Haverford College Information-Literacy Learning Goals

Four-Year Plan for Instruction Goals

Overview: The Library aims to promote and support students’ development across a range of skills encompassed by what scholars variously call “information literacy,” “metaliteracy,” or “transliteracy.” Common to each of these concepts is the understanding that students and other library patrons, in order to be active, critical users and finders of information, must possess the following skills:

- the ability to determine when and how much information is needed for any given project;
- the knowledge of where to find that information, how best to use a given resource, and what the strengths and limitations of each information source are;
- the ability to evaluate critically the information that they find and to use that information effectively and efficiently within their own work—including the ability to cite and reuse information accurately and ethically;
- the ability to manage, store, retrieve, and manipulate information found through searching;
- the understanding of how format and environment shape information across various media, including visual, archival, new-media, multimedia, and transmedia resources in both digital and analog formats.

First-year goals: While library skills are often considered equivalent to advanced research skills, we argue that library skills are relevant to—and develop progressively across—all four years of the undergraduate curriculum. Library subject specialists seek both to foster active learning and to meet students “where they are” in terms of the skills and knowledge with which they enter college. For freshmen, instruction might thus begin with sources such as Google, which librarians then compare with other resources to show both how students’ use of Google might be improved and how other tools might be more useful for many academic projects.

In their first year of college, students will have a particularly strong need to develop the ability to interrogate critically their information sources: that is, students should understand basic differences between: peer-reviewed and unmediated sources; search engines and research databases; primary and secondary sources; and so on. As part of this process, students will need to learn how information is shaped by its medium, an especially important skill to develop as resources proliferate in an increasingly large range of digital and analog formats. This skill will be reflected in the students’ ability not only to interpret the effect of media on the consumption of information, but also to understand the role of media in the production of knowledge. This goal forms a core aspect of the Library’s teaching and support of traditional and digital tools for composition. Examples of the latter include workshops and in-class instruction on how to use software programs like Omeka and hardware devices such as iPads and digital scanners.

In addition to helping students understand which resources to use and when, librarians help freshmen improve their ability to find and retrieve sources from search engines, catalogs, databases, physical libraries, and archives. Moreover, librarians teach students how to cite, store,
and reuse that information ethically and legally, introducing as part of this process the underlying principles behind copyright and plagiarism. Important components of the Library’s instruction in this area include its physical and web-based introductions to services and resources, its peer-to-peer and librarian-led workshops, bibliographic instruction for classes (especially first-year writing seminars) and individual meetings with bibliographers.

**Examples from the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences:**

- **Humanities** (Spanish) – Locate and use high-quality sources to discover the cultural context of a specific hispanophone text
- **Social Sciences** (Economics) – Identify and get access to high-quality economics articles that use up-to-date econometric techniques
- **Natural Sciences** (Computer Science) – Use library services and tools to locate high-quality “documentation, models and examples” to support solutions to a given problem in computer science

**Second-year goals:** The sophomore year represents an important stage in students’ development as researchers and critical users of information. While continuing to build on the analytical and basic-research skills learned in their freshman year, students look ahead to the culminating experience of the second year: the declaration of their major(s). In preparing to make this decision, students must familiarize themselves with the emphases and methodologies of different departments. In addition to taking a wide range of courses, students become acquainted with these themes and approaches by researching different disciplinary literature on their own or as part of in-class research assignments, which are likely to require more sophisticated research skills and strategies than those needed for 100-level courses. The increasing responsibility that students assume consequently requires them to imagine themselves as practitioners within a discipline and participants in a larger academic discourse with which they are becoming increasingly familiar.

As students begin to think about their own scholarship beyond the boundaries of discrete courses and, indeed, even discrete disciplines, librarians help them to see how their current work might lead to larger research projects—whether the thesis or other endeavors. One of the ways in which librarians facilitate this process is by teaching students how to use citation-management programs like Zotero, allowing them to actively marshal their accumulated research. On a more basic level, librarians help students understand the key differences among various types of information—especially important as they try to locate more critical literature in the appropriate subject-specific and multidisciplinary databases. The Library also helps students to improve their archival intelligence, preparing them to do work in local and distant archives, museums, and special collections, as well as in digital archives. Looking beyond students’ coursework, the Library also helps students achieve other professional goals, contributing to their preparation for internships and other off-campus learning experiences. Librarians employ a range of methods to reach students in their second year: by working with classes, holding independent workshops, scheduling individual appointments, providing regular support to all sophomores through the Personal Librarian program (started in fall 2013), and otherwise reaching students by email and other online channels.
Examples from the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences:

- **Humanities** (French) – Identify, retrieve, and analyze secondary resources on various periods of French history.
- **Social Sciences** (Sociology) – Locate and retrieve primary documents from another discipline that can be used to understand and contextualize economic inequality in a particular culture.
- **Natural Sciences** (Biology) – Find and get access to secondary literature that helps students better understand cellular and molecular biology.

**Third-year goals:** Juniors explore the range and depth of their field of study while laying the groundwork for the capstone project in their senior year. They develop evaluative skills in order to critique scholarship in an informed and comprehensive manner. They become familiar with the methodologies and theoretical frameworks of their major field while working with other subject areas for interdisciplinary connections. Through classes, internships, and personal interests, juniors develop skills and acquire experiences that deepen their understanding of their major field and cast them in the role of practitioners. This contributes to their awareness of the ways in which scholarship is produced, shared, and used to advance understanding. In turn when they have opportunities to make their work available to audiences, they prepare images and data for presentation with an awareness of enhancing their arguments and using the work of others responsibly.

Librarians work with juniors in classes, one-on-one meetings, workshops, and in the libraries. For classes librarians put together research guides tailored to the needs of the individual course. Not only do the guides outline the resources for the academic discipline, but they also explain the most effective ways to search the databases, understand the categories of scholarly literature, and develop an overall research plan. In individual meetings the student and librarian concentrate on the questions involved in a particular project. There is more opportunity to follow up on further issues and to suggest ways to evaluate material. Research tools, like handbooks and cited reference indices, provide further instances for critical thinking. Librarians contact all juniors by department to introduce library resources and services and to invite them to get in touch whatever may be needed. Throughout the year librarians send additional messages pertinent to new resources, events, and other items of interest.

Examples from the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences:

- **Humanities** (Religion) – Interpret a religious text with reference to cultural practices and to scholarly views
- **Social Sciences** (Anthropology) – Identify pertinent ethnographies while also finding theoretical work that is relevant for a topic
- **Natural Sciences** (Physics) – Perform a literature search that covers pre-published material and dissertations as well as the journal literature

**Fourth-year goals:** Seniors deepen their knowledge of their chosen discipline and do independent research for a capstone project. They need to identify topics of interest, formulate their own research questions, situate their inquiries within the scholarly literature, and, as work
proceeds, consider new issues, subject approaches, and methodologies that might add to their analysis. In using scholarly literature, seniors need a mastery of their disciplinary databases and reference works, an ability to search online and printed sources effectively, and the skills to identify archives, research centers, and other organizations that hold research material. Throughout the thesis process students evaluate scholarship by contextualizing the work of individual authors, identifying the significant sources for a question, building a larger narrative of the literature in a field, and reinterpreting their own analysis of issues based on critical evaluations of materials. In preparing their work, whether in the form of a written thesis or in other media, students address questions of managing and citing references, understanding copyright and fair use, presenting material in different media effectively, and developing a critical awareness of the ways in which information is created, distributed, and used.

Librarians work with students in classes, one-on-one meetings, and email exchanges. They provide them with relevant scholarship and advice on research while also discussing with them the skills and ways of thinking needed for independent research. Students can get a better understanding of their research question by thinking through search statements both in terms of word distinctions and synonyms as well as the connections between concepts. In a world reliant on both digital and print resources, students need advice on ways to navigate the research complexities that rarely come with a road map. Once students have found material, they need to bring those scholars into dialogue with each other and with their own ideas. By being introduced to the critical workings of their discipline through book reviews, handbooks, footnotes, and literature-review articles, students have a larger context in which to understand issues. Opportunities for access mean that students need to be aware of copyright concerns both as consumers and producers.

Examples from the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences:

- **Humanities** (Classics) – Mine the long history of Classical scholarship effectively to make richer interpretations of Greek and Latin texts
- **Social Sciences** (History) – Contextualize primary sources through a critical understanding of the issues as understood by contemporaries and through an informed reading of the pertinent secondary scholarship
- **Natural Sciences** (Chemistry) – Critique conclusions presented in the primary literature to develop more rigorous research protocols

**Assessment Overview:** The Library measures instructional effectiveness by gathering feedback from students—via evaluations handed out at the end of class or after individual meetings—and assessing it based on the goals and expectations embedded in the Library’s mission statement and enumerated in the Library’s stated goals for instruction for all four years of undergraduate instruction. Students highlight important concepts that they learned in instruction sessions as well as those that need to be added in the future. Bibliographers also work closely with faculty members in planning assignments and gather feedback from those individuals after each session.