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Jagged Little PIL – Using “Project Information Literacy” in the Classroom

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Who
- Debbie Krahmer, Learning Commons Librarian, Assistant Professor of Libraries.
- Eliza Kent, Director of Core Communities & Identities, Associate Professor of Religion
- Noor Khan, Assistant Professor in History
- Melissa Kage, Assistant Professor of Educational Studies

Core CI
Core Communities & Identities is a component of the Core Curriculum at Colgate University. As a major area of Liberal Arts education, Core CI strives to meet 3 goals:
- Enhance one’s knowledge and understanding of a particular geographically-located place.
- Think creatively and critically about how communities and identities in a particular place are shaped by historical and geographical forces, and about how they respond through varied forms of cultural and political expression.
- Develop information literacy skills and academic research skills as they engage in research for a significant project. (measured by the survey)

Methodology
- 7-8 question survey modeled after the PIL.
- Delivered at the beginning and end of the semester, Fall 2011 and Spring 2012.
- Anonymous and voluntary.
- Survey created using Google Forms.
- 4 eBook readers given out in random drawings.
- Questions were measured on a Likert scale, 0=Don’t Understand, 1=Never, 5=Always.
- Total surveys: 574 total students, 204 pre-course, 183 post-course
- Pre-course response rate: 36%
- Post-course response rate: 32%

The Original PIL
Our assessment was based on “Project Information Literacy” (PIL):
- National survey conducted by Alison Heid & Michael Eisenberg, University of Washington.
- 22 questions, anonymous and voluntary.
- Delivered between April 6, 2010-May 18, 2010 to 25 universities.
- 112,844 students surveyed, 8,445 responses (7.9% response rate)
- Survey report and subsequent research: http://projectfinds.org

ACRL Guidelines
Areas of focus for this survey, developed from the ACRL Information Literacy Guidelines:
- Defines and articulates a need for information
- Locates and retrieves information
- Critically evaluates information

Demographics
PIL
- Sophomore, Junior, Seniors

Core CI
- Mostly freshmen & sophomores, very few Juniors & Seniors.
- 39% had a library session as part of their Core CI coursework.
- 38% did not have a library session.

Results
- Students shift from non-scholarly to scholarly sources over the semester.
- Evaluation of materials improves by the end of the semester.
- Just as in the PIL study, students show that they are more frequently using evaluation tools for web resources than library resources.
- Currency remains a large part of evaluation.
- Students consider what the URL means for a web resource more than they consider who the publisher is of a library resource.
- Those who do not have a library session as part of their course tend to not consult librarians frequently.
- Nearly 50% of students who have a library session consult with a librarian in the course of their research project.
- Students at Colgate use the library shelves more than the national PIL study.
- Students at Colgate use Government Websites less than the national PIL study.

Remaining Questions
- How are students using these resources (qualitative)?
- Which article databases are Core CI students using?
- Are Core CI student aware of subject-specific encyclopedias?

Plan for the Future
- Improve the Subject Guides for specific classes, and increase their promotion to students and faculty.
- Focus on greater collaboration between faculty and librarians.
- Improve discussions with faculty about information literacy, using the survey results and PIL as a catalyst for discussion.
- Greater promotion of information literacy information and resources to faculty.
- Repeat the survey in the Fall 2013/Spring 2013.
- Add questions that speak to the needs left unfilled by the original survey.

Conclusion
- Students’ information literacy and academic research skills are improving in the course of their taking Core CI.
- Library sessions also seem to have a positive effect on the measured outcomes for the students.
- The discussion between librarians and Core CI faculty changed for the better as a result of this survey. The material can be used to continue these discussions across the University.

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