Where It Counts: Departmental Curriculum Committees and Librarians

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Introduction
At the University of Arizona, the English and American Literature Librarians are working at the departmental level to integrate information literacy into the core curriculum for the undergraduate major. Through their majors, students can continue practicing the skills developed in their general education courses (including freshman composition) and learn information literacy skills specific to their discipline. Working at this level allows librarians and faculty to evaluate whether or not students are achieving information literacy skills appropriate to a discipline, and to measure students’ success in meeting stated objectives for a departmental curriculum.

Environment
The University of Arizona’s 356 acres sit in a valley surrounded by four mountain ranges in Tucson, Arizona. There are 32,870 full-time students and the university is a land-grant, doctoral-extensive institution, with 16 colleges and 8 schools.

With such a large student population, it is challenging to determine whether or not each student is learning information literacy skills and, even more difficult to know the specific skills each student has learned. Nevertheless, the University of Arizona seeks to integrate information literacy across the curriculum and to measure its success in doing so. To this end, the University of Arizona Main Library works with the general education program, which includes foundation courses, such as freshman English composition. Librarians and composition coordinators have developed information literacy objectives for freshman composition (Appendix A). Additionally, objectives have been developed for the general education program beyond the foundations courses. These objectives are under consideration by the general education committee. If the objectives are accepted and courses re-designed to meet these objectives, then all students can be expected to have a certain level of information literacy competency when they enter their majors. Until then, it is difficult to measure the skills...
of each student. Currently, librarians work with about 46 classes (172 sections) out of 150 general education classes (excluding freshman composition) offered each year.

University of Arizona Department of English
There are four graduate programs (creative writing, English language and linguistics, literature, and rhetoric, composition, and the teaching of English (RCTE)); four undergraduate areas of concentration: British literature, American literature, literature and composition, and language and literature; and over 700 students in the department. There is an undergraduate curriculum committee (UGECC) that just completed revising the curriculum for the major and several curricular subcommittees. Two librarians, the authors of this paper, have been assigned to the English department. It is our responsibility to communicate with over 70 faculty plus numerous adjunct faculty, teaching assistants, and staff in the department about collection development, scholarly communication, and information literacy. Because we have a variety of responsibilities as librarians for the department, we are challenged with managing the time required to do all of them well. We cannot dedicate a significant amount of time to instruction and successfully fulfill our other obligations. We feel it is important to keep up with the BI literature, i.e., pedagogical and assessment trends. When we do spend time planning instruction, we must dedicate our time to the areas determined high priority and where we will have the greatest impact. In order to accomplish the strategic values of the library, we must think critically and creatively in order to move forward the goals of the library to integrate information literacy into the curriculum. Incorporating information literacy into the curriculum is a high priority for UA. The question is how to proceed effectively and productively with as few resources as possible. Where do we begin our work in order to make it count the most?

Outcomes Assessment, a UA Campus Initiative
It is no longer the responsibility of faculty alone to measure what and how students are learning. The American Association for Higher Education’s Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning recognizes that “...assessment is not a task for a small group of experts but a collaborative activity; its aim is wider, better informed attention to student learning by all parties with a stake in its improvement.” As more entities on university campuses become responsible for some portion of student learning, each must collaborate with the others to determine measurable objectives for students during their four years of undergraduate education. These objectives should produce life-long learners, benefiting the students long after graduation. As Farber and others (e.g., Winner, Lecie,) have said, librarians must be active participants in the teaching and learning process of students by helping students learn how to use the library and by helping faculty design research assignments (176).

One opportunity for librarians to get involved with student learning is with the outcomes assessment movement. Many universities, like the University of Arizona, are moving in this direction, and, departments are responding by revising the goals for their majors. The need for the English department to revise its curriculum for the undergraduate major grew out of several needs. One was a UA campus-wide assessment initiative, begun in 2000. This initiative required each department to develop learning outcomes, i.e., outcomes that were stated in terms that described student behaviors and were measurable.

The English Department had already developed a senior capstone course that required students to reflect on their progress toward reaching the goals of the undergraduate English major (listed below), but many students’ portfolios did not demonstrate the type of learning that faculty expected. Learning outcomes would need to be developed for specific core courses in order to achieve the departmental goals for the major. For example, many students, in assessing how well they reached goal five—ability to conduct and use literary research—related that they did not feel adequately prepared to use the library and its resources for their literary studies. The faculty who taught the senior capstone courses shared this sentiment. They were surprised that students were entering the senior capstone classes unaware of some of the most essential resources for literary studies, such as the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) and Modern Language Association (MLA) database.

In gathering comments from both students and faculty on the current assessment process in the department, the UGECC realized that they would need to revise the major radically “in order to better serve
the needs of [their] students, and more fully use the talents of [their] faculty” (L. Berry, Memorandum, September 20, 2002). The goals for the English major in the University of Arizona's Department of English include the following:

1) Knowledge of foundational texts of British and American literature
2) Understanding of the historical and cultural range of literature written in English
3) Understanding of the development of the English language as used in works of literature
4) Understanding of strategies of textual interpretation appropriate to different literary genres
5) Ability to conduct and use literary research
6) Ability to write clearly and effectively

Recognizing that “student learning is a campus-wide responsibility” (Principles, http://www.aahe.org/principl.htm) and wanting to make the most out of our instructional endeavors with the students and faculty in English, we took the first step in collaborating with the English Department to integrate information literacy into the core English courses.

During the summer of 2001, one year into UGECC's development of a new undergraduate English curriculum, we sent an email to the chair of the department offering to work together to accomplish goal number five. The chair suggested we speak with the director of the undergraduate English curriculum. Upon speaking with her, we were asked to join the UGECC as well as one of the three curricular subcommittees that would begin its work in fall 2001. The subcommittee to which we were assigned would determine the learning outcomes for English 380, a gateway course to the major that required students to develop skills in close reading. We worked with the chair of the subcommittee, who was also teaching English 380 during the 2001–2002 academic year, to develop a pilot course for English 380. We wanted to develop a course that included information literacy assignments related to course content.

**Pilot Project: English 380, Literary Analysis**

English 380: Literary Analysis was to be the gateway course for all English majors, with students required to receive a grade of C or higher in order to continue in the major. As a gateway course, the UGECC thought it would be an appropriate venue for introducing students to literary research. Through discussions about the course content and goals for the course, however, we found that the focus for the course was close reading of primary texts with very little research required. On the other hand, a requirement common to all sections was that students would investigate allusions in the texts they were reading and look up words to understand their derivation and meanings for use in interpreting a text. Both of these requirements are intended to engage students in furthering their understanding of a text and help them build interpretive skills. In the section of the class with which we were working, students also had to find and use biographical information about the author to inform their interpretations. Thus, our assignments were created to introduce them to literary research tools that would immediately be of benefit to them in these areas: allusions, definitions, biography.

For the fall 2001 pilot section of English 380, students read a variety of short stories and poems. In collaboration with the professor, we created two graded assignments for the students. The first assignment required students to find out more about the proper names mentioned in a poem and to discover more about the poet. The 30 students enrolled in the class were assigned to work in groups of three or four. Each group was assigned a poem. The poems were chosen in consultation with the faculty member teaching the course. During one class period, we met the students in the reference area of the library, briefly showed them how to use the Proper Names Master Index and the Dictionary of Literary Biography. We also mentioned World Book Encyclopedia and introduced them to Contemporary Literary Criticism and Literature Criticism from 1400–1800. Students spent the remaining class time using the sources consulting us when necessary. Students were then required to summarize their findings individually, and then present them to the class as a group. We attended the group presentations and looked at the completed assignments as a way of assessing the students' learning.

The second assignment asked students to investigate words that appeared in the texts they were reading that were unfamiliar to them. We wanted students to build skills in the usage of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED). We met with the students in the library to explain how the OED was created; why one would use it; how to use it; and how
to interpret each entry. Students then completed an assignment that asked them to respond to questions that would show their understanding of how to use the OED. Again, students were asked to work in groups.

**Flexibility, or Guidelines, not Mandates for Departments**

During the spring 2002 semester we worked with two sections of English 380. One section was taught by the same professor with whom we had worked in the fall semester, the second section by another professor. The two courses were distinctly different: While the first section introduced students to an array of short stories and poetry throughout the course and required very little research, the second section introduced students to a single work, *Hamlet*, and required the students to do more extensive research. For the first section, we revised the assignments only slightly, as the course content was the same and we were happy with the results. For the second section, we also had two assignments. We slightly modified the OED assignment for the first class, and the second assignment, we provided an in-class library session; we showed the students particular sources and research tools and then gave them time to use these sources/tools to complete a short assignment created in collaboration with the faculty member. This short assignment, turned into the professor for a grade, was intended to get students started on researching their papers and immediately using sources and research tools that were appropriate. The students had turned in paper proposals prior to the session and had given some thought to their topics.

Although the two sections had similar outcomes, such as the expectation that students would develop appropriate interpretive strategies (see English 380 goals below), each faculty member had a different approach for how students would develop these skills. The differences in the methods faculty use to teach students interpretive strategies, make it difficult for us to agree on objectives for particular research tools. For example, it would not be helpful to expect all students enrolled in English 380 to be familiar with the MLA database, if not all professors of the class would require students to locate research articles. When we design assignments, we introduce tools and concepts depending on the content of the course and the methodology faculty use to interpret a text.

Both the content of the class and the methodology students were to use to interpret a text were different in the two sections of English 380 described here. One faculty member asked students only to look at biographical information, definitions of words, and the use of allusions to interpret a text. Another faculty member asked students to engage in the research process by reading literary criticism and asking them to analyze and synthesize this information with their own ideas about the text. This flexibility allows faculty to teach within their areas of expertise and to determine the level of research in which they want their students to engage. The outcomes created by the English 380 subcommittee are “general expectations to guide but not constrain individual instructors of the course” (English 380: Close Reading Goals, May 2001). The goals for English 380 follow:

1. To develop and sustain viable and appropriate interpretive strategies.
2. To show a close working relationship with the language and form of texts being interpreted.
3. To write a clean, clear, perhaps even graceful, critical prose.
4. To know how to treat a text as if it were a literary text.
5. To be able to distinguish between and among text-based, author-based, and reader-based criticism(s).
6. To be familiar with the conventions of reading and writing (among other things) prose fiction and poetry.
7. To know and use key terms and concepts associated with traditional text-based criticism, or close reading (e.g., narrator/speaker; theme; metaphor/trope; image/symbol/sign; irony; rhyme/meter; rhetorical situation).
8. To argue logically and persuasively, especially in modes associated with text-based criticism(s).
9. To successfully complete written assignments of varying lengths, kinds, and formats that demonstrate 1–8.

Because we want to work with faculty to develop the curriculum, it is crucial that we are flexible in creating assignments that stay true to the content of the course and that we are willing to develop assignments that will directly address student learning. Thus
assignments will vary, just as the course content does, with each faculty member teaching. We found that while some of the same research tools and their uses in literary studies could be introduced in all sections (e.g., OED, Proper Names Master Index), the course was neither a good candidate for teaching the research process nor for introducing major research tools (e.g., MLA database, WorldCat), as the amount of research required for students was not the same for both classes. This would also hold true for the additional sections. Thus, by the end of the year, the English 380 curriculum subcommittee determined that although English 380 was a good place to introduce a few research tools that would help students develop interpretive strategies through the close reading of a text, it was not the place to teach comprehensive research methods. The UGECC needed a different course for this.

**New Course Proposed**

In order to achieve the goals of the English major and because no current course offering was sufficiently designed to teach research methods, the UGECC decided to create a new course. In the fall of 2002, one year after we began working with the committee, a course proposal for a junior pro-seminar, English 396, was put forward to the College of Humanities Curriculum Review committee (COH CRC). The course was described as “designed to introduce students, through the study of a specific and relatively narrow aspect of literary study, to the methods and materials of literary research. University librarians will work closely with the class, individually and as a group, to introduce students to the use of research materials necessary for literary study” (L. Berry, recommendation to establish a new course, June 24, 2002). The course has been approved and two sections of the course are being offered in the spring 2003 semester.

Although the details of the class have not yet been worked out, an English 396: Junior pro-seminar subcommittee (including the faculty who will teach the course and the librarians) has had initial discussions of the Research Competency Guidelines for Literature in English. These guidelines were developed by an ad hoc committee (Literary Research Competencies) of the ACRL Literatures in English Section (Appendix B. Research Competency Guidelines for Literatures in English). Like the two sections of English 380, the two sections of English 396, taught by different faculty members, will cover different content and teach different approaches to conducting research.

**Incoming Assessment of English majors**

Because the general education program has not yet approved the proposed objectives for information literacy competency, as described earlier, we cannot presume that students have a common set of information literacy skills when they enter the English major. Thus, we will have to make allowances for students coming to the major who have not yet learned basic level skills. Basic skills include the following: identify and use librarians in the research process; use interlibrary loan for materials not available at one's own library; use Boolean operators appropriately, differentiate between resources provided free on the internet and fee-based resources.

For students who do not have these skills, they will have difficulty grasping the skills necessary for the major, as we will be building on the skills we think they should already have. Thus, the subcommittee is discussing how to assess the information literacy competency of the students enrolled in the junior pro-seminar for spring 2002.

**Reflection**

In early discussions, several faculty felt that if they could learn how to conduct research on their own, so too could their students. We have shared our concerns with faculty about allowing students to stumble through the research process and use of the library. Through storytelling and discussion, we think faculty have begun to see the problems we encounter at the reference desk with this approach and they have begun to acknowledge their role in teaching students how and why to use the library.

Being part of the curriculum committee and various subcommittees as well as being involved with instruction of one course, allowed us to test and explore various methods for incorporating information literacy. Being part in all this offered us a sort of bird’s eye view into pedagogical differences among faculty and how these differences affected students’ use (or lack thereof) of library resources. We shared these experiences with the committee members. This allowed the committee to think about how to address the concerns we had about information literacy and what pieces
belonged where to ensure that all students could meet the goals of the department.

During the past year, we have learned a great deal about the variety of methodologies used by faculty in such a diverse department covering such a broad area of English Studies. We have had to consider how to write objectives that can be reached no matter which methodology is being taught. We are still working on answering that question. We may find that we cannot do it. We do know that there is room for teaching students the usage of one research tool (OED) in all sections of one course, but where do the other tools fit into the core curriculum? The learning objectives for each core course need to reflect when certain tools will be introduced. Of course, we are concerned with more than just the tools students will use, but if students are not given the opportunity to learn the basic tools for their discipline, then we miss out on giving them a foundation from where they can begin learning the higher order skills in the research process. We find it very necessary to know when students will be introduced to and required to use the premier database in the discipline: MLA. If we do not know that, then we are left with the senior capstone assessment that assures us that students are not aware of it.

This has been a long process. Although we have gained in-roads in integrating information literacy into the curriculum, much will need to be considered in developing objectives for a department that is so varied in its research methodologies.

What we hope to gain is a partnership that will allow us the opportunity to voice our concerns and share our expertise as curriculum is planned and implemented. As Leckie states, a curriculum-integrated approach allows us “to concentrate on developing [our] working relationships with faculty, fostering an environment where the skills and knowledge of both groups can be harmonized to better benefit students and enhance the institution” (207). We are well on our way to accomplishing this. The UGECC committee is now talking about making the goal number 5 of the English major—ability to conduct and use literary research—more explicit. Although, we are currently talking about working with one course: English 380 and English 396, the UGECC is also beginning to discuss a more comprehensive approach by including a variety of information literacy competencies throughout the major.

**Summary**

In September of 2002, the Department of English Undergraduate Literature Curriculum Committee submitted the proposal for revision of the undergraduate major in English to the College of Humanities Curriculum Review Committee (COH CRC). The proposal was developed over the period of two years described here. The voting membership of the English department favored the new curriculum with a vote of 45 to 3. The COH CRC has accepted the new curriculum.

There are countless examples of faculty/librarian partnerships that illustrate some aspect of curriculum-integrated instruction where the librarian is a true partner throughout the class. Librarians are partners in everything from co-teaching a class, writing syllabi, and developing assignments. It seems, however, that many of these partnerships are discontinued because librarians cannot continually commit substantial time to a single class. If we are to truly integrate information literacy into the curriculum, we need to share the responsibilities of integration with faculty. Understanding each other’s goals and developing common outcomes can help us achieve this integration.

The faculty we have worked with thus far have become cognizant of their roles in information literacy, and are beginning to change their teaching methodologies accordingly. They have also revised assignments to make information literacy objectives clear, and alerted students to our services by including our names on syllabi or in class announcements. None of these efforts could have moved forward, however, if all involved were not open to listening and sharing expertise.

**References**


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Appendix A

**English 102 Student Learning Outcomes**

**Information Literacy Skills**

1. Explores a topic and formulates a focus. Through reading and reflecting, are able to narrow and broaden topics as needed. (Instructor should provide time for exploration—see Kuhlthau handout).

2. Knows how to get to SABIO, the Library’s Information Gateway.

3. Knows that assistance is available from a variety of sources—library reference desk, writing center, etc.

4. Uses a variety of search systems, such as indexes, catalog, and web search engines when appropriate and understands the differences among them.
   a. Searches the catalog (by selecting the Catalog icon) to identify and locate books and other items the library owns.
   b. Uses indexes (by selecting the Indexes to Articles icon) to search for articles from journals, magazines and newspapers.

5. Writes a research statement or question.

6. Select keywords or phrases along with Boolean operators to create an effective search strategy.

7. Identifies the parts of a citation and knows what to search in the catalog.

8. Can physically locate a book or journal issue in the library from citation information.

9. Distinguishes between scholarly articles from journals and popular articles from magazines or newspapers.

10. Evaluates information for appropriateness to a topic and assignment and for its reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness, and point of view or bias.

11. Recognizes prejudice, deception or manipulation.

12. Demonstrates an understanding of what constitutes plagiarism.

13. Creates citations for sources (bibliography) used in papers, according to a determined citation format.

14. Synthesizes the information found to create his/her own argument.