oversight group, with expertise in pedagogy, instructional design, assessment, and other instructional issues. Those with primary managerial/coordination oversight for instructional programs should have clearly written and delineated position descriptions setting forth the scope of their responsibilities.

Key components of advanced Instruction Programs

- Relationships with key institutional curricula and initiatives
- Reach beyond the first year
- Research methods courses in disciplinary majors
- Progression of IL learning outcomes
- General education core requirements
- Capstone courses, learning communities, and cohorts
- Computer equipment, training, and support staff
- First-year seminars
- Writing-across-the-curriculum programs

- Undergraduate research experiences/internships
- Experiential learning/service learning courses
- Additional courses, resources, departments, or committees
- Linked credit courses

Benchmarks

The Instruction Program

- Has defined, measurable learning objectives that are aligned with ACRL's *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* and institution's standards and goals;
- Has worked to align institutional standards regarding information literacy with ACRL's *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*;
- Has the necessary facilities and technology to meet the needs of participants and the objectives of the program;
- Has appropriate tools for providing instruction;
- Continuously seeks out opportunities to collaborate with academic programs already in place or under development in order to foster positive relationships across campus;
- Is progressive and reaches beyond the first year of college and/or general education coursework;
- Has adequate funding, resources and personnel to support a robust instructional program, including an ongoing budgetary commitment for acquiring classroom technologies that support diverse learners and provide support for the maintenance and expansion of these technologies;
- Provides needed equipment, supplies, and other materials used for instruction, program promotion, and training/continuing education;
- Ensures that teaching faculty are aware of the ACRL *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*. Librarians have developed training and awareness tools to help create this understanding;
- Collaborates with campus units that are involved with faculty teaching and learning initiatives to incorporate the ACRL *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* into training programs for faculty. Connections to the Standards are made between institutional teaching and learning goals; and
- Provides internal library training and/or external training opportunities (i.e. Institute for Information Literacy Immersion programs) that emphasize incorporating pedagogy and technology appropriately are provided to librarians and instructional staff.

Bibliography

ACRL Instruction Section. (2008). *The First-Year Experience and Academic Libraries: A Select, Annotated Bibliography*. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/about/sections/is/projpubs/tmcfyebib.cfm>

ACRL's Institute for Information Literacy. (2003). *Characteristics of Programs of Information Literacy that Illustrate Best Practices: A Guideline*. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/characteristics.cfm>

ACRL Instruction Section. (2001). *Objectives for Information Literacy Instruction: A Model Statement for Academic Librarians*. 2001. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/objectivesinformation.cfm>

ACRL Standards Committee. (2000). "Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education" Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/standards.pdf>

Angelo, T. A., & Cross, K. P. (1993). *Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for college teachers*. The Jossey-Bass higher and adult education series. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Budd, J. (2009). *Framing library instruction*. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries.

Diamond, R. M. (2008). *Designing and assessing courses and curricula: A practical guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Gradowski, G., Snively, L., Dempsey, P., & Association of College and Research Libraries. (1998). *Designs for active learning: A sourcebook of classroom strategies for information education*. Chicago: American Library Association.

Jacobs, H. (2008). Information Literacy and Reflective Pedagogical Praxis. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 34(3), 256-262.

Oakleaf, M. (2010). *The value of academic libraries: A comprehensive research review and report*. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries.

ACRL: Characteristics of Programs of Information Literacy that Illustrate Best Practices: A Guideline

Best Practices Initiative Institute for Information Literacy

Approved by the ACRL Board, June 2003, revised January 2012.

Note: Links within the text will take you to an annotation of the highlighted terms.

Overview

The “Characteristics of Programs of Information Literacy that Illustrate Best Practices: A Guideline” attempts to articulate elements of exemplary information literacy programs for undergraduate students at four- and two-year institutions.

The characteristics identify and describe features notable in information literacy programs of [excellence](#). The characteristics are not, however, descriptive of any one program, but rather represent a metaset of elements identified through examination of many programs and philosophies of undergraduate information literacy.

In addition, though guided by the definitions found in the [“Final Report of the ALA Presidential Committee on Information Literacy”](#) (1989), [“A Progress Report on Information Literacy: An Update on the American Library Association Presidential Committee on Information Literacy: Final Report”](#) (1998), and the [“Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education”](#) (2000), the characteristics themselves do not attempt to define [information literacy](#) per se. Instead, the focus is on defining the elements of best practices in information literacy programming.

Although an attempt was made to categorize and organize the characteristics for ease of use and logical presentation, the order does not reflect any judgment of priority.

Purpose and Use

The characteristics are primarily intended to help those who are interested in developing, assessing, and improving information literacy programs. This audience includes faculty, librarians, administrators, and technology professionals, as well as others involved in information literacy programming at a particular institution.

Individuals involved with information literacy programming are encouraged to use the characteristics in a variety of ways. These characteristics both present and represent a set of ideas that can be used when establishing, developing, advancing, revitalizing, or assessing an information literacy program. The characteristics also provide a framework within which to categorize the details of a given program and to analyze how different program elements contribute to attaining excellence in information literacy. Because the characteristics are descriptive in nature and the result of a meta-analysis of many programs, they may also be useful for benchmarking program status, improvement, and long-term development.

It is important to note, however, that no program is expected to be exemplary with respect to all characteristics; this list is not prescriptive. Rather, individuals are encouraged to consider their library and institutional contexts in establishing information literacy program goals and strategies while incorporating these characteristics.

Librarians are also encouraged to make use of the "[Guidelines for Instruction Programs in Academic Libraries](#)" for specific guidance on academic library involvement with information literacy programs.

Characteristics of Programs of Information Literacy that Illustrate Best Practices

Category 1: Mission

A [mission statement](#) for an information literacy program:

- Includes a definition of information literacy;
- Is consistent with the "[ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education](#)";
- Aligns with the library's mission statement to correspond with the larger mission statement of the institution;
- Adheres to the format of campus strategic documents;
- Incorporates the institutional stakeholders, clearly reflecting their contributions and the expected benefits;
- Appears in appropriate institutional documents; and
- Promotes relevant lifelong learning and professional development.

Category 2: Goals and Objectives

[Goals and objectives](#) for an information literacy program:

- Are consistent with the mission, goals, and objectives of the library and the institution;
- Establish measurable outcomes for evaluation of the program;
- Accommodate input from institutional stakeholders;
- Clearly present the integration of information literacy across the curriculum for students' academic pursuits and effective lifelong learning, see [Category 5: Articulation](#);
- Accommodate sequential growth of students' skills and understanding throughout their education, see [Category 5: Articulation](#); and
- Take into account all learners served by or connected to the institution, regardless of delivery systems or location.

Category 3: Planning

Planning for an information literacy program:

- Articulates and develops mechanisms to implement and/or adapt components of the best practices listed in this document (as needed):
 - mission
 - goals and objectives
 - administration and institutional support
 - articulation (program sequence) with the curriculum
 - collaboration
 - pedagogy
 - staffing
 - outreach
 - assessment/evaluation.
- Addresses current opportunities and challenges.
- Is tied to library, institutional, and information technology planning and budgeting cycles.
- Incorporates findings from [environmental scans](#).
- Accommodates the level of the [program](#), department, and institution.

- Addresses and prioritizes human, technological and financial resources (both current and projected), taking into account administrative and institutional support.
- Encourages librarian, faculty, and administrator collaboration at the outset.
- Enables librarians to take on leadership roles that will extend beyond the planning stages.
- Includes a program for training and development, see [Category 8: Staffing](#).
- Provides a timeline for systematic revision.

Category 4: Administrative and Institutional Support

Administration within an institution:

- Assigns information literacy [leadership](#) and responsibilities to appropriate librarians, faculty, and staff.
- Incorporates information literacy in the institution's mission, strategic plan, policies, and procedures.
- Provides funding to establish and ensure ongoing support for :
 - teaching facilities
 - current and appropriate technologies
 - appropriate staffing levels
 - professional development opportunities.
- Recognizes and encourages collaboration, see [Category 6: Collaboration](#).
- Communicates support for the program.
- [Rewards](#) individual and institutional achievement and participation in the information literacy program.

Category 5: Articulation (program sequence) within the Curriculum

Articulation with the curriculum for an information literacy program:

- Identifies the scope (i.e., depth and complexity) of competencies to be acquired on a disciplinary level as well as at the course level.
- Sequences and integrates competencies throughout a student's academic career, progressing in sophistication.
- Emphasizes learner-centered learning, see [Category 7: Pedagogy](#) .
- Is formalized and widely disseminated.
- Uses local [governance structures](#) to advocate for and ensure institution-wide integration into academic or vocational programs.
- Specifies programs and courses charged with implementing competencies.

Category 6: Collaboration

Collaboration in an information literacy program among disciplinary faculty, librarians, other instructors (e.g., teaching assistants), administrators, and other program staff:

- Fosters communication among disciplinary faculty, librarians, other instructors (e.g., teaching assistants), administrators, and other staff within the institution.
- Focuses on enhancing student learning and skill development for lifelong learning.
- Communicates effectively with faculty, librarians, other instructors, administrators, and additional staff members to gain support for the program within the academic community.
- Aligns information literacy with disciplinary content.
- Works within the context of the course content, and other learning experiences, to achieve information literacy outcomes.
- Takes place at different stages: planning, delivery, assessment of student learning, and evaluation and refinement of the program.

Category 7: Pedagogy

Pedagogy for an information literacy program:

- Supports diverse approaches to teaching and learning.
- Is suitable to the type of instruction (e.g., one-shot, dedicated course).
- Takes into account diverse teaching and learning styles.
- Incorporates and uses relevant and appropriate information technology and other [media resources](#) to support pedagogy.
- Advances learning through collaborative and experiential-learning activities.
- Promotes critical thinking, reflection, and recursive learning.
- Builds on learners' existing knowledge, course assignments, and career goals.
- Contextualizes information literacy within ongoing coursework appropriate to the academic program and course level.
- Prepares students for independent lifelong learning.

Category 8: Staffing

Staff for an information literacy program:

- Includes librarians, library staff, administrators, program coordinators, instructional technologists, as well as disciplinary faculty, graphic designers, teaching/learning specialists, and other program staff as needed.
- Endeavors to work collaboratively with others and support each other's learning development.
- Are knowledgeable in instruction/teaching, curriculum development, and assessment of student learning.
- Garner expertise in developing, coordinating, implementing, evaluating, and revising information literacy programs.
- Exemplify and advocate for information literacy and lifelong learning.
- Engage in professional development and training.
- Are adequate in number to support the program's mission and workload.
- Receive regular evaluations about the quality of their contributions to the program and areas for improvement.

Category 9: Outreach

Outreach activities for an information literacy program:

- Clearly define and describe the program and its value to targeted audiences, including those within and beyond the specific institution.
- Market the program through the creation and distribution of publicity materials.
- Identify and reach out to relevant stakeholders and support groups both within and outside of the institution.
- Use a variety of communication methods, including [formal and informal](#) networks and media channels.
- Provide, in collaboration with other campus professional development staff, workshops and programs that relate to information literacy.
- Contribute to information literacy's advancement by sharing information, methods, and plans with peers and stakeholders both within and outside of the institution.

Category 10: Assessment/Evaluation

[Assessment/evaluation](#) of information literacy includes program performance and [student outcomes](#).

Program evaluation:

- Develops a process for program planning, evaluation, and revision.
- Measures the progress of meeting the program's goals and objectives, see [Category 2: Goals and Objectives](#).

- Integrates with course and curriculum assessment, institutional evaluations and regional/professional accreditation initiatives.
- Uses appropriate assessment/evaluation method for relevant purposes, for example [formative and summative](#) and/or short-term and longitudinal.

Student outcomes:

- Acknowledge differences in learning and teaching styles in the outcome measures.
- Employ a variety of pre- and post-instruction outcome measures; for example: needs assessment, pre-tests, post-tests, portfolio assessment, oral defense, quizzes, essays, direct observation, anecdotal, peer and self review, and experience.
- Focus on learner performance, knowledge acquisition, and attitude appraisal.
- Assess the learners' [process and product](#).
- Include learner-, peer-, and self-evaluation.

Document and Revision History

The characteristics were developed through a multiphase process which involved professionals from multiple sectors of higher education, including librarians, faculty, administrators, and professional organizations. Beginning in April 2000, suggestions for an original draft of the characteristics were gathered through a Web-based Delphi polling technique. Members of the Best Practices Project Team and Best Practices Advisory Panel then wrote a document based upon these suggestions and revised it several times. A working draft was distributed widely for comment and went through a further revision. A penultimate draft was completed in March 2001 and was used as the basis for selecting ten institutions for a national invitational conference on best practices in information literacy programming, which was held in Atlanta in June 2002. As part of that meeting the characteristics were further refined. The revisions culminated in a final edition.

In 2008 members of the ACRL Information Literacy Best Practices committee (ILBP) undertook a revision of the characteristics. Committee members agreed that certain language needed to be changed in order to better represent the current state of information literacy at academic institutions. Members of ILBP began the process by offering suggestions for revisions; these suggestions were then collected, keyed to the original text, and then disseminated for comments from the ACRL membership by sending the links to the original document and the proposed revisions to the ILI-L, COLLIB, and CJC listservs. After collecting the comments provided by ACRL members, the document was re-examined, and a new draft was created using the track changes feature, which allowed readers to look at proposed changes and the differences in meaning that would result from making those changes. The changes were then integrated into the original document and submitted to ACRL Executive Committee for approval.

TEACHING INFORMATION LITERACY

A Conceptual Approach

Christy Gavin



The Scarecrow Press, Inc.
Lanham, Maryland • Toronto • Plymouth, UK
2008