Guidelines for Instruction Programs in Academic Libraries

The final draft

by the Policy Committee of ACRL's Instruction Section

Preamble

Academic libraries work together with other members of their institutional communities to participate in, support, and achieve the educational mission of their institutions by teaching the core competencies of information literacy—the abilities involved in identifying an information need, accessing needed information, evaluating, managing, and applying information, and understanding the legal, social, and ethical aspects of information use. The systematic delivery of instructional programs and services should be planned in concert with overall strategic library planning, including the library's budgeting process. Such planning may also involve strategizing with other campus units to deliver collaboratively designed programming.

To best assist academic and research librarians in preparing and developing effective instructional programs, the following guidelines are recommended.

I. Program design

A. Statement of purpose

The library should have a written mission statement for its instructional program that:

• articulates its purpose for the instruction program in the context of the educational mission of the institution and the needs of the learning community,

• involves its institutional community in the formulation of campus-wide information literacy goals and general outcomes,

• aligns its goals with the "Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Educa-

tion," and clearly states a definition of information literacy,

• recognizes the diverse nature of the learning community through the identification of a variety of learning styles, attitudes, educational levels, life experiences, cultures, technology skill levels, and other learner variables such as proximity to the campus itself (distance learning students),

• recognizes that instruction programs prepare learners not only for immediate curricular activities, but also for experiences with information use beyond the classroom—in work settings, careers, continuing education and self-development, and lifelong learning in general, and

• reflects changes in the institution and learning community through regular review and revision when appropriate.

B. Identification of content of instruction

While each institution will determine instructional content based on the needs of its learning community, the library should have a clearly articulated set of learning outcomes. The institution- or campus-wide set of learning goals should be congruent with the "Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education," which provide the framework for institutional planning for information literacy content through a carefully delineated set of standards, performance indicators, and outcomes. The library's specific learning outcomes should be aligned with the "Objectives for Information Literacy Instruction," which are designed to assist instruction librarians in expanding upon the more generic "Competency Standards," and in specifying discrete, assessable out-

Guidelines, guidelines, and more guidelines

For the past year, the Instruction Section's (IS) Policy Committee has been charged with updating the "Guidelines for Instruction Programs in Academic Libraries." This process involved discussions on the purpose of the document and the intended audience. When the guidelines were originally written in 1996 the "Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education" had not been revised and the "National Information Literacy Institute's Best Practices in Information Literacy" had not been created.

It was decided that the guidelines should be a "read-me-first" document for librarians and administrators interested in setting up or formalizing instruction programs. Notable changes include removing the background section, adding language on collaborating and new educational technologies, and providing a reference list.

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During the upcoming Midwinter Meeting in Philadelphia, a hearing will be held on Saturday, January 25 at 4:30 p.m. to discuss the changes and to hear your input regarding the guidelines. Copies of the original guidelines and the revised draft are available at http://www.ala.org/acrl/guides/index.html under the heading "Instruction."

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comes in the context of both the library's and the institution's information literacy goals. The "Competency Standards" and the "Objectives" should be used together: the "Competency Standards" for discussions of information literacy content with campus administrators and academic professionals outside the library; and the "Objectives" for programmatic planning and design within the library itself.

The "Characteristics of Best Practices Programming" offer the possibility for measurement in developing content for programs, while these guidelines offer the basic theoretical outlines for programs.

C. Identification of modes of instruction

Instruction takes place in many ways using a variety of teaching methods. These may include, but are not limited to:

- advising individuals at reference desks,
- in-depth research consultations and appointments,
- individualized instruction,
- electronic or print instruction aids,
- group instruction in traditional or electronic classrooms,
- Web tutorials and Web-based instruction,
- asynchronous modes of instruction (e-mail, bulletin boards),
- synchronous modes of instruction (chat software, videoconferencing),
- course management software, and
- hybrid or distributed learning or distance learning, employing combinations of the previous methods.

The modes selected should be consistent with the content and goals of sound information literacy instruction. Where appropriate, more than one mode of instruction should be used based on knowledge of the wide variety of learning styles of individuals and groups. For suggestions and explanations of modes of instruction, see the *Sourcebook of Bibliographic Instruction*.

When possible, instruction should employ active learning strategies and techniques that require learners to develop critical thinking skills in concert with information literacy skills. Planning such active learning strategies and techniques should be carried out collaboratively with faculty in order to increase overall student engagement in the learning process and to extend opportunities for a more reflective approach to information retrieval, evaluation, and use. For useful examples of course-specific active learning exercises, see "Designs for Active Learning: A Sourcebook of Classroom Strategies for Information Education."

Planning an instruction program should draw on the expertise of a wide variety of personnel, depending on local needs and available staff. Examples of available expertise may include:

- instructional design/teaching methods: faculty development offices, teaching/learning centers;
- technology integration: technology support centers;
- assessment, surveys: teaching/learning centers, institutional research/assessment offices; and

• student demographics/characteristics: institutional research, campus/student life offices.

D. Program structures

Each institution will develop its own overall approach to *instruction* programming, but a successful comprehensive program will have the following elements:

• a clearly articulated structure, described in readily available documents, showing the relationships among various components of the program;

• an integral relationship with key institutional curricula and initiatives (e.g., general education, writing programs, etc.) so that there is horizontal breadth to the program; and

• a progression of information literacy learning outcomes matched to increasingly complex learning outcomes throughout a student's academic career so that there is vertical integration in the program. Information literacy programming should reach beyond the first year or general education courses and be present in discipline-specific coursework, or courses in the majors.

To meet these general guidelines, instruction programs should identify curricular structures already in place or under development on their campuses that support an evolving, "tiered" approach to information literacy programming. Instruction librarians themselves should also seek opportunities for collaborative engagement in new institutional initiatives and redesigned curricula that allow for a deeper interplay between the library's instruction program and the total campus learning environment.

Examples of curricular and program structures with which instruction programs can become engaged include (but are not limited to):

• first-year seminars; writing-across-the-curriculum programs;

• general education core requirements;

• research methods courses in disciplinary majors;

• capstone courses, learning communities and cohorts;

• undergraduate research experiences/internships;

• linked credit courses; and

• experiential learning/service learning courses.

E. Evaluation and assessment

Evaluation and assessment are systematic ongoing processes that should gather data to inform decision-making regarding the instruction program. Data gathered should give an indication that the instruction program supports the goals set forth in its mission statement or statement of purpose.

• There should be a program evaluation plan addressing multiple measures or methods of evaluation: such measures may include needs assessment, participant reaction, learning outcomes, teaching effectiveness, and overall effectiveness of instruction.

• The criteria for program evaluation should be articulated in readily available documents pertaining to the program's mission, description, and outcomes.

• Specific learning outcomes should be addressed and specific assessment methods should be identified.

• Coordination of assessment with teaching faculty is important because learning outcomes are a shared responsibility.

• Data for both program evaluation and assessment of specific learning outcomes should be gathered regularly and brought into the program revision process so that the program can be improved continuously, and specific learning deficits addressed in an ongoing, formative manner.

II. Human resources

To achieve the goals set forth in the library's mission statement for information literacy, the library should employ or have access to sufficient personnel with appropriate education, experience, and expertise to:

• teach individuals and groups in the campus community;

• use instructional design processes, and design a variety of instruction programs and services;

• promote, market, manage, and coordinate diverse instruction activities;

• collect and interpret assessment data to evaluate and update instruction programs and services;

• integrate and apply instructional technologies into learning activities when appropriate;

• produce instructional materials using available media and electronic technologies;

• collaborate with faculty and other academic professionals in planning, implementing, and assessing information literacy programming; and

• respond to changing technologies, environments, and communities.

Many instruction programs will have a designated program manager, or a coordinating/oversight group, with expertise in pedagogy, instructional design, assessment, and other instructional

issues. Those with primary managerial/coordination oversight for instructional programs should have clearly written and delineated position descriptions setting forth the scope of their responsibilities.

III. Support

Support for a successful instruction program has many interdependent facets. The level of support necessary will depend on the scope and size of the program, as well as its connection with other institutional units.

A. Instructional facilities

The library should have, or should have ready access to, facilities of sufficient size and number that are equipped to meet the goals of the instruction program and reach the instructional learning community.

The instructional setting(s) should duplicate the equipment and technology available to users. At a minimum, the facilities should allow the instructor to demonstrate information systems available to the library's users. It is desirable that the facilities provide individual hands-on experience for those being instructed. It should be flexible enough to accommodate active learning and student collaboration when appropriate.

B. Staff work facilities

The library should provide convenient access to the equipment and services necessary to design, produce, reproduce, and update instructional materials in a variety of formats. There should be sufficient space for the preparation and storage of instructional materials.

C. Financial support

• The instructional program should have adequate funds identified to attain the stated goals of the program.

• The funding for an instruction program should cover all personnel costs connected with the program, including, but not limited to, student, clerical, and technical assistance.

• The funding should cover supplies and materials; equipment or access to equipment; design, production, reproduction, and revision of materials; and promotion and evaluation of the instruction program, as well as other identified costs.

• The budget allocation process should allow for equipment and software replacement and enhancement as changes occur.

• The funding should provide for training and continuing education of those involved in the instruction program.

• Collaborative instructional projects with other campus units should involve sharing budgetary responsibilities when appropriate.

• Whenever possible, instructional personnel should use the expertise of development officers and those institutional staff persons with external fundraising responsibilities to further expand or enhance the program.

D. Support for staff continuing education, training, and development

Support for continuing staff development helps to establish an atmosphere conducive to innovation and high morale. It is recommended that the library:

• provide a structured program for orientation and training of new instruction personnel,

• develop a program of continuing education or make available continuing education opportunities, and

• whenever appropriate, identify opportunities for release time for staff to engage in continuing education and/or project development in technology applications, surveys, and other instruction-related projects.

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