Creating Dynamic Information Literacy (IL) Learning Opportunities for Business Students

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Introduction

At the 2022 BRASS Fall Symposium, I presented "Listening with my heart: What students told me about business information literacy and how we can create dynamic learning opportunities for them." During the presentation, I invited the audience to contribute to six dimensions of learning opportunities that we can create for students. In this article, I would like to share this collective wisdom. Hopefully it will inspire new opportunities for students.

Opportunity 1: Promote Existing Resources

The first opportunity is to promote existing resources. Raising students' awareness of available resources is fundamental for building students' IL skills. We need to be more creative and ensure the right amount of information is shared with students at the right place and the right time. Here are some ideas on how to promote the available resources in the library:

- Ask for a short visit to a class and give a quick introduction to the library or a specific resource/program.
- Work with campus partners such as the first-year experience program, graduate school, or entrepreneurship center to promote existing resources, programs, and services in the library to targeted student groups.
- Invite vendors for targeted training in partnership with student clubs, for example, have FactSet/Bloomberg/Capital IQ do a session for a finance club.
- Outreach to liaison departments semesterly to promote new items and low/no cost options for textbooks and learning materials such as Open Educational Resources (OER) and course reserves.
- Have a promotional event such as a virtual lunch session for 30 minutes to go over a particular database and how to use it and open it to all.
- Use infographic handouts to visualize library resources and place them in the business building.
- Utilize social platforms to promote existing resources.

Opportunity 2: Embed into Business Curriculum

The second opportunity is to embed the library IL instructions into the business curriculum. This is one of the most preferred ways of acquiring IL skills by students. Whether the library instruction is offered as a one-shot or not, we can benefit from more strategic planning. Here are some ideas:

- Collect syllabi and assignments from research-heavy business courses to find areas for library support and pitch library instruction to courses that would benefit from database usage for assignments.
- Conduct curriculum mapping to identify where the gaps are.
- Collaborate with faculty on major research assignments to embed IL and library resources in assignment requirements.
- Customize Libguides for classes and projects.

- Ask to be enrolled in the Learning Management System (LMS) to post items. Embed as-needed video content on databases, etc. mapped to assignments.
- Recruit "champions" from faculty to share changes/improvements in student outcomes after collaboration.
- Use technologies (such as Kahoot! or Calendly) to make the in-class presentation more engaging or the consultation scheduling easier for students to engage.

Opportunity 3: Offer Standalone Online Learning Modules

The third opportunity is to develop a standalone learning module. This might be a solution to scale up IL instruction and make the library services more sustainable. Here are some specific ideas for offering standalone online learning modules:

- Make a series of self-taught modules at the point of need for business research. This could be housed on the library's website or in an LMS.
- Develop a comprehensive business IL standalone learning module and motivate students with extra credits or certificates.
- Design a stand-alone module for a course project in consultation or collaboration with business faculty.
- Partner with the professionalism badging program to have IL badges (or Info Lit Micro-credential) for business knowledge.
- Work with career centers and create LibGuides/videos to support career research needs with just-in-time content.
- Work with alumni and create IL programs that reflect the useful skills in the workplace and that hiring managers are excited about.

Opportunity 4: Integrate into Students' Existing Research Efforts

The fourth opportunity is integrating IL education into students' current research efforts. This is probably the easiest way to market or promote a library IL service since the needs are already there. Here are some ideas to further engage with this opportunity:

- Offer pre-consultation for students who engage in internships, especially for internships that require students to conduct research.
- Integrate IL into business competitions, such as business idea competitions, business plan competitions, business case competitions, etc.
- Work with campus partners such as the innovation center and entrepreneurship center to support student entrepreneurs' market and industry research needs.
- Provide IL services to campus research projects, such as undergraduate summer research.
- Offer IL training to graduate research assistants who need to support faculty research.
- Provide IL workshops to student clubs that can benefit from business research, such as investment clubs, sustainability or corporate social responsibility clubs, etc.
- Promote student research through exhibits, displays, and events in the library (include how the library helped in the research process).

Opportunity 5: Organize Workshops, Events, or Social Activities

The fifth opportunity is to develop new programs or organize new workshops, events, or activities. There are tremendous opportunities in this category and some ideas include:

- Host a speaker series that highlights local entrepreneurs or business professionals.
- Host workshops or webinar series on conducting business/consumer research, employer research, career planning research, or hot topic research.

- Create a Community of Practice open to anyone but targeted to specific groups such as first-generation students.
- Organize a research event such as a research hackathon that allows students to collaborate to achieve a specific research outcome.
- Organize a research competition that motivates students to learn IL skills through a competitive research process.
- Organize cohort learning groups or peer-mentoring programs for students to share research experiences and learn from each other.
- Create a student-led data wrangler program using students as interns to train other students in programs such as R or Python.

Opportunity 6: Create Real-life Research and Learning Experiences

Finally, there are opportunities to create real-life research and learning experiences for students. Experiential learning has been adopted by many business faculty and librarians have supported experiential learning class projects in many ways. But can we develop some experiential, real-life learning opportunities of our own? Here are some ideas:

- Encourage business faculty to consider the library as a partner or client for their experiential learning projects.
- Develop credit-bearing courses on evidence-based decision-making in addressing business needs or community challenges.
- Engage students who are interested in an independent study to develop research projects that are based on real business or community needs.
- Collaborate with campus partners such as the office of service learning to support students in community engagement.
- Partner with business faculty in co-teaching experiential learning classes or co-directing experiential learning projects that can benefit from extensive evidence-based research.
- Include students as research assistants in grant opportunities and provide mentoring and coaching for students to learn real-life research skills.

Further Directions

Facing limited library resources and staff, many people would ask how we can make these opportunities real for our students. Librarians can further conduct a situation analysis of our institutions' resources, support networks, priorities, and our individual capabilities, resources, values, and aspirations. We can also utilize the Action Priority Matrix (see figure 1) to identify the projects that are quick wins, fill-ins, thankless tasks, or major projects.

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Figure 1. Action Priority Matrix (productfolio.com)

A strategic structure or plan for the next 3-5 years will assist us to achieve tangible outcomes and meet our goals. Collaboration, integration, and experimentation can be used as guiding principles for achieving better results with limited resources.