Dual Credit Programs and Impact on IL Instruction

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Introduction
What is Dual Credit?

Dual credit, also called concurrent enrollment or dual enrollment, is a national trend that is gaining in popularity. The U.S. Department of education defines dual credit as "…high school students earning college credits for courses taken through a postsecondary institution."[1] These courses are different than Advanced Placement courses, in that upon successful completion the student has earned actual college credit from a recognized university or college while at the same time earning high school credit. These courses can be taught at the university, or in the high school, by either university or school staff, but are administered under a state system of guidelines, often at a lower cost than traditional college courses. During the 2010-11 academic year, 46% of Title IV eligible 2 and 4 year colleges and universities reported offering dual credit programs, with 1,277,100 high school students taking classes for dual credit with 82% of public high schools participating.[2] Of these, 34% reported that their dual credit courses were only taught by high school instructors.[3]

Because of the mixed nature of dual credit it can be hard to define and evaluate programs across schools or states. Karp and Jeong outline many of these challenges in their report to the U.S. Department of Education, highlighting the lack of student tracking and rigor in statistical analysis.[4] With the majority of studies focusing on high school completion rather than long term outcomes, it is difficult to make any meaningful conclusions about the effect dual enrollment has on student achievement in college and after. This is echoed by Bailey and Karp's analysis of the research, which found that while there were compelling reasons to continue such programs, there was no reliable data on long term outcomes.[5]

In the state of Indiana, these classes primarily take one of two forms: dual credit only classes where all students are enrolled concurrently or mixed classrooms where some students will receive college credit and others will not. Instructor certification requirements differ depending on the credit granting institution. Many high schools offer dual credit classes from multiple institutions from a variety of locations across the state, making it difficult for students and staff to keep track of who is enrolled at which university. All of which presents serious challenges for information literacy instruction and library access.

Challenges

An often cited challenge to dual credit programs is ensuring that students enrolled in coursework off campus, particularly when conducted by high school instructors in the traditional school setting, receive the same experience as on campus students. Since the majority of dual credit courses focus on first and second year general education requirements, composition and speech courses are most often affected. Colorado State University composition instructors

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reported that students who had taken their first composition course via dual credit were not demonstrating the same level of competency with research techniques as students that had completed the on campus coursework.[6] One reason this may be so noticeable is the lack of consistency between library resources and instructional support between the academic library and the high school. Rhode Island college administrators expressed similar concerns regarding assessment and accountability of courses taught in the high school by the classroom teachers.[7]

Another challenge is the lack of awareness for the need for information literacy instruction in the dual credit classroom. In a study on the self-efficacy of dual credit students, the only area that consistently showed a moderate level of confidence was related to research and write a paper.[8] Since this study was concerned with confidence, not skill, it does not indicate that the students were actually proficient in this area—only that they possessed a certain level of familiarity with it. That being the case, however, they may be less inclined to seek out assistance or make inquiries to their instructor or librarian regarding resource location and utilization. This is only one area of information literacy, but is demonstrative of the ongoing need for outreach and dialogue with instructors about the true breadth of skills needed for university level research.

Other challenges for reaching dual credit students relate to distance and funding. With credit awarding institutions spread across the majority of the state, the student in question may be unable to travel to the university library for help or for access to resources—or know that they have access to resources online. Similarly, it may be impossible for the academic librarian to go to the student due to either distance, cost, time, or a combination thereof. Since many colleges and universities rely on first year composition and speech courses for the basis of their information literacy instruction program, the very courses most often offered in the high school via dual credit programs, this problem begins to take on increased significance. In the state of Indiana, for example, many students may earn enough credits to enter college at the junior level, thus bypassing all lower level information literacy instruction that on-campus students would have received.

Purpose of the Study

In July 2011, the Academic Libraries of Indiana's Information Literacy Committee hosted an Information Literacy Summit where project HAIL (Hoosiers and Information Literacy) was born. HAIL was designed to be a joint effort by librarians from all fields: academic, public, school, and special to actively promote information literacy skills for all ages. One of the early areas of concern noted by this group was dual credit. A special working group was formed to investigate the situation. It was quickly discovered that there was little information available, and that the majority of academic librarians in the state had not been aware of the growing number of dual credit students, nor the possible affect this might have on existing information literacy efforts. This working group, consisting of a mix of school media specialists and academic librarians as well as a representative from the state library began having informal conversations with other HAIL members and attending local library conferences to inquire about what the needs of these students may be and the challenges facing information literacy instruction. As this informal information gathering continued it became clear that a more formal survey of the situation was necessary.

Methods

Academic librarians from two state universities collaborated to develop a pilot survey designed to ascertain what information literacy programs were being done in the state of Indiana to reach dual credit students. Questions were developed for both school media specialists and academic librarians asking them what type of information literacy instruction was taking place, if any, and in what subject areas. After IRB approval was granted, the survey was sent out using the state library association listservs, the state library listserv, and pre-existing lists of school media specialists from past instructional programing.

TABLE 1	
Responses by Type	
School Media Specialists	13
Community college/ 2-year college	2
Public 4-year college or university	2
Public masters/doctoral granting university	2
Private 4-year college or university	1

Results & Discussion

The surveys received a total of 20 respondents. The majority were school media specialists (13), with academic librarians making the smaller participant pool (7). The majority of the academic librarians responding worked at public institutions ranging from two year community colleges to doctoral granting state universities. Only one respondent was from a private university.

TABLE 2	
Methods of IL Instruction by Academic Librarians	
In person, university librarian visits high school	2
Students visit university library	4
Online tutorials	1
Webinar	0
Other	Librarian trains the teachers

There was a notable gap between high school media specialists and academic librarians on whose institutions provided information literacy instruction to high school students enrolled in dual credit courses. Fifty-seven percent of academic librarians answered yes, while 38% of school media specialists indicated that their school had such a program. The school media specialists indicated that the majority of their instruction to dual credit students was provided by a school media specialist in the high school classroom. Academic librarians, however, responded with a variety of methods of information literacy instruction. The majority of these instructions were given in the university library by an academic librarian. Only one respondent indicated that they offered online tutorials as a format for instruction.

TABLE 3		
Information Literacy Instruction by Subject		
	School Media Specialist	Academic Librarian
English composition/writing	86%	75%
Social Sciences	43%	0%
Humanities	29%	50%
Math and Science	0%	25%
Other	n/a	First Year Experience

In the case of both academic librarians and school media specialists, the majority of instruction was concentrated in English composition or writing courses with 75% of academic librarians and 86% of school media specialists that offered instruction indicating that they taught in these areas. In both groups, respondents indicated that there was very little interaction with the classroom teacher for the course, with the school media specialists indicating a higher degree of collaboration overall.

TABLE 4		
Interaction with High School Classroom Teachers		
	School Media Specialists	Academic Librarians
Highly collaborative	25%	0%
Some interaction	17%	25%
Very little interaction	42%	75%
No interaction	8%	0%
Other	*	

* "Highly collaborative with English, no interaction or instruction with any other subjects."

One result of concern was the lack of interaction between school media specialists and academic librarians involving information literacy instruction for dual credit courses. Both groups reported little to no interaction with their colleague. Open text responses indicated that this wasn't necessarily by choice, but rather a result of logistical problems or instructor preference. This demonstrates one of the

largest challenges to information literacy instruction for dual credit, that of negotiating multiple institution requirements and priorities.

TABLE 5 Interaction Between Librarians		
	School Media Specialists	Academic Librarians
Highly Collaborative	0%	0%
Some interaction	9%	0%
Very little interaction	0%	25%
No interaction	82%	50%
Other	*	†
* "We used to have good interaction with one college that was not part of a dual program but liked to collaborate with high schools. Unfortunately, the high school teacher in charge of this program with to another school system. Our current dual credit English teacher has chosen not to continue the program."		
† *"It depends. Some of the composition instructors actually bring the librarian with them on the library visit which is great. That way you know what resources the students have already used and know how to focus the lesson."*		

Of even greater concern, however, is the quality of the instruction provided. Both groups indicated that in their experience dual credit students were not receiving the same opportunities for information literacy instruction as traditionally enrolled students in the same course on the college or university campus. The reasons why this was the case were different for each group. (See table 6).

The majority of school media specialists thought that a general lack of awareness of the importance of information literacy was to blame, coupled with a lack of time in the course and a general lack of support by both the high school and the academic library. Aca-

TABLE 6 Do students taking dual credit courses receive similar opportunities for information literacy instruction as students enrolled in the equivalent course on a college or university campus?		
	School media specialists	Academic Librarians
Yes	15%	0%
No	85%	100%

demic librarians emphasized the same lack of understanding of information literacy, but also saw the distance or lack of access to opportunities for instruction as an impediment. Interestingly, the lack of time in the course did not seem to be as much of a concern to the academic librarians as to the school media specialists, possibly due to the greater interaction between high school teaching faculty and the school media specialists. School media specialists may be better placed to understand the time demands on the instructors and the requirements the school may place on the class in addition to the required university syllabus.

TABLE 7 Reasons for Difference between Dual Credit and Campus IL		
	School Media Specialists	Academic Librarians
Lack of awareness of the need for information literacy instruction	58%	50%
Lack of time in course	50%	0%
Distance or lack of access to opportunities for instruction	25%	50%
Lack of support by college	33%	25%
Lack of support by high school	50%	50%
Other	*	
* *"I do not believe that the instructors in most of these courses even know what information literacy instruction is. I do not believe they think that students need instruction when they obviously do."*		

When asked what the biggest challenge to supporting information literacy instruction for dual credit at their institution was, academic librarians and school media specialists both cited technology and access issues as a concern. Some schools had firewalls that prevented accessing university resources even when logins were available. Others were never granted access to the university materials at all, and were not considered to be fully enrolled students by the credit granting institution. Both groups considered time constraints and lack of instructor awareness or

training to be a major challenge. One academic librarian responded. "…the misconception that the courses are 'just advanced high school courses', [they] need to realize that some of these students will go from Seniors in high school to juniors in college, preparing them for that is a major responsibility which includes making them ready for the increased level of research in the junior year of college." This was echoed by a school media specialist, "… I suspect that the level of research required is not college level." Several school media specialists also responded that they felt there was a lack of communication from the university about what would be appropriate resources or skills to emphasis, and they felt unsupported by credit granting institutions in delivering such content. One school librarian specifically highlighted the lack of distance reference service available saying, "I'm a former academic librarian who did LOTS of distance reference help and know that our partnering university should be doing a much better job of connecting dual credit students with university resources."

Another problem cited was the lack of a school media specialist at every location. With many schools cutting back on their library staff, in many cases one media specialist is left to cover multiple school locations. This leaves very little time for instruction, and may place a librarian whose specialty is early childhood education in the position of teaching college research principles with no prior orientation to the resources or competency standards. The decreasing number of school media specialists has been an ongoing issue of concern in the state of Indiana, as well as nationally, with implications far wider than just dual credit.

Limitations to the Study

The major limitation of this study was the sample size. Very few academic librarians responded to the participation call, most likely due to a general lack of awareness in the state's academic library community about the nature and implications of dual credit. When the topic was first broached in the HAIL project the majority of the committee was unaware of the program

entirely and did not realize that so many students in the state were participating, or receiving up to 30 credit hours prior to college. With so many academic librarians unaware of the situation, they most likely did not respond to the call to participate in the survey. Also problematic is the lack of a complete listing of librarians in the state, and the reliance on membership listservs.

Questions for Future Study

One of the challenges to studying information literacy in dual credit is the wide variety of program models in existence and a general lack of quality research on the topic. While widely implemented nationally, there is no solid evidence as to the effectiveness or long term implications of dual credit. Most of what is known is anecdotal, or based on instructor impressions. Comparable assessment data between students attending traditional campus based courses and those in dual credit high school based classrooms is not available. This would be one area in which future research would be highly advisable. To do so, an accepted skills based information literacy assessment would likely need to be implemented and results compared from multiple groups over time.

Conclusion

There are many challenges facing information literacy instruction to dual credit students. The most immediate is the general lack of awareness on the part of academic librarians regarding the program. For many universities and colleges, the bulk of information literacy instruction is concentrated in the very composition courses that make up the majority of dual credits rewarded. This means that in many cases, students can enter the junior year of college having never experienced any college level information literacy instruction—by either a school media specialist or an academic librarian. This should inform how higher level information literacy instruction is organized, with an awareness that not all students in the course have the same background even if their transcripts show the same courses.

A secondary challenge is to increase the collaboration efforts between school media specialists and academic librarians to emphasize the importance of information literacy instruction during the composition course and the higher expectations of university level resource utilization. To do this, academic librarians must be more creative in how they reach out to dual credit students and instructors. One possible solution is making better use of web based instruction such as tutorials and web conferencing which would allow instruction to take place without the librarian or students traveling. With many institutions offering dual credit courses as far away as several hours drive from the main campus, this would be a viable way of reaching a larger number of students.

Advocating for the importance of school media specialists in the state, and the vital role they play in the educational process, is also critical. Academic librarians may have the knowledge of university resources and information literacy requirements, but they lack the knowledge of high school realities. School media specialists are uniquely placed to bridge the gap between the university and the high school instructor and to provide on-site assistance for students where the university librarian cannot. In addition, many dual credit students may be intimidated by the university library, unaware they have privileges, or even not actively recognized by the credit granting institution. Without school media specialists in place, at every high school, these students are without the assistance their traditional counterparts have. With more and more schools eliminating or reducing library staff, there is a very real danger of losing this opportunity for collaboration.

One successful model of information literacy instruction for dual credit students in the state relies on this very partnership. Indiana University—Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW) has partnered with school media specialists serving students taking dual credit courses in their high schools. Academic librarians at IPFW offer workshops for school media specialists on what resources are available at the university level, and the expectations faculty have for stu-

dent resource use and familiarity. Teaching tools and resources are shared between both groups and school media specialists are given login access to university materials so they can become familiar with the resources and direct students appropriately. Student visits to the university library are encouraged, and when possible academic librarians make on-site visits to the high school classroom. Existing virtual reference services are highlighted, so that students can receive reference assistance without making the journey to campus. While technology and access issues are still a concern, the IPFW university library has worked with the university IT services and the dual credit program to make logins available to every student enrolled in a dual credit course.[9]

Colorado State University has also had success with collaborative information literacy instruction. They emphasize the importance of planning for setting out mutual goals and insuring sustainability, as well as marketing the library as a resource for professional development of the dual credit high school instructor. Their program connected high school instructors to the ACRL information literacy standards and encouraged the development of action-based research in the classroom.[w] There is no simple solution to the dual credit information literacy instruction problem, but by leveraging partnerships within the larger library profession and raising awareness of the issue, there can be significant improvement in the amount and quality of instruction provided. While the larger concern of the overall quality of dual credit courses is at issue, the library can and should take an active role in facilitating greater campus/school interaction. This will not only increase the likelihood of the student receiving information literacy instruction prior to starting traditional university course work, but can also be a form of greater library advocacy and increased inter-professional understanding and cooperation.

Notes

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3. Ibid.

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8. Cliff D. Ozmun, "College and Academic Self-Efficacy as Antecedents for High School Dual-Credit Enrollment," *Community College Enterprise,* 19, no. 1 (2013), 61-72. EJ1012824

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