

Improving Information Literacy in First Year Students:

Collaborating with the Library to Improve First Year Student Library and Research Skills, Improve Retention, and Foster Self-Confidence

**Douglas.Hasty@FIU.edu
First Year Experience Librarian
Florida International University
Miami, FL 33199**

Collaborating with the Academic Library:

Anticipated Learning Outcomes

Collaborations with the Library can result in First Year Student academic success improvements relating to:

- Understanding the value of the academic library
- Learning how to maneuver library resources in an overwhelmingly online environment
- Understand the necessity for Information Literacy
- Confronting and reducing library anxiety
- Becoming aware of one's self-perception of library and research skills

Component 1

Understanding the Value of the Academic Library – First Year Students Library Skills and Knowledge Sets

Anticipated library skills and knowledge sets which first year students should achieve:

- The layout of the library (study areas, service desks, device checkout, etc.)
- The library's home page, listing available online and print resources (books, journals/articles, databases, etc.)
- How to find research and information literacy help
- Perform basic searches to find books, peer-reviewed articles, and other works
- Understand the difference between keyword and subject searching, and why both are important
- Know how call numbers work and how to use them
- Knowledge of and experience with multiple citation methods

Component 2

Information Literacy – Information Literacy Standards

The information literate student:

- Determines the nature and extent of the information needed
- Accesses needed information effectively and efficiently
- Evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into their knowledge base and value system
- Uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
- Understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

Defining “Information Literacy”

“Information Literacy is a **set of abilities** requiring individuals to **recognize when information is needed** and have the ability to **locate, evaluate, and use effectively** the needed information.”

- **Set of Abilities** – attributes which make success obtainable, such as objectivity, organization, patience, perseverance, etc.
- **Recognize When Information is Needed** – be aware that there is insufficient evidence in the paper
- **Locate** – both physically and virtually, know how to conduct searches
- **Evaluate** – objectively assess an article, book, paper (including the student’s own), for mistakes, lapses in evidence, confused wording, etc.
- **Use Effectively** – know when, where, and how to present and depend upon the evidence

Integrating Information Literacy as a Retention Resource

- Developing and mastering information literacy skills begins in the first year, progresses through all levels of higher education and into Masters and PhD programs, and achieves expert status in the profession.
- Teaching and implementing information literacy skills throughout the campus, in all programs, depends upon the level and extent of collaborative efforts between librarians, instructors, and administrators
- Many research and information sources by various organizations have become available for researchers, and this number increases every day. This creates difficulties for the individual researcher or information seeker – which to use, which to believe, how to search effectively.

Higher Education Literacies

Three types of Higher Education “Literacies”:

- Information Literacy –research process skills
- Technology Literacy – software and application skills
- Computer Literacy – hardware and programming skills

Information literacy:

- Is an intellectual framework for understanding, finding, evaluating, and using information.
- Extends beyond the formal classroom.
- Forms the basis for lifelong learning.
- Is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education.
- Results in self-directed learning, critical thinking, and asking informed questions.

An information literate individual is able to:

- Determine the extent of information needed
- Access the needed information effectively and efficiently
- Evaluate information and its sources critically
- Incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base
- Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
- Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally

Technology Literacy:

- Shares similar skill sets with Information Literacy.
- Focuses on understanding the underlying concepts of technology and applying problem-solving and critical thinking to using technology.
- Individuals whom are technologically literate are able to use a computer and software with skill levels of no less than moderate in order to be successful in academic and business situations.

Computer Literacy:

- Understand and be able to physically set up computers and devices
- Install and set up a wireless network
- Provide fundamental software maintenance and troubleshooting
- Install, remove, and customize software and programs
- Be responsible for security and virus protection

Component 3**The 5 States of Anxiety**

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	Traditional Stages of Loss and Grief	Stages of Library Anxiety
Shock & Denial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning of the loss may result in complete disbelief. • Denying the reality may help lessen pain. • Shock may help provide emotional protection. • May last for weeks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shocked by heightened expectations for research papers in college, profound self-doubt occurs. • Realization that expectations of academic success have suddenly and sharply risen. • “This is too difficult for me to do.” • Procrastination sets in. Study and research time are wasted.
Anger & Guilt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shock is replaced by anger, recognition of the situation occurs and suffering begins. • Rather allowing reality to take its natural course, coping may be hampered by use of alcohol or drugs. • Feelings of guilt about what was and was not done may become overwhelming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shock is replaced with realizing that the assignment won't go away; stress levels rise. • As stress levels rise, substance abuse may occur. • Lack of responsibility develops into guilt, possibly spreading to other class work and assignments. • Loss of control becomes overwhelming.
Anger & Bargaining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger is compounded by frustration, may be misdirected towards people with little or no involvement. Relationships may be permanently damaged. • "Why me?" • Bargaining takes place, in a vain attempt to reverse the course of events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of progress may lead to reduced expectations for a high grade. • Self-bargaining begins, reasoning that a C grade is better than nothing. • If I fail the course, I can take it again.
Depression, Reflection, Loneliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term loss and reality set in, followed by deep sadness or depression. • Reflections of past times or events begins. • Self-isolation may occur, resulting in despair and loneliness. • Support from friends may not be helpful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frustration leads to lack of confidence in academic abilities. • Comparisons of high school successes to college failures redirects efforts to focus backwards rather than forwards. • Support from students in similar situation fosters negative encouragement to accept the situation rather than to improve.
Upward Turn, Acceptance, Hope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjustments begin to occur in life, becoming calmer, organized, forward thinking. • Realistic thinking replaces irrational thoughts. • Realizing that acceptance does not mean instant happiness, optimism and thinking of the future slowly starts to return. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At some point, self-confidence returns. • Faced with reality, work begins. • With less time, only minimum requirements are completed. • Results depend upon the student's ability to work under stress with limited time and a looming deadline. • Seek help from the professor, a librarian, or the writing center.

Component 4 – Analyzing First Year Students’ Self-Perception of Library & Research Skills

Reasons for the Survey

- To discover First Year Students’ self-perceptions of their library and research skills, by surveying them before and after the instruction.
- To analyze the differences, if any between the two sets of survey responses.
- To share the results with colleagues interested in the effects of library instruction, the insight regarding origins of low retention levels, and higher education administrators.

Methodology

- The required Freshman Orientation class [SLS1501] instructors who scheduled library instruction session had their students report to the library for that class session.
- Prior to the session beginning, students were given a one-page survey which seeks to discover self-perceptions of their library and research skills prior to the instruction session commencing.
- The same one-page “Before” survey was given to the students at the end of the library instruction session.

Pre-Instruction Survey

- Survey questions included these topics and response choices ranged from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”:
 - Accessing the library from off-campus
 - Finding general information about the library
 - Finding books and articles for research papers
 - Using Google and Wikipedia for research
 - Using library databases for research
 - Getting help from a librarian
 - Able to plan, research, and write a paper
 - Able to find materials on Course Reserves
 - Able to checkout a laptop and other devices
 - Able to use Interlibrary Loan
- “Before” survey results (total: 2,371):
 - Strongly Agree – 37.1%
 - Agree – 24.9%
 - Neutral – 17.9%
 - Disagree – 13.8%
 - Strongly Disagree – 6.3%
- Survey results by blocks of responses:
 - Strongly Agree / Agree – 62.0%
 - Neutral – 17.9%
 - Strongly Disagree / Disagree – 20.1%

Post-Instruction Survey

- Survey questions included these topics and response choices ranged from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”:

- Accessing the library from off-campus
- Finding general information about the library
- Finding books and articles for research papers
- Using Google and Wikipedia for research
- Using library databases for research
- Getting help from a librarian
- Able to plan, research, and write a paper
- Able to find materials on Course Reserves
- Able to checkout a laptop and other devices
- Able to use Interlibrary Loan
- “After” survey results (total: 2,586)
 - Strongly Agree – 73.0%: up from 37.1%
 - Agree – 20.4%: down from 24.9%
 - Neutral – 4.5%: down from 17.9%
 - Disagree – 1.3%: down from 13.8%
 - Strongly Disagree – 0.8%: down from 6.3%
- Survey results by blocks of responses:
 - Strongly Agree / Agree – 93.4%: up from 62.0%
 - Neutral – 4.5%
 - Strongly Disagree / Disagree – 2.1%: down from 20.1%

What the Results Revealed

After the instruction session, students reported these differences as recorded in the pre-instruction and post-instruction surveys:

- Self-confidence doubled after a one-hour library instruction session;
- Doubt about their library and research skills dropped ten-fold; and,
- Free-text comments consistently and overwhelmingly reported profound increases in strong increases in self-confidence, better and clearer understandings of the research process, and an understanding of the academic library’s role and value in their education.

Online resources for the complete “Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education” document from ACRL [Association of College & Research Libraries]

PDF document: <http://www.ala.org/acrl/files/standards/standards.pdf>

ACRL home page: <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency>