Population Served

We work at the Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), a research land-grant institution located in northern Nevada. The region is known for its mining, ranching, and casino industries. In recent years, companies such as Tesla and Apple have contributed to a technology boom that has influenced the community and surrounding areas. Both the university and its community are experiencing fast-paced growth and change, which have created a growing need for education and research support. Over the last ten years, the university has enjoyed a steadily growing freshman class. In fall 2018, total undergraduate student enrollment for at UNR was close to 18,000. The university also has just under 300 medical students and almost 3,000 graduate students. The top majors in fall 2018 were community health sciences, engineering, business, biology, and psychology. First-generation students make up 40 percent of undergraduates. Nevadans make up 72 percent of undergraduates, many from rural areas. Rural students need extra help adjusting to college and a new classroom environment. Just under 25 percent of incoming students are transfer students. The presence of these traditionally underserved students along with the growing student population has increased the need for information literacy instruction.
Program Scope

Most information literacy (IL) instruction at UNR resides within the Research and Instructional Services Department (RIS), whose mission is to “assist students, faculty, and community members with the discovery, evaluation, and use of information.” Eight RIS tenure-track librarians serve as liaisons to a variety of disciplines on campus and provide IL instruction for lower-division, upper-division, and graduate courses. RIS and other liaison librarians work directly with their disciplines and coordinate with faculty individually to schedule instruction sessions. At this time, the only programmatic IL instruction at UNR occurs in conjunction with the English (ENG) department’s Core Writing Program, which provides freshman-level composition classes to incoming students.

Within RIS, a dedicated Core Writing Team works directly with the Core Writing Program to provide foundational IL instruction for these students. The Core Writing Program (CWP) refers to the English department’s core composition curriculum. The Core Writing Team (CWT) is the team of librarians who provide IL instruction for Core Writing. Our vision is to reach every student enrolled in ENG 102 (Composition II). ENG 102 explicitly addresses the university’s Core Objective 3: Critical Analysis and Use of Information, making it an ideal course for IL instruction. Although ENG 102 has long been the focus of our instruction efforts, the CWT provides instruction for other CWP courses as well, from remedial composition classes to composition for English language learners.

Operations

As of fall 2018, the CWT comprised four liaison librarians holding MLS degrees and two library instructors. The liaison librarian for English is the CWT lead, coordinating instruction as an informal but agreed-upon responsibility. The liaison librarians involved with the CWT also support IL in their respective departments. In contrast, the library instructors on the CWT focus solely on supporting CWP classes. For simplicity, we refer to all CWT members as librarians, except where functional distinctions are necessary to highlight.

Instruction requests are assigned to librarians by the CWT lead based on several factors, including librarian availability and job responsibilities (see Administrative Highlights). The reality is that each of us has a different capacity to teach CWP classes in any given semester. As a result, an effort is made to distribute the number of classes taught by each librarian equitably, not equally. What is equitable is not a precise measure. However, the team lead considers factors such as full-time or part-time status as well as primary job responsibilities and competing projects when assigning classes. The unequal (but hopefully equitable) distribution of classes for the fall 2018 semester can be seen in table 11.1.

Table 11.1
Distribution of CWP classes across CWT members (fall 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Member</th>
<th>LL* 1</th>
<th>LL2</th>
<th>LL3</th>
<th>LL4</th>
<th>LI* (24% FTE)</th>
<th>LI (80% FTE)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sessions Taught</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* LL = Liaison Librarian
† LI = Library Instructor
In addition to liaison librarians and library instructors, the RIS department employs Peer Research Consultants (PRCs), undergraduate students trained in reference services who provide drop-in research help at the Research Help desk. PRCs also provide occasional assistance with IL instruction for the CWP, offering individual research assistance for students during sessions.

Costs associated with IL instruction for the CWP are minimal, and the CWT does not manage its own budget. Rather, the CWT is supported through the RIS department, which funds ongoing instruction costs including
- teaching materials (e.g., dry-erase markers, whiteboards, Play-Doh, Koosh balls, etc.)
- class incentives (e.g., candy, mini-highlighters, flash drives, etc.)
- professional development (e.g., online courses, books, workshops, etc.)

Marketing

Over the years, marketing IL instruction to the CWP has evolved with changes to the CWT and the CWP. A failed past marketing technique was the provision of warming sessions, in which librarians would drop by classrooms to give a brief presentation of library resources and distribute bookmarks. The goal of these sessions was to gently introduce students to the library and to encourage instructors to schedule a follow-up instruction session. The low return on investment made these warming sessions unfeasible.

Our current promotion strategy is tied closely to the academic year as well as to the activities within the CWP. We use a marketing plan with a strong focus on outreach activities at the start of the fall semester. Here’s an outline of our fall 2018 marketing plan:
- **Summer**: Design Core Writing newsletter using Canva.com; host new CWP instructors for a library tour and information session during their orientation.
- **Faculty Reporting Week** (the week before the start of the semester): Librarian visits CWP faculty meeting to show instructors how to request session through the library website.
- **Week 1 of the semester**: Obtain a list of CWP instructors from the CWP office.
- **Week 2**: Email informational newsletter to instructors and distribute print copies in mailboxes.
- **Week 4**: Send personalized email check-ins to all CWP instructors who have not yet requested a session.

The current marketing plan focuses on fostering relationships with individual CWP instructors (through personalized emails) and highlighting differentiated IL instruction for ENG 101 and ENG 102 (as outlined in Pedagogical Highlights). As we review our instruction statistics at the end of the semester, we reflect on our outreach efforts and adjust our marketing plan accordingly.

Collaboration

The cornerstone of our collaboration with the CWP is the librarian-instructor relationship. This occurs on both the program level and the individual level. To facilitate communication and foster collaborative relationships, each instructor requesting a session is
assigned one librarian to work with for all their CWP classes that semester. The librarian and instructor then discuss the goals for the instruction session and begin to develop a plan together.

We have also attempted collaboration at a more programmatic level. For example, our CWT meets annually with the directors and assistant directors of the CWP. These meetings are especially important for sustaining collaboration as they allow us to reassess and realign IL instruction with the broader CWP objectives. Changes in program leadership and priorities underscore the importance of continual communication. In addition to communicating with the CWP leadership, we have reached out to Graduate Writing Program Administrators and participated in CWP subcommittees such as the Pedagogy Committee, the Publicity Committee, and the Assessment Committee. Outcomes of these collaborations have included sharing IL activities for instructors to include in the classroom and providing assistance with program assessment projects.

Role of the One-Shot

One-shots are the primary mode of IL instruction, with a few instructors each semester opting for a follow-up session. Our team recognizes the disadvantages associated with one-shot sessions, and we are constantly seeking strategies for making the best of these sessions. We frequently discuss concerns about one-shot sessions, which range from limitations on building effective learning environments for students to identifying which IL concepts to teach during a one-hour session. Whatever its drawbacks, the one-shot is here to stay at UNR.

Our team addresses the challenges of the one-shot by using active learning strategies (see Pedagogical Highlights) and rapport-building techniques in the classroom to engage students. In both cases, librarians develop their unique style for engaging students in meaningful ways. For example, some instructors use storytelling techniques, while others share a few personal details (such as a picture of a beloved cat). We have observed that these techniques increase student involvement in our sessions. We have also tried to extend the impact of one-shots through online tutorials that can be assigned to students outside of class for a flipped classroom. These tutorials are optional, and usage has remained low. As more courses move to online and hybrid formats, however, we are seeking to embed online IL tutorials in more classes.

Pedagogical Highlights

As discussed above (see Program Scope), our IL instruction model was built on the assumption that ENG 102 was the gravitational center of our instruction efforts. The crowning assignment in ENG 102, the research paper, lent itself well to this assumption. As a result, we tried to reach as many ENG 102 classes as possible, with the other CWP courses forming a minority of our instruction load. Recent trends have required us to reexamine those assumptions. We have seen an increasing number of ENG 101 sections and a decline in the number of ENG 102 sections in the spring semester. What accounts for the shifting focus on IL, and what should we do about it? Table 11.2 includes all CWP classes served by the library.
Table 11.2  
CWP courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Number</th>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>Course Catalog Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENG 98</td>
<td>Preparatory Composition</td>
<td>The writing process including paragraph development, sentence structure, usage, and grammar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG 100j</td>
<td>Composition Studio</td>
<td>Writing the expository essay; emphasis on revising and editing for development, coherence, style, and correctness. Enhanced instruction in critical reading and extended workshop time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG 101</td>
<td>Composition I</td>
<td>Writing the expository essay; emphasis on revising and editing for development, coherence, style, and correctness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG 102</td>
<td>Composition II</td>
<td>Exploration of essay forms with particular attention to interpretation and argument; emphasis on analytical reading and writing, critical thinking, and research methodologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG 113</td>
<td>Composition I for International Students</td>
<td>Satisfies the ENG 101 requirement for non-native English speakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG 114</td>
<td>Composition II for International Students</td>
<td>Satisfies the ENG 102 requirement for non-native English speakers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In examining these questions, we identified a primary problem: we had not differentiated IL learning objectives for ENG 101 and ENG 102. Not only was this problematic from a pedagogical perspective, but it was also indefensible in the face of student complaints that they had already had an IL session (in ENG 101) and that another one would be redundant. We therefore undertook a curriculum mapping project. The goals of the project were to bring some uniformity to our teaching and to differentiate instruction while leaving the responsibility and space for creative lesson planning to individual librarians.

The joint effort of creating an activity bank has helped build our community of practice while realigning our teaching with the current goals of the CWP. Working in teams and using recent ENG 101 and ENG 102 syllabi as our starting point, we identified course learning outcomes with IL components. From the course outcomes, we wrote IL learning outcomes that were tied to the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education and identified or developed activities for each IL learning outcome (see table 11.3). This process fostered a shared teaching philosophy across the CWT. Prior to the launch of our new lesson plans in fall 2018, we hosted an activity show and tell in which each librarian demonstrated an IL activity for ENG 101 or ENG 102. Experiencing the activities firsthand prepared the CWT to teach new activities, forcing us to become more adventurous and flexible teachers.

Our community of practice around these shared lesson plans comes full circle as we all provide written evaluations of activities tried and we participate in regular peer teaching observations.
Table 11.3
Sample learning outcomes and activities for ENG 101 and ENG 102

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>ACRL Frame</th>
<th>Learning Outcome (Students will be able to . . .)</th>
<th>Activity Option 1</th>
<th>Activity Option 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENG 101</td>
<td>Research as Inquiry</td>
<td>Recognize different steps of the research process</td>
<td>Mapping the Research Process</td>
<td>Draw These Characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG 102</td>
<td>Searching as Strategic Exploration</td>
<td>Select appropriate library databases and search tools for different information needs</td>
<td>Database Evaluation</td>
<td>Pass the Paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Administrative Highlights

Administrative responsibilities consist of scheduling and communication. While everyone contributes to developing our communications strategy, the CWT lead is the primary communicator with the CWP.

Scheduling is primarily handled by the team lead. Core Writing instructors complete an online instruction request form, which is received by the team lead and one other librarian. We schedule the request within one business day of receiving it. This requires aligning a person, a place, and a time (easier said than done!). Instructors indicate their first and second (and sometimes third) choices of a date. The team lead uses Outlook to determine librarians’ availability at the requested times. If more than one class section is requested by the instructor, every attempt is made to assign all their classes to the same librarian. Once the availability of a librarian at the requested times is confirmed, one of three library computer labs is reserved. The team lead checks class enrollment against the room capacity of available labs. If an appropriate lab is not located, an alternate date is considered and the process restarts.

Once a date, place, and librarian are aligned, the class information is entered into the RIS department’s shared instruction calendar. The team lead then forwards the original instruction request to the assigned librarian, along with the room reservation details. At this stage, assigning classes is approached with regard for the librarian tasked with teaching the IL instruction session. The assignment of a session is always posed as a question—“Can you take this class?”—and refusals (though rare) are respected.

Once the librarian has confirmed the class, the team lead tracks the number of classes each librarian teaches on a whiteboard. This helps the team lead to track progress toward meeting our teaching goals and to monitor the instruction load. This informs scheduling decisions since maintaining an equitable teaching load (as outlined in Operations) is as important as librarian availability.

Tracking IL instruction sessions as they are scheduled allows for continuous assessment of our instruction impact and instruction load. We measure instruction impact in the number of unique class sections taught, collectively. Instruction load is measured in the total number of class sessions taught, both collectively and individually. At the start of the semester, we set goals for instruction impact (e.g., 55% of CWP classes will receive IL instruction). As classes are scheduled, the team lead can see how close we are to meeting our goal and determine whether more outreach is required. (Because the whiteboard
tracks sessions and not sections, instruction impact is merely approximated until the end of the semester when instruction data from LibInsight is reviewed. Similarly, the team lead consults with individual librarians at the start of the semester to set targets for instruction load. As IL sessions are assigned, the team lead can see how close a librarian is to reaching their target instruction load.

From the moment the librarian accepts an instruction session, they assume all communication, scheduling, and planning responsibilities. If the requesting instructor wants to reschedule or add a follow-up session, it’s up to the librarian to handle. This way, the instructor communicates with only one librarian.

What We Wish People Knew

As the team lead for Core Writing, I (Rosalind) was surprised by how uncomfortable I would be with assigning instruction sessions to other librarians. As a liaison librarian, the decision to accept a request for instruction from one of my departments has always been my own. I appreciate having such control over my schedule, particularly because a blank space on a calendar does not always indicate availability. We all have job and life responsibilities that are unscheduled but are nevertheless real work. Since I did not like the idea of someone else controlling my instruction calendar, I was uncomfortable with assigning instruction to other librarians, especially because I do not supervise any of the Core Writing librarians. They are my peers, and leading a team of peers requires cultivating a great deal of goodwill. With respect to scheduling, it helps to have a discussion about what a reasonable instruction load looks like for each individual. Knowing that one of my Core Writing librarians is teaching a semester-long class, another has a young child at home, another has demanding liaison departments, and another has limited hours allows me to be more sensitive to the hidden demands on their time. Then, when I do schedule an instruction session for a Core Writing librarian, I know that I have given them and their valuable time due consideration.

Beyond the hidden labor of scheduling is the logistics of scheduling. We all know that scheduling can be a challenge, but it never ceases to impress me just how intractable a problem it is, particularly those midsemester, last-minute requests that come during peak instruction when rooms and people are already booked. Then, finding a workable solution is headache-inducing. Having a clear system for tracking requests and schedules helps, as does being flexible and accepting that sometimes not everything aligns. It’s okay to adjust your expectations as well as those of the requesting instructor. If computer labs aren’t available, be open to going to the regular classroom to teach. If the instructor’s preferred date doesn’t work, offer to schedule their second- or third-choice date or propose an alternative date.

Aligning the library’s IL instruction with the goals of the CWP in a systematic way can also be challenging. CWP administrators, tenure-track faculty, adjuncts, and teaching assistants all have their own perspectives and concerns that influence their approaches to teaching. Often, each individual instructor is executing the stated goals of the CWP, but interpreting them differently. This can make building a cohesive IL program a challenge. Nevertheless, stepping back and finding common ground is important. With the larger goals of the CWP in focus, librarians can depend a little less on individual instructors to
set goals for IL instruction sessions. Rather, we can teach IL in the best way we know how, grounded in the goals of the program.

As team lead, I attempt to foster a sense of community of practice through shared lesson plans and activities, as well as peer teaching observations and group active learning demonstrations. These activities further the cohesiveness of our IL instruction, providing for shared values as well as shared tips. From my own experiences and the experience of my team, I have gathered some practical advice for fellow coordinators to share: be prepared with a lesson plan, but be prepared to abandon that plan. Be flexible and ready when unexpected situations arise. Whether it’s a technical interruption (such as a power outage, slow or no internet connection, or authentication issue) or a digression from your original lesson plan (such as low attendance or a last-minute request from the instructor to change your airtight lesson plan), minor preparations made ahead of time can save you in a pinch.

Here’s what has helped us when the unexpected happened:

- **Save important pages offline.** If there is a website you frequently show students, save an offline version and bookmark it. If the library website is down or if the internet is disconnected, you can still direct students to helpful resources they can use following the session. For instance, we have saved and bookmarked the library home page, English Composition Library Guide, and research help page. Showing students library resources from an offline page can buy you some time while you wait for the internet connection to return.

- **Keep it low-tech.** It’s a good idea to have a few pen and paper activities on hand in the event of a power outage or tech failure. Simple, low-tech activities can still engage students.

- **Know your classroom support or IT.** Whom do you contact if the equipment in the classroom isn’t working? Is it the same contact for every room in the building? On campus? If your institution has a classroom support or IT department to assist with classroom technology, keep its contact information in your phone so you can contact it quickly.

Coordinating an information literacy program brings with it many surprises and challenges. Success does not depend on one person alone, but on a team of dedicated librarians. An instruction coordinator can foster a professional learning community by demonstrating a willingness to share ideas and take risks, to listen and be flexible.

**Notes**

3. Shannon Ellis, “Academic Affairs and Student Service” (presentation, New Faculty Orientation, University of Nevada, Reno, August 2018).
6. Graduate Writing Program Administrators are graduate students who help administer the Writing Program. This is a common practice in the field, and the Council of Writing Program Administrators has a dedicated Graduate Organization (the WPA-GO): see “WPA-GO,” Council of Writing Program Administrators website, accessed November 25, 2019, http://wpacouncil.org/wpa-go.


8. A single section of a class may schedule multiple sessions. This increases the instruction load but does not change the instruction impact.

Bibliography


Ellis, Shannon. “Academic Affairs and Student Service.” Presentation, New Faculty Orientation, University of Nevada, Reno, August 2018.


