

# Guidelines for instruction programs in academic libraries

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by the ACRL Instruction Section Guidelines for Instruction Programs Standards Revision Task Force

## **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 institu-

tion'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 (e-mail, 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 that 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 that will support evolving approaches to information literacy programming. Instruction librarians them-

selves 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, and
- 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 and 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; and
- 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; and
- 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.

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