INFORMATION COMPETENCE PROGRAM
for
Loyola College and College of Notre Dame

*The skills of analysis, evaluation, and synthesis will become the hallmarks of a good education, just as absorption of knowledge once was.*
*(Boyer Commission)*

**Statement of Purpose**
Information literacy is the ability to access, evaluate, organize, and use information ethically to meet a need. The purpose of the Information Competence Program of the Loyola/Notre Dame Library is to advance the information literacy skills of the students of Loyola College and College of Notre Dame in support of the missions of both colleges to promote intellectual growth and develop leaders. Recognizing that effective, appropriate and ethical use of information is important to critical thinking and decision-making and, therefore, to leadership, we are committed to collaborating with faculty to foster skills of critical thinking and competent retrieval and use of information in order to prepare students for the challenges of academia and their personal and professional lives.

The most effective program for ensuring information literacy of all graduates of Loyola College and College of Notre Dame is an across-the-curriculum, course-integrated series of sessions, taught in conjunction with faculty, and including progressively more complex skills spaced throughout the program of study.

**Goals of the Information Competence Program**
The program seeks to establish the importance of information literacy as a curriculum initiative and to recognize, formalize, and organize transmission of these skills as a primary educational outcome.

- Develop and implement a multi-tiered information literacy program based on defined learning goals at each level.
- Increase students’ conceptual understanding of the information-seeking process to enhance problem-solving and decision making.
- Collaborate with faculty in design, delivery, and assessment of information literacy instruction.
- Explore and implement various methods for providing information literacy instruction, either through library sessions, online tutorials or collaboration on course curriculum with faculty.
- Assess the effectiveness of the program in terms of students acquiring proficiency in information literacy skills.
**Teaching Philosophy**
Concepts and skills are best learned through hands-on activities based on solving information problems.
Relevancy to grading in assignments and college courses create a “need to know” motivation.
Library sessions should be integrated into the curriculum where possible.
The ideal program includes a series of sessions beginning early in students’ program of study and moving into majors.

**Methodology**
The instructional sessions of the information competence program employ a hands-on, active approach to introduce the strategies and practices of effective research. Through sequential practice exercises, students are introduced to various strategies for locating and evaluating information. Skills and concepts are developed through critical thinking and problem-solving activities which provide a foundation for students to develop independent and effective research strategies. Whenever possible, classroom sessions are followed by an activity which reinforces concepts and relates to assignments for the course.

**THE CURRICULUM**

**Academic Integrity Tutorial:**
Reference librarians are working with Loyola faculty and subsequently CND faculty to develop a tutorial on academic integrity that will be required of all freshmen in their fall or spring semester. Librarians and faculty will develop content during the summer of 2006. Design and technology will be developed over the next academic year and the tutorial will be implemented in the fall of 2007. The primary focus of the tutorial is academic integrity but it will also include an introduction to the research process. The ethical use of information is an important facet of information literacy that will be further developed in the library sessions, along with other aspects of information literacy including finding, evaluating and managing information as well as acquiring skills in searching the library resources.
**Introductory Library Session**

**Purpose:** To provide students with basic information retrieval skills that will enable them to meet their information needs for a variety of courses and activities and to become competent, independent seekers of information. Through student participation in this session, we hope to foster students’ critical thinking and increase their creativity and intellectual curiosity in information-seeking situations. Our intent is not just to teach the use of a specific database, but to enable students to learn to solve information problems using a variety of appropriate sources.

The Introductory Library Session should be
- Integrated in a course that reaches the entire student population,
- Lends itself to the use of general databases, and
- Is taken early enough in the student’s program to be helpful for subsequent research projects in core, general education, and some major courses.

**Introductory Session established at College of Notre Dame:**
- **IDS 100:** An introductory library session has become a standard feature of this course. IDS 100 is required for all freshmen and the library component is a required part of the curriculum.

**Recommended Course for Library Session at Loyola:**
- **Effective Writing: WR 100**
  Effective Writing, is an optimal course for introductory information literacy instruction. While the curriculum for this course emphasizes writing based on personal ideas and experience, faculty often include a research component as well.

**Required session currently established at Loyola:**
- **English 200-level courses**
  Library instruction is provided for all students in these courses. All students are required to take a 200-level English course but they often wait until their junior or senior year, which is not the ideal time to introduce information literacy skills. Also, the focus of the library instruction is literature resources although the skills taught can be used in other disciplines. We plan to continue these sessions, which have been effective in improving the quality of the sources students use in their term papers, but would modify the instruction if information literacy instruction becomes part of the Effective Writing course.

**Objectives:**
Upon completion of this session students will be able to:
- Analyze a problem or research opportunity and determine the type of information needed.
- Select appropriate information sources, such as books, articles or other materials, as well as useful databases for finding these sources.
- Construct and perform a search strategy based on the information needs.
- Distinguish scholarly from popular sources and evaluate websites.
• Find the full-text of articles and books using information from citations and the appropriate database for finding the text.

Methodology for introductory session:
When possible, the session is tailored to class assignments by choice of examples and lesson topics. If the assignment requires additional resources not generally covered in the basic session (e.g., local newspapers or biographical reference sources), these resources will be included in the instruction or in an online guide posted on the library website.

Advanced Information Literacy and Discipline-Specific Instruction

Purpose: To familiarize students with the databases and concepts of discipline-specific research, to review basic skills and to introduce specialized research methods as needed in the discipline. The session(s) should enable students to meet their information needs as they progress through their majors and acquaint them with resources useful in their careers.

Discipline-specific information literacy sessions
• Should be embedded in a course that is required in the major, preferably not also a core or general education course.
• Should have a strong research component, and
• Should be taken early in the major, preferably at the sophomore level or entry level in the major.

While the aim is for one advanced session in each major, for some majors two courses are targeted because the research-based course is upper level; thus an entry-level course with research possibilities is included as well.

Curriculum for discipline-specific information literacy sessions is best developed in collaboration with faculty in relation to course assignments. However, the session(s) may also include additional specialized resources that are important in the field.

Objectives for Discipline-specific Instruction:
Objectives for specific courses will be determined in collaboration with faculty, but in addition to these specialized objectives, the following objectives should be accomplished in the discipline-based session:

Upon completion of the session(s), students should be able to:
• Perform all research skills that were introduced in the basic session in similar discipline-specific databases.
• Articulate the nature, scope, and limitations of subject-specific resources and databases related to their major.
• Identify and locate primary and secondary resources.
- Conduct searches in specialized databases and determine appropriate vocabulary by using database tools and thesauri.
- Annotate, store, and organize information sources for effective use in projects and papers.
- Cite resources used properly according to designated format

**Methodology:**
Skills taught in the basic session will be reviewed and reinforced in the advanced session as necessary according to the proficiency of the students in the session. The major difference between this session and the introductory lesson is the focus on discipline-specific databases. Hands-on practice will still be emphasized although with more discussion of complex research problems and concentration on students’ individual research projects. The exercises and thesaurus use will help develop students’ research vocabulary in their specialized fields.

**Priority Majors for Years 2006-2009:**
For the next three academic years, priority majors have been identified according to number of students in the major at both colleges, level of advanced programs in the major and the amount of research and use of library resources required for academic work in the major. These priority majors include: biology, business, communication, English, history, psychology and nursing (CND) or speech pathology (Loyola). The library will concentrate on collaborating with chairs and departments to establish advanced information literacy instruction in research courses for these priority majors for the next three academic years.

**Graduate Level Information Literacy Instruction**

**Purpose:** Since graduate students, especially at the doctoral level, must perform “exhaustive” research ensuring that their work provides an original contribution to their fields, they require thorough knowledge of the available resources in their field of study. In addition, these students frequently employ unique, personal information-seeking strategies (the “expert researcher” model). Recognizing this, the purpose of information literacy instruction at this level is to help them perform their secondary research, which provides the context for their primary research and study.

Sessions for graduate students include:

**Pre-class Orientations:**
Familiarize students with the support, services, and resources available to them through the Loyola/Notre Dame Library.

**Course-related Instruction:**
Review effective use of discipline-specific databases (as needed), introduce specialized databases for comprehensive research and teach the effective use of bibliographic tools to manage information for their theses and projects.
ASSESSMENT OF INFORMATION LITERACY

How can we measure information competence? Our goal in assessing the information competence program is to determine the relationship between our program and the achievement of particular learning outcomes; that is, to investigate the assertion that to the degree students can now perform a skill, this is a direct result of the program.

In designing our assessment, we are guided by questions such as:

- What kinds of evidence do we need to make decisions to improve the program and increase student learning outcomes?
- How can we identify areas in the program that are not achieving acceptable results?
- What methods can we use to find out?
- What changes in the program will address determined weaknesses?
- After implementing changes, do we get the desired improvement?

The focus on learning necessitates looking at the program not from the perspective of subject content, but rather from the perspective of the competencies to be developed. We need to measure performance, not simply knowledge.

Assessment involves two elements: assessment of reach (Are we advancing the information literacy skills of all graduates of Loyola College and College of Notre Dame?): and assessment of impact (Is the information literacy program making a difference?)

Assessment of reach:

- Matrix showing the courses and their relation to the program based on class statistics
- Matrix of information literacy competencies covered in courses based on an analysis of our lessons and, where possible, on course syllabi.

Assessment of impact (potential methods):

- Pre and post-tests for sessions
- Assignments
- Surveys
- Focus groups
- Anecdotal information from faculty and students.
- Standardized instruments (such as SAILS or ITC from ETS)
- Library/college developed instruments

By employing these and possibly other assessment methods, the efficacy of the information competency program can be regularly assessed, adapted and improved.