

This month we celebrate the ongoing work of ACRL colleagues across the United States and Canada who are participating in the Assessment in Action (AiA) program (www.ala.org/acrl/AiA). The March issue of *C&RL*, guest-edited by Kara J. Malenfant, Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe, and Debra Gilchrist, focuses on the design and conduct of action research, as modeled in the AiA projects pursued at seven participating institutions: Anne Arundel Community College, Grinnell College, Illinois Institute of Technology, St. Mary's College of Maryland, University of Alberta, University of California-Merced, and Utah State University.

While these essays represent the excellent work that has been conducted as part of AiA, they are also notable for the way in which they demonstrate the impact of the association's investment in providing research training and support to members in a diverse array of institutions, including community colleges, liberal arts colleges, comprehensive universities, and research universities. The need for an engaged and sustainable approach to continuing professional education in research methods and the application of lessons learned from research to improve practice have been noted consistently in member surveys, feedback provided to groups such as the ACRL Research Committee (in its various incarnations), and studies published in *C&RL*, including "Academic Librarian Research: A Survey of Attitudes, Involvement, and Perceived Capabilities."¹

The ongoing interest in such efforts, and their appeal across national borders and the professional boundaries of library type, can be seen in the appeal of programs such as the Institute for Research Design in Librarianship (<http://irdlonline.org/>), the Librarians' Research Institute (www.carl-abrc.ca/lri.html), and the Research Institute for Public Libraries (<https://ripl.lrs.org/>). We at *C&RL* hope to see

the association make an ongoing commitment to programs like AiA, to tie such programs to the practice-oriented research agendas developed by member groups, and to foster greater collaboration and coordination with efforts such as IRDL to ensure the greatest impact for our members.

In addition to an introductory essay by the guest editors, the March 2016 issue includes the following articles:

- Kara J. Malenfant, Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe, and Debra Gilchrist. "Assessment as Action Research: Bridging Academic Scholarship and Everyday Practice." *Abstract*: This special issue of *College & Research Libraries* proudly features a selection of action research studies by participants of the ACRL AiA program. Just over 200 institutions have participated in the AiA program, with a librarian from each leading a campus team in developing and implementing an action learning project that examines the impact of the library on student success and contributes to assessment activities on campus.

- Veronica Arellano Douglas and Celia E. Rabinowitz. "Examining the Relationship Between Faculty-Librarian Collaboration and First Year Students' Information Literacy Abilities." *Abstract*: Using surveys, interviews, and a rubric-based assessment of student research essays, the St. Mary's College of Maryland Assessment in Action team investigated the relationship between faculty-librarian collaboration in a First Year Seminar (FYS) course and students' demonstrated information literacy (IL) abilities. In gathering information on the experiences, attitudes, and behaviors of faculty, librarians, and first-year students, the project team uncovered additional questions about the integration of IL in the FYS, the ways in which faculty and librarians work towards educational goals, and just what should be expected from students in their first year of college.

- Sara L. Davidson and Susan Mikkelsen. "Assessing the Value of Course-Embedded

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Information Literacy on Student Learning and Achievement.” *Abstract*: A team at the University of California- Merced, collaborated to evaluate the value of integrating information literacy into introductory composition courses through a curriculum developed by librarians and writing faculty. Using a mixed-methods approach, the team investigated the impact of the curriculum on students’ learning and achievement at the end of their first semester of college. Students participating in the curriculum demonstrated greater gains than their peers in using suitable sources and presenting arguments and multiple viewpoints with evidence. This learning did not translate to higher student achievement as represented by course grades and grade point average.

- Jérôme Melançon and Nancy Goebel. “Personal Librarian for Aboriginal Students: A Programmatic Assessment.” *Abstract*: The Personal Librarian for Aboriginal Students (PLAS) program at the University of Alberta (UofA) is a creative outgrowth of the growing Personal Librarian programs in academic libraries, in which a student is partnered with an individual librarian for the academic year. In the case of the UofA’s PLAS program, first-year undergraduate students who self-identified as Aboriginal during the registration process were selected as participants. The first year of the program saw many successes. This paper provides background on the initiative and the associated action research indicating a creative approach to engaging Aboriginal students.

- Phil Jones, Julia Bauder, and Kevin Engel. “Mixed or Complementary Messages: Making the Most of Unexpected Assessment Results.” *Abstract*: Grinnell College participated in ACRL’s first cohort of AiA, undertaking a mixed-methods action research project to assess the effectiveness of librarian-led research literacy sessions in improving students’ research skills. The quantitative data showed that the quality of students’ sources did not markedly improve following a research literacy session, while the qualitative data indicated that many students were able to state and describe important research concepts they learned. This article profiles the

development of Grinnell’s AiA project and discusses how Grinnell’s librarians responded when the initial results led to more questions rather than to satisfactory answers.

- Kacy Lundstrom, Pamela Martin, and Dory Cochran. “Making Strategic Decisions: Conducting and Using Research on the Impact of Sequenced Library Instruction.” *Abstract*: This study explores the relationship between course grades and sequenced library instruction interventions throughout psychology students’ curriculum. Researchers conducted this study to inform decisions about sustaining and improving program integrations for first- and second-year composition courses and to improve discipline-level integrations. Researchers began with transcript analysis but soon incorporated student surveys and a faculty focus group to supplement the data and influence future directions. Findings confirmed that students benefit from meaningful collaborations with the library at strategic, sequenced points in their curriculum, including at the discipline level. This research also provided concrete information that brought about change at the classroom and programmatic level.

- Lisa Massengale, Pattie Piotrowski, and Devin Savage. “Identifying and Articulating Library Connections to Student Success.” *Abstract*: Engaging in ongoing assessment is key to libraries demonstrating their value to their institutions. This study is an initial step in a STEM library’s long-term goal of measuring the library’s connection to, and impact on, student academic success markers such as retention and persistence. Initial results showed that any library usage was always accompanied by a slightly higher achievement in GPA for the user. Results will serve as benchmarks for further study.

- Brandy Whitlock and Nassim Ebrahimi. “Beyond the Library: Using Multiple, Mixed Measures Simultaneously in a College-Wide Assessment of Information Literacy.” *Abstract*: To get the best sense of how graduating students demonstrate information literacy skills and how the institution can improve student learning, the AiA project at Anne Arundel

Community College (AACC) deployed a combination of indirect measures and authentic assessment of student work, using assessment tools flexible enough to be deployed across the college. The results of AACC's AiA project have provided college practitioners and stakeholders with evidence of the extent to which graduating students demonstrate crucial information literacy skills and with data that can inform decisions about how to foster more effective teaching and learning.

Online Forum on Assessment in Action

In conjunction with the release of the special issue, *C&RL* will sponsor an online forum focused on the AiA work conducted at two of the institutions included in the collection: Anne Arundel Community College and Grinnell College. AiA participants from these institutions will describe their work as part of the project, how the data collected informed decision-making and practice at their schools, and the value that the AiA experience had for them (and their colleagues) in terms of professional development. The *C&RL* Online Forum on Assessment in Action will be held

on March 24 at 2 p.m. (CST). For information on how to register, please visit <http://crl.acrl.org/site/misc/fora.xhtml>.

Online Forum on Student Success recording available

The *C&RL* Online Forum on Student Success, originally scheduled for October 28, 2015, is now available as a recording. The asynchronous session was recorded on January 6, 2016, thanks to the extraordinary efforts of *C&RL* Social Media Editor Sarah K. Steiner and participants including Felly Chiteng Kot (Nazarbayev University) and Jennifer L. Jones (Georgia State University). For this and other recordings of past forum programs, please visit: <http://crl.acrl.org/site/misc/fora.xhtml>.

Note

1. Marie R. Kennedy and Kristine R. Brancolini, "Academic Librarian Research: A Survey of Attitudes, Involvement, and Perceived Capabilities," *C&RL* 73 (2012): 431-448, accessed January 21, 2016, doi: 10.5860/crl-276. *ZZ*

("Librarians in the budde," cont. from page 146)

objectives would help develop student research confidence. Coaches would likely be very open to librarians developing specific research requirements.

- Rather than asking students to identify a "weak study habit," each student should identify one SMART academic goal for the semester. This would encourage individual accountability and help students see their progress and improvement.

- There could be value in each of the librarians working with players from different graduating classes: perhaps Clark working with freshmen and sophomores, and Erdmann working with juniors and seniors.

At the team dinner, the coaches confided to us that the majority of the students lacked confidence both as athletes and as students. This had been observed during our first session with the students when few were able to identify a personal strength or skill. The lack

of confidence in our driven, toughminded female athletes was surprising but relevant to how we design future workshops and library instruction activities for all students.

This pilot project with the field hockey team led to discussing other opportunities for collaboration. In addition to working with faculty and the academic program, it is time to ask other college departments "What do you want the students to know?"

At VWC, we will be seeking collaboration with International Programs and Model United Nations as well as other sports teams. Librarians can develop activities, assignments, and discussions that enable more learning opportunities. Students can reap demonstrated benefits from information literacy skills outside the traditional classroom environment, and librarians will be there to cheer them on in every aspect of their undergraduate experience. *ZZ*