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Catching up with information literacy assessment

Resources for program evaluation

In March 2009, the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA released its triennial report on national faculty norms for 2007–08, which were based on survey responses from 22,562 full-time faculty at 372 four-year colleges and universities nationwide.[1] For 97.2 percent of the faculty surveyed, helping students to evaluate the quality and reliability of information was a top goal for undergraduate education. Information literacy is the evaluation of the quality and reliability of information, paired with the ability to use that information legally and ethically.

Academic librarians charged with developing a reliable assessment tool for their libraries' information literacy instruction programs can find a wealth of resources that are readily available from both commercially and institutionally developed and administered products that are used among librarian peers across the country and throughout the world. In an article that appeared in the November 2010, issue of *C&RL News,* Jennifer Jarson provided links to several such resources.[2]

The goal of this article is to build on the assessment links Jarson provided. Her stated goal was to "guide readers to important resources for understanding information literacy and to provide tools for readers to advocate for information literacy's place in higher education curricula." In addition to the information on resources and tools, Jarson provided links to universities whose assessment tools were available for review on their Web sites. For this article, selected Web sites have been accessed and evaluated further. A handful of additional information resources have been profiled, including new Web sites that offer a variety of assessment tool formats.

Commercially administered assessment tools

• **Information Literacy Test, James Madison University (JMU).** Working collaboratively, librarians at JMU libraries and JMU's Center for Assessment and Research Studies developed an assessment program whose offerings are computer-based multiple-choice assessment tests based on the ACRL standards. Several tests, such as information literacy, quantitative reasoning, and scientific reasoning, are available for purchase from Madison Assesment, Boulder, Colorado (www.madisonassessment.com). The cost is $8 per test with a minimum cost of $100. Students are also given the Student Opinion Scale (SOS) test-taking motivation instrument at no additional cost. On the JMU Web site, links to the SOS survey, its manual (dated 2007), and scoring guide are freely accessible. Assessment process tips, a multiple choice format test development guide, writing test items, object-format questions, a writing rubric, and a list of podcasts on topics of assessment are also linked. *Access:*

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http://www.jmu.edu/assessment/resources/Overview.htm.

• **iSkills.** iSkills is an outcomes assessment that measures applied information and communication technology (ICT) literacy skills. In 2001, ETS, a nonprofit organization, brought together an international group of leaders in education, business, and government to analyze issues and approaches to measuring ICT literacy. ETS took the research from the panel, partnered with a consortium of institutions of higher education, and developed assessment instruments for K–12, Higher Education, and English Language Learning. iSkills uses real-world scenarios and can be used in both education and work settings. Test costs are based on the quantity ordered and range between $18 and $20, with the lowest price based on 1001 or more tests. *Access:* http://www.ets.org/iskills/.

• **Project SAILS (Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills).** Project SAILS was developed in 2001 by a team of experts in librarianship, test design and measurement, data analysis, and programming at Kent State University. The team developed a standardized test of information literacy skills that allowed libraries to document skill levels of groups of students and identify areas for improvement. Carrick Enterprises, a software development and consulting company, is now responsible for the testing program. SAILS is a 45-item multiple choice test aligned with ACRL's Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. Students are directed to the SAILS Web site to take the online test. Responses are saved, the data analyzed, and PDF-formatted reports are generated. For the Web-based test, there is a $4.50 per-student fee that is calculated once a school finishes testing, based on actual numbers of students completing the test. The

test can be administered on paper but incurs an additional charge of 50¢ per answer sheet. *Access:* https://www.projectsails.org/.

Institutionally developed assessment tools

• **Assessment Primer, University of Connecticut.** The University of Connecticut's (UConn) assessment Web site provides users with detailed summaries of the purpose and definition of assessment, and the role of assessment in general education at UConn. Although the article on the role of assessment in accreditation references the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, users will likely find the section of sample questions that motivate assessment efforts, adaptable. The primer uses colorful graphics and flowcharts to explain assessment components, the learning cycle, goals, objectives, outcomes, and learning taxonomies to illustrate points being made in the text. Step-by-step instructions on writing instructional objectives, curriculum mapping, how to plan for assessment, and an extensive bibliography of references make this one of the more powerful sites that were reviewed. *Access:* http://www.assessment.uconn.edu/primer/index.html.

• **Bay Area Community Colleges Information Competency Assessment Project.** In 2004, armed with the support of a California Academic & Research Libraries (CARL) Research Award, a ACRL/IMLS grant, and the support of the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges, faculty librarians in the San Francisco Bay Area formed a project development team. They designed a two-part assessment instrument. Part A includes 47 multiple choice, match-

ing and short answer items. Part B consists of 12 performance-based exercises, many of which have subparts. Detailed rubrics are provided. Librarians and faculty can click on a link where they can request copies of the assessment instrument. *Access:* http://www.topsy.org/ICAP/ICAProject.html.

BAY AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

• **Instruction Clearinghouse Initiative, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.** As reviewed in Jarson's article, Virginia Tech's Instruction Clearinghouse Initiative continues to provide links to teacher and student assessment tools that can be readily adapted. Clickable links provide instructional samples, tips, and discipline-based sample assignments. Pre- and post-test surveys assess what a student knows or doesn't know. Customizable skills survey questions are discipline specific. *Access:* http://www.lib.vt.edu/RIS/clearinghouse/assessments.html.

• **Lehigh University Library and Technology Services, Lehigh University.** This site is example of an institutionally developed assessment tool. Lehigh University's librarians developed the Research Skills Assessment and Information Literacy Initiative tools in 2004. Recently they updated the content, freshened the questions, and added a feedback mechanism. They also revamped the approach that the students see. The site's unique logo represents Naval Engineering and is one of 24 medallions for academic disciplines that are displayed in Linderman Library's Reading Room. *Access:* http://library.lehigh.edu/teaching_support/information_literacy_teaching_research_skills/research_success_your_students/resear.

• **Library Instruction Assessment, Utah State University (USU).** USU's assess-

ment initiatives were also reviewed by Jarson. The site offers four options: one-minute assessments, pre-/post-assessment surveys, teacher evaluations, and rubrics for assessing the English 1010 learning goals, which can be readily adapted for other courses. Feedback is sought in the form of short essays, whose brevity is designed to encourage student participation by appealing to the students' willingness to engage in short surveys while avoiding longer ones. *Access:* http://library.usu.edu/instruct/assessment/index.php.

UtahStateUniversity
UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

• **Linscheid Library, East Central University.** On their Assessment LibGuides page, Linscheid librarians have posted links to their Information Literacy Plan and two areas of assessment: instruction assessment and reference assessment. Instruction assessment offers examples of forms for faculty and peer instruction evaluation, self assessment, and student instruction evaluation. The reference assessment forms are used for peer reference evaluation and a reference user satisfaction card is included. Copies of the actual forms are found under the "Tools" tab. The site was last updated in February 2012. *Access:* http://www.ecok.edu/libguides.com/assessment.

• **VOILA (Virtual Orientation Information Literacy Assessment), Hunter College.** Reference/instruction librarians at Hunter College developed a Web-based program that they named VOILA. Its self-paced

design orients new students to the libraries' services, while teaching them basic academic library skills.[3] The program has three components: a virtual tour of the physical library, a tutorial for determining the availability of materials, and a tutorial on using LC call numbers to locate materials. Once the user has watched the videos, they are offered a test that assesses what they've learned. The URL provides access to the library orientation tutorials but requires a username/password to access the test. *Access:* http://library.hunter.cuny.edu/voila.

VOILA!
Virtual Orientation Information Literacy Assessment

Additional resources

• **Assessments of information literacy.** This is a resource list of 45 links to online assessment sites for academic libraries. Topics are forced-choice tests, authentic assessments, blended assessments that combine forced-choice and constructed-response or performance items, rubrics, and tutorials. Although the Web site indicates an October 2010 last update, as of this writing, 40 of the 45 links are valid. *Access:* http://jfmueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/infolitassessments.htm.

• **ACRL's ILI-L.** The ILI-L electronic list (Information Literacy Instruction Discussion List) is sponsored by ACRL's Instruction Section. It is dedicated to information literacy and instruction, a rich resource where librarians provide encouragement to one another, share best practices for creating assessment tools, and freely share links to their Web sites. *Access:* http://www.ala.org/acrl/aboutacrl/directoryofleadership/sections/is/ilil.

• **ACRL's Information Literacy Portal.** Sponsored by ACRL's Information Literacy Coordinating Committee, this site is the go-to source for information literacy resources to help users understand and apply the ACRL Web site standards. The site provides information on standards and guidelines, their applications, resources and ideas, curriculum and pedagogy, links to institutions of higher educations' information literacy programs, instructional program guidelines, and continuing education. *Access:* http://www.ala.org/acrl/issues/infolit.

• **National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment Organization (NILOA).** Library assessments of information literacy support campus-wide assessment initiatives that monitor student learning outcomes. For those interested in assessment resources that move into the broader arena of student learning outcomes assessment, NILOA is an excellent resource. Established in 2008 on the campus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, NIOLA's Web site provides tests, surveys, examples of curriculum mapping, a benchmarking section that provides resources for the practice of benchmarking, and links to papers and examples of assessment information. *Access:* http://learningoutcomeassessment.org/.

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment
Making Learning Outcomes Usable & Transparent

• **Standards.** Information literary assessment starts with the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. The standards include explanations of performance indicators and outcomes that define each standard and a brief explanation of how information literacy relates to information technology. Included are links to selected information literacy initiatives.[4] *Access:* http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency.

• **Rubrics.** Librarians who are looking for rubrics to use in developing assessment tools should turn to the RAILS project site for assistance. Currently in progress, the RAILS team is working on the development of a Web repository of information literacy rubrics. Based at Syracuse University, RAILS is funded by the Institute for Museum and

Library Services in partnership with ACRL's Assessment Immersion Program. The Web site offers links to publications and presentations, training materials, forums, and a page that offers categories of rubrics that are linked to participating institutions of higher education. *Access:* http://railsontrack.info.

• **Information Literacy Plans.** Librarians who want detailed examples of information literacy plans should review the University of Rhode Island's Instruction Services' Web site. In addition to an online library skills tutorial, the site provides an introduction to their program; the relationship of information literacy to higher education; the information literacy program and steps for its implementation; support services for faculty, including subject specific, online learning, and distance education instruction services; coordination efforts that state opportunities for students enrolled in the Graduate School of Library and Information Studies; and rubrics for assessment and evaluation. *Access:* www.uri.edu/library /instruction_services/infolitplan.html.

• **Internet Resources for Higher Education Outcomes Assessment.** This is one of the oldest (1995) and largest collection of annotated links (more than 1,200) to assessment resources available on the Web. Currently hosted by North Carolina State University, it includes more than 400 college and university assessment sites and general resources, assessment handbooks, specific skills or content, state boards and commissions, accrediting bodies, and student assessment of courses and faculty. Many sites include PDF files for further research purposes. The site is excellently maintained with the newest links being posted in February 2012. Broken link checks are performed about every three months (most recent: December 13, 2011) with a full check and update of annotations

done every year (currently in progress). *Access:* http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt /resource.htm.

Notes

1. DeAngelo, L., Hurato, S., Pryor, J. H., Kelly, K. R., and Santos, J. L. (2009). The American college teacher: Nation norms for the 2007-2008 HERI faculty survey. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA. HERI Research Brief, March, 2009. http://learningoutcomesassessment.org /documents/brief-pr030508-08faculty.pdf.

2. Jarson, Jennifer. "Information literacy and higher education: a toolkit for curricular integration." *College & Research Libraries News,* volume71, no. 10, pages 534–38.

3. Dent, V. (2003). "Innovation on a Shoestring: An All-Virtual Model for Self-Paced Library Orientation on an Urban Campus." *College & Undergraduate Libraries,* 10(2), 29. doi:10.1300/J106v10n02 03.

4. For more information, see ACRL (2006) "Task Force on Academic Library Outcomes Assessment Report," www.ala.org/ala/mgrps /divs/acrl/publications/whitepapers /taskforceacademic.cfm. Accessed February 18, 2012. Document ID: 136373.