

Information Literacy for Music Librarians: Pre-Conference Workshop at MLA 2003

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Information Literacy: the set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze and use information (ALA Web site).

Julie Todaro, Dean of Library Services at Austin Community College, began the workshop by showing a scenario that epitomized an information-literate student. She encouraged us to create a profile of an information-literate music student and to write a scenario describing how the student would research and write a paper.

Different terms for and definitions of information literacy (IL) were presented. Todaro recommended we use the term or phrase that people at the institution will accept, and that we have different ways to explain and personalize the concept.

The IL umbrella includes tool, resource, social-structural, research and publishing literacy. IL activities include library tours, reference and point-of-use instruction, small group in-library instruction, non-credit and credit library courses, classroom presentations (general and discipline-specific), signage, Web content on library use, Web content on research skills, and Web tutorials.

IL programs are part of the academy's strategic directions. They are

planned for and budgeted based on the library's vision and goals. IL is integrated into the continuous learning of faculty and staff. It is designed to meet institutional and patron needs, and is actively marketed and continuously assessed.

Deborah Pierce (University of Washington) discussed the relationship between brain research, education and psychology. Brain research and learning is a new research area. Before the advent of the MRI, EEG and PET, we could not study the brain without the person being deceased. Functional MRI (fMRI) tracks brain activity when we are doing something functional. Ultradian rhythms are our natural attention cycles. There are continuing smaller cycles of dropout (ninety to one hundred minutes, then fifty minutes, twenty minutes, etc.). We can use this information to be mindful of the plus-or-minus chunks in which people learn. Recommended teaching tips include: don't talk over twenty minutes without a change in activity or a break, a longer break every ninety to one hundred and ten minutes, build in external vs. internal focus (e.g., five minutes of reflective work), give

downtime between pieces of learning, use variety and contrast (e.g., lecture, group work, drama, music, presentations) encourage standing, stretching and deep breaths when students feel sleepy.

Pierce then discussed learning styles, which can be characterized by our preferences for the type of information we receive (sensory vs. intuitive), perceive (visual vs. verbal), organize (inductive vs. deductive), process (active vs. reflective), and understand (sequential vs. global). To be truly effective, we need to incorporate all these learning styles into our teaching. Most people tend to teach the way they learn. The workshop participants took a learning style inventory to discover their personal learning (and teaching) preferences. The different modalities of auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning and teaching techniques need to be incorporated into lectures. We worked in pairs to develop ways to incorporate these modalities into teaching the concept of boolean logic.

This was followed by four presentations that showcased information literacy projects and programs in music libraries. Kathy Abromeitt (Oberlin Conservatory of Music) worked with faculty member Victoria Vaughan to integrate information literacy into the program of the opera theatre department. They focussed on real-life situations since the students found a studio rather than an academic approach to be easier. This method convinced the students of the importance of library research skills for their education and career. IL competencies were built into the

students' assignments, such as a role research paper, a scene analysis paper, and a performance analysis paper, where the students needed to document the resources used to fulfill the assignments.

Beth Christensen (St. Olaf College) developed a program where IL competencies are integrated into music history courses. Students continuously build their skills throughout the undergraduate program. Christensen provided a handout that presented the level of student and course, the activity the librarian teaches, and the outcomes (i.e., the student is able to cite authors' credentials and determine their potential biases). Sample assignments were distributed. Christensen stressed the importance of faculty support and commitment to motivate the students. As a result, students now see the library as an integral part of becoming a musician.

Gregg Geary (University of Hawaii at Manoa) discussed how IL is created at UHM libraries. This includes establishing face-to-face learning communities, providing a self-guided library skills' workbook, and providing Web tutorials. A "learning community" is a group of students who take the same classes and form a collective. The curriculum is linked across several classes and is interdisciplinary. Both faculty and librarians teach the course. For instance, one community is taking three-credit courses in world history, world music, and libraries, scholarship and technology for a total of nine credits. There are over twenty-five different communities at UHM. The library components include teaching and assessment of the research process, evaluation skills, the nature of the

scholarly enterprise, and efficient and critical use of appropriate technology to gather information.

Laurie Sampsel (University of Colorado) discussed IL for music bibliography at the graduate level. In this course, there are a series of assignments leading to a state-of-the-research project. This includes an annotated bibliography on a topic of the student's choice, as well as an essay that summarizes and evaluates the research with suggestions for future directions.

The project conforms to the five ACRL Information Literacy standards.

Finally, Todaro provided an overview of the assessment of IL programs. She stressed the importance of continuous assessment, the types of evaluation, current issues, and how and where assessment can occur.

This was a wonderful workshop where not only the general principles and issues of information literacy were discussed, but were also related to a music library environment.