Information Literacy Reality Check

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INTRODUCTION
Twenty years of information literacy in libraries provides an opportunity for reflection on both what we’ve accomplished and what faces us as we look ahead. Having had a small role in the information literacy movement at several institutions and in several different positions for many of those twenty years, I am offering my perceptions of where we are and where we’re headed.

I can’t pinpoint it exactly, but my awareness of information literacy as a formal concept first came in the mid-1990s. I was working as a generalist librarian at a small private college, doing a variety of things, one of which was teaching. As I worked at becoming a better library teacher, I started looking for like-minded librarians and in the process discovered information literacy concepts. I was delighted to find the structure that was provided by ALA’s explanation of information literacy (American Library Association 1989) and by ACRL’s Information Literacy Competency Standards (Association of College and Research Libraries 2000) and enthusiastically embraced what they meant for my library teaching. They also provided me with the structure for my dissertation research (Seamans 2001), which further strengthened my enthusiasm.

Moving from my more generalist role, I then had the opportunity to try to make information literacy a cornerstone of a university library instruction program. This is where some of my early doubts started to form. The information literacy message seemed to be difficult to sell—
not only to university administrators but also, far too often, to librarians. The changes in library teaching that I felt had to occur for librarians to succeed as the flag-bearers for the information literacy message seemed too often to be met with lack of interest by my library colleagues. With the passage of time, and with increasing administrative responsibilities, I have become less and less sanguine about how we are doing in terms of making information literacy a keystone program for academic libraries.

I know I am generalizing. I know that many people, many institutions, many organizations are doing incredible work with implementing the information literacy standards, with creating discipline-specific standards, with helping librarians become superb library teachers. But I am not convinced that we have made a compelling case for libraries to be the ones providing leadership in information literacy implementation on our campuses. Additionally, in an environment where there are conflicting agendas within the library, and competition for resources on our campuses, I'm not sure that we can or should tie the future of our libraries to information literacy programs. I will agree that information literacy programs may be a component of our future, but I think we must shift away from seeing them as one of the primary methods for demonstrating our relevance and importance to our user communities. So with this as background, I would like to talk about some of my disappointments and frustrations with the first two decades of information literacy. But I will also attempt to balance those disappointments against what I perceive of as remarkable successes. I have discussed information literacy issues with several library leaders via face-to-face conversations, email, phone conversations and with an electronic survey that asked them to reflect on the current state of information literacy, and I will present some of their views of where the information literacy movement is now and where it is headed. I will also offer opinions, mine as well as others, on what I think is the future role of information literacy in the academic library.

As I discussed information literacy with a number of library leaders, the majority were reluctant to be quoted. I quickly realized that I would have discussions with a greater level of candor if I offered anonymity to these deans and directors and university librarians. To that end, I will be reflecting this when providing their comments about the state of information literacy in academic libraries. All quotes without attribution are from these library leaders who, during the past few months, were willing to talk with me, respond to email, and participate in telephone conver-

sations. I do appreciate the willingness of a few respondents to be quoted by name, and though I have not identified them in the body of the chapter, they are acknowledged at the end of the chapter.

I am well aware that the information literacy movement is international in scope, but what I know best is very US-centric, and very focused on 4-year and research institutions. I am making no pretense of being comprehensive in my comments but instead am offering food for thought—an information literacy reality check from one library administrator.

Framing my discussion be the successes of the information literacy program at Purdue University. In 2007, James Mullins wrote a chapter entitled An Administrative Perspective for a book entitled Proven Strategies for Building an Information Literacy Program (Curzon 2007). Mullins, who is the Dean of Libraries at Purdue University, discussed the importance of information literacy to the academic library, concluding with, “The competition that an administrator must always contend with when allocating resources, is balanced by the perceived impact and benefit to students and faculty. Information literacy is obviously at the top of the priority list.” I used that statement about information literacy being at the top of the priority list for academic libraries as the starting point for my discussions with library leaders. Additionally, Mullins also graciously responded to questions (Mullins 2010) thus providing me with the opportunity to update the Purdue story and to use its successes as a counterpoint to some of the disappointments I'll be noting.

DEFINING INFORMATION LITERACY
As I look at how we have used the information literacy standards during the first two decades, I'm struck by a couple of things. The first is the challenges we created for ourselves when we from the beginning used the word literacy. It has its own meaning and is generally understood to be the ability to read, or perhaps even the ability to read and write. It can be modified, as in information literacy. But does that then mean that information literacy is the ability to read and write information? Or should we go to a broader comprehension of literacy and define it as understanding? That means that information literacy is the ability to understand information. From a non-library perspective, literacy modified by information is a muddy concept, creating for librarians a frequent need to explain what we mean by information literacy. Though most librarians have the traditional definition down pat, our constituents have not necessarily
embraced the concepts though they actually have quite often embraced the phrase.

To further complicate things, we in the library community have also modified literacy by a number of other words and concepts. So libraries also have initiatives that focus on things like Family Literacy (Allie 2010), Visual Literacy (ACRL/IRIG 2010), and Consumer Health Literacy (Ziots et al. 2010), and outside of the library community we encounter Media Literacy (Consortium for Media Literacy 2010) and New Media Literacy (New Media Literacies Research Group 2010), and this list is by no means exhaustive. We librarians may have done ourselves a great disservice by how we’ve diffused our focus on basic literacy and thus on all of the other very important initiatives that we’ve undertaken. Naming is important, and in the case of information literacy I am not convinced that we have done it well.

On the other hand, the phrase information literacy has become embedded in the contemporary lexicon. On a number of campuses the phrase is included in strategic plans, and frequently comes up when faculty talk about the library. I’m not convinced that our campus administrators or our faculty really understand what the phrase means, or what kind of changes it suggests for teaching and learning and for the library and librarians, but at least they say it and if we are lucky they sometimes even link it with the library.

The phrase also turns up in a number of non-library settings. A good and recent example is in the March/April 2010 issue of EDUCAUSE Review. An article entitled Faculty and IT: Conversations and Collaboration (Hager and Clemmons 2010) discusses the need to work with classroom faculty in “planning, delivering, and assessing the use of academic technology in higher education....” The second of three steps that IT people should take is all about information literacy: “Step 2: Encourage conversations about student learning outcomes and information literacies that prepare students to succeed in higher education and beyond.” Nowhere in Step 2 does the word library appear, but the fact that the authors use the phrase is a significant accomplishment. Recent publications are rife with articles about students not being as Web-savvy as they think they are or how students use Google (but not particularly well), and go on to talk about the need for students to acquire information literacy skills even if libraries are not identified as the place where these skills are most often taught. Jimmy Wales, Wikipedia’s founder, spoke recently (Wales 2010) about the need for better information literacy skills, though in the interview he never mentioned libraries. So on one hand I am encouraged by how often I see information literacy referenced in non-library higher education writing. We librarians can take great pride in the fact that people have heard us. However, I am frustrated that even as others use the phrase libraries are not necessarily given ownership of some of the information literacy solutions.

And where I see problems and frustrations, others see opportunity. One library leader reported conversations with faculty “about how new media projects fit within a broad view of information literacy, new styles of communicating”—thus an embracing of an expanded definition that accommodated a different kind of interaction with faculty members. Another noted that “information literacy is a concept that...needs a more cohesive bond to computer, writing, and research literacy....” Mullins notes that at Purdue data literacy is being added to the traditional definition of information literacy.

Several library leaders pointed to the critical thinking skills that are an integral component of information literacy and suggested that it is in teaching these skills that the library can have an impact. However, it was also noted by several of these library leaders that faculty and administrators do not necessarily think of the library as a place where these skills are taught. In this vein, one library leader noted that what faculty and administrators do embrace is the teaching of research skills and the concepts of lifelong learning, both of which can be components of an information literacy program. This is affirmed by Mullins who notes, “Often times we find that faculty don’t understand or know the term information literacy, but once we begin to describe its concepts and principles they recognize it immediately. They may tend to call it critical thinking, research skills, etc., and we don’t mind that. Our goal is to insure that the students become knowledgeable about how to locate and evaluate information that they need now in their work at Purdue and in the future in their work and their lives generally.” (Mullins 2010)

One thoughtful response noted different ways by which librarians, faculty and students understand information literacy: “I think librarians have at times mistaken operational skills for true information literacy, which is closely related to critical thinking and analysis. I think the faculty has mistakenly thought their assignments assured information literacy when, in fact, students were not required to make critical choices
about what information to use and how to use it. Students often confuse skill with manipulating web browsers and search engines with information literacy." However, this library leader then went on to note a sense that the concept is "understood better now than in the past, and is being seen as an essential learning outcome on many campuses."

During the past few months as I have discussed information literacy with library leaders, it has seemed increasingly obvious that the definition may be in need of an adjustment. The term as initially presented now seems oddly outdated and limiting. The most successful definitions have often proven to be the ones specific to an individual campus, thus allowing those involved to define information literacy in the way that best meets the needs of the administrators, faculty, librarians and students at that institution. One library leader has gone so far as to suggest that librarians should be promoting a cluster of literacies that all students need to be successful at our institutions and beyond, as informed citizens. It is in this context that the concept of the Blended Librarian (Bell and Shank 2004) might take on even greater importance, with the idea that "library practitioners would help each other to improve their knowledge of and ability to apply the theory and practice of instructional design and technology to improve our ability to connect with faculty for the purpose of achieving student learning outcomes." But regardless of how we proceed, there is benefit to a shared understanding of what information literacy does mean or could mean to us as a profession. Perhaps the beginning of the third decade is the appropriate time to make sure that at least the broad concepts of information literacy are shared by the majority of us.

IMPLEMENTING INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAMS

Beyond definitions, how information literacy programs have been implemented has caused me some small degree of anxiety. Of particular concern is how often we have invested responsibility for an information literacy plan or program in one person—an instruction coordinator or an information literacy coordinator. With some notable exceptions, this seems to isolate information literacy into a stand-alone unit rather than integrating it into all aspects of the life of the library and, ultimately, the campus. The challenges inherent in a successful program often mean that success is built upon the largest possible number of librarians in an institution understanding the importance of information literacy instruction and buying into it. Though a coordinator can make this work, it is often

only because of top level support and often only because of the personality of the coordinator—someone who is a champion for the information literacy endeavor. And if this is too invested in one person, that person's departure from an institution may signal the end of the information literacy program—though of course it may also signal the beginning of a program at another institution!

It is appropriate here to draw the distinction between the implementation of a successful information literacy program and significant successes that individual librarians are realizing with innovations in instruction. A programmatic success means that there is broad campus buy-in and involvement by both library personnel and campus faculty members and administrators. It is possible for library teachers to be extremely creative and effective in the classroom with no information literacy program in place. It is possible to have excellent library instruction or even information literacy instruction because of the efforts of individuals. However, I think it is less likely that an information literacy program will be effective, successful or sustained without significant commitment from library administrators.

In addition to administrative commitment, there are several other aspects to consider in terms of long-term sustainability of a successful information literacy program. One is certainly the need to ensure that more than one librarian is engaged in the information literacy endeavor so that the departure of an individual doesn't end up sinking the entire program. Another is to invest in the success of the program by providing the appropriate levels of support and training to both the librarians involved and to support staff members who may be developing instructional modules or serving in the library in new or different ways in order to free up time for teaching librarians. Being attuned to changes on campus in academic or administrative thinking and then taking advantage of what those changes signal for the library can help ensure that the information literacy program both has a place in the planning for the institution and may help the program be nimble and responsive to changes taking place on campus.

However, perhaps one of the most important components of sustaining an information literacy initiative is also one that we find most difficult, and that is the willingness to give primary responsibility to others if that's what will ensure the program's success. Should a faculty member embrace the information literacy concepts and want to take
ownership of them, we must ultimately be willing to take a secondary role in how these skills are taught to students. This will be difficult to do since we tend think of information literacy as a library initiative, but, when appropriate, we must be willing to do so.

The Perfect Storm
I am particularly struck by two things that Mullins reports from Purdue. The first is that he describes the "perfect storm for gaining support for information literacy." At Purdue this was the arrival on campus of Dr. Sharon Weiner as the new Wayne W. Booker Endowed Chair in Information Literacy at the same time as a task force of the University Senate was working on core curriculum issues, and "a decision [was made] by the University Library Committee to focus its agenda on information literacy for the 2009-2010 academic year." (Mullins 2010) This resulted in information literacy being recommended as a core competency for the university. As a parallel to this, library leaders discussed the need to "sell" information literacy to campus administrators and faculty, to educate them and market to them the benefits of an information literacy program. In my view, Mullins' perfect storm is often what makes the difference between a program that has the potential to enjoy broad success as opposed to one that may languish regardless of efforts to market a program to the campus community. Having the confluence of all of the right pieces—people, library initiatives, campus initiatives—can be what makes or breaks a broad-based endeavor of this nature.

Another striking point made by Mullins is how much of a commitment is required for an information literacy program to succeed. He notes that at Purdue "...we removed all librarians from service points, to provide them more time to commit to instruction. The management and supervision of day to day functions within the Libraries have been delegated to the professional staff (non-librarian) and clerical staff." (Mullins 2010) This is a sea change for libraries and demonstrates the depth of institutional commitment required for libraries as they take responsibility for a successful information literacy program. It also demonstrates the need for library administrators to clearly articulate expectations and be prepared to address resistance. In the Purdue situation, Mullins comments on this, noting, "The increased demand for information literacy instruction required that we increase the number of librarians involved in instruction, and in order to meet that need, the last fully librarian-staffed reference desk in the Humanities, Social Sciences and Education Library was eliminated in 2009. A single point service desk was created. Although this was met with some dismay by the librarians, they soon adjusted and worked to increase their interaction with students and faculty in new and more dynamic ways." (Mullins 2010)

Another point to consider is whether information literacy can succeed on a campus without a formal program. For at least one library leader, it cannot: "In my opinion, information literacy requires or at least implies a formal program, which in the ideal world would be understood and endorsed by university administrators and teaching faculty." And even having a formal program is no guarantee of success. I would speculate that there are a number of institutions that actually have formal information literacy programs but are seeing spotty implementations and limited successes.

In Person vs. Tutorials
Scalability is perhaps one of the biggest challenges to successful implementation. Something that works on a small campus or in a few classes at a larger campus may be difficult to implement when there are 3,000 first-year students or 40,000 undergraduates involved. Though technology has provided us with some ways of addressing questions of scale, including tutorials like the highly-regarded and much-used and adapted TILT—Texas Information Literacy Tutorial, technology cannot provide all of the answers. And even if technology does provide some answers, we still have "librarians who will not think outside the box in terms of how to deliver IL [information literacy]."

Many institutions have created modules, tutorials, videos, and assorted other methods of offer the opportunity of delivering information literacy instruction without having to place a librarian in front of a class. These are of varying quality and have been used with varying degrees of success. One library leader suggested that "we look beyond educating massive groups and focus on virtual delivery and personalized delivery" while also acknowledging that staffing and resources are perhaps our biggest obstacles to implementing successful programs.

But as we look at electronic means for delivering instruction, we are often too willing to ignore one that may be the most successful. As noted
previously, we are generally reluctant to give up ownership of information literacy to the faculty members on our campuses. Mullins has recognized this challenge and has identified and is acting to implement the obvious solution: “We are clear in understanding that librarians will not do all of the information literacy [instruction], that our goal is to teach the fundamentals of information literacy and to help faculty incorporate the principles in their courses, not requiring that a librarian instruct in each class.” (Mullins 2010) I worry that too often we have invested so heavily in information literacy as a library initiative that even when it is not feasible for library personnel to teach all students we have been reluctant to share the responsibility.

One library leader captured this question of technology usage quite succinctly when noting: “I believe we would achieve our desired goal if we relied far more heavily on the type of online tutorials that JISC [United Kingdom’s Joint Information Systems Committee] has offered for more than ten years.” And another noted that while we must not diminish the role of instruction at our institutions, we will need to “move away from all of the instructional customization that is currently taking place.”

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Teaching Librarians
If nothing else, twenty years of focus on information literacy instruction has resulted in librarians becoming much better teachers. Though it has often been an effort, we have taken very seriously our role as library teachers and have developed teaching skills that are often among the best on campus. This may be because we know we have to engage our audiences quickly and efficiently, so we know that we must pay more attention to pedagogy than do faculty members on our campuses who have the entire semester in which to make their points.

But it seems to have been difficult for us to understand information literacy as a new concept that requires us to think very differently about our library instruction. At some point early in my information literacy engagement period, I ran across Dane Ward’s table (Ward 1997) [Figure 9.1] that compared and contrasted bibliographic instruction to information literacy. It was revelatory for me and encapsulated into one place what had been troubling me about what I was often seeing among librarians: a tendency to take traditional bibliographic instruction, wave a wand over it, and designate it as information literacy instruction. Indeed, I clearly recall a librarian sighing and saying that this was just the newest name for what she had always been doing; that we could call it anything we wanted to call it but she would continue to teach what she had always taught, and what she had always taught was bibliographic instruction. Regardless of what she and many other librarians say, information literacy instruction requires us to fundamentally rethink the way we teach.

Library instruction is the broad category and within it reside bibliographic instruction, information literacy instruction, technology instruction and tool-based instruction. All are important components of a good library instruction program, but they are really not interchangeable kinds of instruction.

From Ward (Ward 2010): “Information literacy instruction is definitely a shift in our thinking towards which we are still growing. I believe many of our colleagues have difficulty making this shift because what’s required

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**FIGURE 9.1**
How is Information Literacy Different from Bibliographic Instruction?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bibliographic Instruction</th>
<th>Information Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. One-shot instruction</td>
<td>Integrated into the curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Focuses on learning to use library resources</td>
<td>Focuses on information management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Often not linked to classroom assignments</td>
<td>Integral to course and assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Session often focus on passive learning</td>
<td>Active learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. May lack clearly defined goals &amp; objectives</td>
<td>Goals &amp; objectives are carefully linked to course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Librarian lectures, demonstrates</td>
<td>Librarian &amp; faculty facilitate learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Librarian provides instruction asked for</td>
<td>Librarian &amp; faculty design and implement instruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
remains outside of their experience providing one-shot instruction. Librarians are frequently not well-positioned in the academy to participate meaningfully in the deep learning that information literacy requires."

Mullins also points out the shift in thinking that needs to take place and reports how that shift happened at Purdue: "The Purdue Librarians had an epiphany during a workshop... and that was, we should not be instructing only on how to find the right information using Libraries' resources to meet course requirements; rather the goal should be to prepare students to be able to address and approach a question or problem, define the question or problem, and determine the information resources needed, critique what they have found and integrate what they have located into their class work. The goal is not only to teach them about information resources, but to help them understand a process or methodology that can be applied time and time again, while at the University or later when they are working in their career or, more generally, in life." (Mullins 2010)

Several library leaders pointed out another challenge inherent in developing an information literacy program: Many librarians do not want to teach. One library leader noted "lackluster performance by those involved in teaching information literacy." Others noted the need to have a retirement or a move by a librarian to another position in order to be able to hire or promote those who wanted to teach and were interested in becoming good teachers. Mullins acknowledges both aspects of this problem: "Librarians are not trained as teachers, so they need help in developing lesson plans and classroom skills. We have done some of this but we need to do more." Mullins also reports a conversation with a librarian who said, "if I had wanted to be in the classroom I would have chosen teaching as a field, I chose librarianship so I wouldn’t have to be in the classroom...." He then goes on to comment, "that may have been possible in the past, but that is not likely or desirable today." (Mullins 2010)

**Assuming New Roles**

Given that librarians have not always been provided with learning opportunities to become good teachers, and that there is perhaps even some resistance to assuming that role, it is incumbent upon library leaders to provide some degree of teacher training plus time for librarians to become comfortable in the classroom setting. One library leader commented that “[l]ibrarians must be seen as faculty with instructional goals just as classroom faculty are seen.” Another noted the "inability of some librarians to adapt their instruction to new modes of delivery..." and went on to point out that "...[d]eveloping new courses or new ways to instruct takes time and it can be challenging for many to find that time." Identifying the resources to support library teachers can also be problematic. Though many campuses provide teaching centers or support for pedagogical development, if librarians are not perceived of as teachers it is often difficult to obtain that support. Additionally, as noted by one library leader, "library constituents just don’t think of us as educators...." So, both identifying ways to acquire teaching skills and being seen as campus teachers are two sides of the same issue.

But it goes even further. Referring again to Dane Ward's table of the differences between bibliographic instruction and information literacy instruction, there are additional challenges for the teaching librarian. Ward notes that "Librarian & faculty design and implement instruction" (Ward 1997) in information literacy instruction; I believe such collaboration is often alien to us as librarians. There is also implicit the notion that ultimately we librarians may not "own" the instruction that is taking place but have instead served as consultants to a faculty member and have then turned over the actual instruction to that faculty member. Mullins goes so far as to point out that it wouldn’t be feasible to expect librarians to provide all information literacy instruction: "We are clear in understanding that librarians will not do all of the information literacy, that our goal is to teach the fundamentals of information literacy and to help faculty incorporate the principles in their courses, not requiring that a librarian instruct in each class (it wouldn’t be feasible)." He further notes that "... the only way a strong information literacy program can survive and be totally integrated into the curriculum is by faculty acceptance, adoption, and integration into the courses. Libraries faculty/librarians will be the advocates, the experts in new methodologies and resources for the integration of information into assignments and projects." (Mullins 2010) This may mean not only giving up our instructional opportunities to others, but also confronting our campus faculty members about the inadequacies of assignments that theoretically demonstrate student information literacy. One library leader points out, "Faculty assignments are the drivers of information literacy and engagement in the literature of specific disciplines." We may be placed in the awkward position of having to confront a faculty colleague about an assignment that does NOT
appropriately demonstrate student understanding of information literacy concepts. And though a challenging role for many librarians, Mullins also notes that the positive is “a greater recognition of the librarians as faculty colleagues through the work they are doing in information literacy.” (Mullins 2010) But though we may be very excited to be viewed as a partner in the teaching enterprise, there can be some uneasiness with this role.

**ASSESSMENT**

As librarians have implemented information literacy programs on our campuses, we have been faced with the challenges of assessing the success of those programs. Both the ETS iCritical Thinking™ Certification examination (ETS 2010) and Project SAILS* (Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills) (Project SAILS 2010) provide standardized tests for assessing student information literacy skills. [Disclosure: I worked briefly with the Project SAILS* people at Kent State University as the instrument was developed and tested.] Both instruments have been adopted at a number of institutions throughout the United States and mechanisms for assessing information literacy skills in student populations. Both instruments have been tested extensively and can serve to inform a campus about programmatic successes. Both instruments have also served as models for new assessment tools that have been developed and implemented at individual campuses.

Where we have been less successful, in my view, is in assessing student learning outcomes in courses that have information literacy components integrated into them. We still struggle with how we will know that our instruction has been effective and has resulted in student learning or changed behaviors. Too often, librarians rely on what one library leader characterized as the “we get invited back” method of assessment: We really don’t know whether students learned anything but we keep getting asked to repeat the instruction so we must be doing something right. Instead of relying on invitations as a method of assessment, we instead “need to focus on improving student outcomes (freshman to sophomore persistence, graduation, improved grades)....” Demonstrating cause and effect will be challenging, but without the attempt to do so we will have difficulty persuading campus administrators of the need for or value of our programs.

One library leader discussed a proposed assessment program where First Year Seminars might be used as a mechanism for establishing base-line understanding of student information literacy skills. This would be followed by assessment within senior seminars, thus providing a way to determine whether information literacy skills have been accumulated throughout a student’s academic career.

Mullins points to a possible assessment project at Purdue that would focus on at-risk students, to test “the impact that information literacy could have (and this is what we will be testing) in leveling the playing field for students who attended rural or inner city schools and may have a decent GPA but didn’t have access to the kind of information resources that students in more affluent communities might have had, and are, therefore, at a disadvantage in locating resources in support of papers and other projects they may be working in during their first year at Purdue, and consequently may be more likely to drop out of Purdue.” (Mullins 2010) This is the kind of assessment program that could provide many of us with ways of approaching campus administrators with a tool that would not only demonstrate the library’s value to the institution but also might help a group of students that are in need of additional assistance.

There are instruments available to us, and there are programmatic assessments that are being used or implemented that will provide us with ways of knowing how successful we are with information literacy instruction. But we must always be looking for ways to not only be involved with courses but to also influence the learning objectives of those courses, and to contribute to the design of assignments that contain information literacy components. One library leader pointed out that “there is also a reluctance at many institutions on the part of faculty to collaborate with librarians in designing courses and assignments.” As we work to change that mindset, we must also look for all possible ways to demonstrate that information literacy skills are a key component of student success and that we can contribute to student learning by being involved with teaching those skills.

As library administrators, we are increasingly being asked to demonstrate to our campuses that we add value to the academic enterprise. We are no longer able to count things—acquisitions, door counts, questions answered, classes taught, etc.—and the point to these things as reasons why the library adds value. Instead we need to recognize that impact on teaching, on learning, on research, on funding are measures that are valued. Demonstrating the value of information literacy is challenging and will continue to be challenging, but it is something we must do if we are to see broad campus support for this initiative.
BROAD SUPPORT FOR INFORMATION LITERACY

In my conversations with library leaders about information literacy on their campuses, I was pleased but also surprised to hear how many find this initiative to be compelling and important for their institutions. Approximately half of those with whom I talked indicated that information literacy is definitely the number one priority for their library, and the remainder recognized it has a significant place in the programs and services they were offering. My surprise was that even half of them considered this to be the primary priority! I had expected more of them to reflect the reality of one library leader who noted that information literacy was but one of many important initiatives, and that the primary challenge to it being higher on the list is a lack of clear understanding of how important it is to our campuses. But for many information literacy is unequivocally the highest possible priority, and it is definitely on the list for the rest and seems destined to stay there for the foreseeable future.

In addition to the commitment by librarians, it is important to acknowledge the support of a variety of organizations and individuals that individually and collectively have supported libraries and librarians in developing new information literacy initiatives and have provided an astonishing array of materials, people and programs that explain and advocate for information literacy programs. The list of organizations focused on information literacy efforts, and of individuals who have made information literacy their life work, is extensive and has resulted in new ways for librarians to understand both broad programmatic issues and more narrowly focused discipline-specific implementations. Support for discipline-specific guidelines has been notable and the guidelines developed have been embraced formally and informally by a variety of professional organizations. It is the support and advocacy of these organizations and people that has made information literacy what it currently is. Though I do have concerns and frustrations about how things have evolved and are evolving, I also feel that the broad support for this initiative has been key component to its growth and evolution and will be critical as we look forward to the next decade of information literacy.

LOOKING AHEAD—THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Information literacy is now entering its third decade, and I see opportunities available to us that outweigh the threats that we must overcome. One campus leader suggested that we are perhaps even entering into the golden era of information literacy, where a broad understanding of the skills needed to be successful as a student or a teacher or a researcher are recognized as a component of library services and programs and are valued by campus administrators as a way to help ensure the success of a variety of initiatives across our institutions.

There is some evidence that the rather narrow definition of information literacy is being changed at the institutional level and that those changes will perhaps result in adjustments to the official definitions. There are indications that new definitions might include not only information literacy but also technology fluency, writing skills, familiarity with a variety of new media tools, and other skills beyond the somewhat narrowly-defined information literacy component. And with new definitions come new opportunities to collaborate with others on our campuses and expand our reach and our influence even further.

Increasingly, there is a sense of the information literacy initiative taking hold on campuses, with the implementation of programs spanning a broad continuum from early development to full-fledged integration into the curriculum. There is also a sense that the technology will increasingly serve us as well as we look to scale programs and make them available to all students on our campuses, regardless of size.

As a profession we have done a remarkable job in embracing pedagogy and becoming very effective teachers. Today, librarians not only provide support for learning on our campus but in some cases provide leadership for learning how to be good teachers. Our skills as teachers will be critical as we become more integrated into courses and curricula at our campuses. We are increasingly comfortable with new and different roles that take us beyond our traditions and into new areas on campus and within disciplines. And we are broadly looking for ways to provide our campus leaders with ways to understand our value to the academic community that will result in increased assessment of all areas of our operations, including information literacy instruction and programs.

(There is one critical area where I believe we should either recognize failure and move on, or acknowledge that it should never have been part of the discourse of information literacy, and that is in promoting the aspect of information literacy that results in an informed citizenry. We have generally acknowledged that the need to promote information literacy goes well beyond teaching our constituents how to use library resources, and when we discuss information literacy we include references
to helping to develop an informed citizenry. Whether there is a valid theoretical underpinning to that aspect of information literacy remains a question (O'Connor 2009) and whether we have had any successes in including this in our information literacy instruction or programs is suspect. Even if we can find a rationale for thinking that creating an informed citizenry, the existing mechanisms for doing this seem to be no different from those we use to teach database access, so too often focused on immediate skills acquisition and less on the transference aspects of information literacy skills. I tend to take personally the inability of my fellow citizens—particularly those young enough to have likely received some kind of information literacy instruction—to be analytical and discerning in, for example, discussions of the current economic situation. Based on the how uninformed our citizenry seems to be I have to think that we as librarians have been less than successful in helping to create an informed citizenry and should perhaps admit that it is outside of both our purview and our ability to accomplish and to remove this component from our discussions and definitions. But this is a certainly more of a personal quibble and not one that has been reflected in my conversations with other library administrators.)

Looking ahead specifically at the role of library administrators, and using the words from conversations, discussions and interviews with library leaders, we will continue to need to “sell” our services to our campuses and make campus leaders understand “that our students need to graduate with effective information literacy skills if they are to be effective in their careers and as informed citizens. Librarians are the best professionals on campus to help students develop this expertise.” We will continue to need to help our institutions develop ways to assess information literacy skills, and if and when a deficiency is identified, we must be prepared to provide solutions. We will need to recognize even more the mandate to provide a variety of ways for students to acquire needed skills and to create “a dynamic suite of library and related academic services that students can access at point and time of need.” We will need to be “visionaries and advocates for information literacy, seeking every opportunity to make it more central on our campuses. We also need to make it central in our libraries and devote the necessary resources to it.” We need to “keep this on the agenda and allocate resources.” We will need to “educate and market, and not just to faculty but to students and to the administration.” At some institutions we will also need to educate and market informa-

tion literacy within the library and “make sure all working there are on board and understand it.” This may require a culture change and if so, as library leaders we will need to make sure that this culture change happens. We must provide the mechanism for library personnel to acquire new skills. We must communicate our commitment to change and new roles for the library in the life of the campus. We must look for ways to be innovative in how we interact with our colleagues. But most importantly, we must look for our own “perfect storms” and take advantage of the events on our campuses that allow us to put forward the library as a leader in providing student support.

As noted, one library leader posited that the information literacy movement is just now coming into its own. If that is the case, and I agree that it may be, perhaps a call to action is warranted. What is it that library administrators must do now to make sure that our information literacy initiatives continue to survive and thrive? What can we draw from the Purdue experience that will have relevance for our own institutions?

Based on my conversations, my experiences, let me suggest the following. This is a personal list, surely not comprehensive, but one that I hope will generate additional discussion and more ideas of how library administrators can support information literacy initiatives. It is a two-part list with the first part being a reflection of what I feel that we, the library community, can and must address—so actions that are internal to the library. The second part consists of my thoughts of what we must hope that others in our communities will be recognize as their responsibilities—so actions that are external to the library.

We, the broad library community, must:

- Provide appropriate levels of leadership, serving as visible and persuasive advocates for our campus information literacy initiatives.
- Recognize that as collections budgets are increasingly stretched and we are no longer able to be valued primarily because of our spending power and collections sizes we should shift some of the focus to what we can do to support student learning.
- Provide appropriate levels of support, tools, resources and training to ensure the success of our information literacy programs.
- Shift emphasis away from providing building-based services to providing classroom-based services.
• Shift the cultures of our libraries toward teaching and outreach to our campuses.

• Experiment, recognize successes, be willing to fail, but always look for ways to innovate in how we support the instructional mission of our campus communities.

• Accept the notion that good information literacy instruction may have nothing to do with knowing how to use library resources, but may instead focus on skills needed to find a job in a new city, buy a car, or plan a spring break trip.

• Value all aspects of excellent customer service, creating an environment in which our users value all of the services that we provide for them.

• Recognize which aspects of student learning the library "owns" and which are "owned" by faculty members, but be willing to recognize when it is time to give up some of our ownership or to blur the dividing lines.

• Reassure librarians that sharing information literacy responsibilities with faculty members is a positive (and perhaps necessary) aspect of a program and something that will return numerous benefits both in terms of improved student learning and better instruction.

What we cannot be completely responsible for, and what we must look for in the broader academic community, includes:

• Graduate students, their role as future faculty, and recognition of how critical they will be to future successes of our information literacy programs.

• Campus administrators' interest in the library's impact on student learning rather than in our ability to make students feel welcome on our campuses, though we must still strive to maintain our personal connections with our constituents.

• Different ways that learners learn and the increasingly-important role of instructional design principles.

• Partnerships with those who are preparing students for our colleges and universities, and instilling good information habits in younger students, before they have established bad and/or traditional library habits.

• Senior faculty members who often have more flexibility and less to lose than junior faculty and may be better information literacy partners for us.

• Expectations of the library differ from campus to campus, and understanding how faculty members and administrators view our libraries is critical to developing a successful information literacy initiative.

• Schools of library and information science that will prepare graduates for their roles as teaching librarians or a "blended" librarians, with an accompanying expectation that our librarians will have teaching excellence (not just teaching, but excellent teaching) as a component of their professional portfolios.

• Campus champions from outside the library who will help us to differently articulate the need for campus information literacy initiatives.

• Collaborations with anyone on our campuses who is willing to collaborate, and using the varied skills of our campus partners to enhance our initiatives.

And though we can hope for support from the broader campus community it is ultimately us as library leaders, who are responsible for the success of information literacy initiatives on our campuses.

We must also look to the research being conducted by our colleagues, and both learn from that research and act on suggested ideas for additional research. Using but one example of such research, Gilchrist's 2007 dissertation, Academic Libraries at the Center of Instructional Change: Faculty and Librarian Experience of Library Leadership in the Transformation of Teaching and Learning (Gilchrist 2007) provides both insights into some of the challenges we face as we implement information literacy programs and affirmations of what we are doing well and where we can look to improve, but also offers some of the opportunities for further investigation. Gilchrist's work is by no means unique, but does provide a recent example of the quality of information literacy research that is being conducted and the additional questions that need to be asked as we proceed with this initiative.

As I think about my concerns and reflect on the role of information literacy in academic libraries today, on where the movement has come from and where it seems to be going, I think that may be correct. As I
think about my disappointments and frustrations they seem to be rooted in impatience. I am convinced that we do have a critical role to play in supporting the students at our institutions but am concerned that we have not been as effective as we need to be either in claiming that role or in making our campus leaders understand and recognize that role. The amount of information available to students, faculty and researchers will continue to grow exponentially, and the role that we must play in helping our users find, evaluate, manage and use that information, regardless of format, will be increasingly important. So perhaps the third decade will be the decade when libraries and information literacy initiatives become synonymous and there will be a widespread recognition that we are “not only preparing students for their classes but for their future place in society.”

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References
Gilchrist, Deborah. 2007. Academic Libraries at the Center of Instructional Change: Faculty and Librarian Experience of Library Leadership in the Transformation of Teaching and Learning.

