LIRT's Top Twenty 2005

The list below was selected and reviewed by the Continuing Education Committee: Susanna Cowan, Tiffany Hebb (co-chair), Corliss Lee, Camille McCutcheon, Harry Meserve, Ericka Arvidson Raber, Leslie Sult (co-chair), Esteban Valdez, Leanne VandeCreek, and Teri Weil.

The committee reviewed over 130 articles this year, looking at library instruction from a practical and theoretical viewpoint, in various library settings. Although this year's list focuses heavily on instruction in academic library settings, the committee believes that many of the ideas presented are readily applicable to K-12 as well as public library settings.

Badke, William B. "Can't Get No Respect: Helping Faculty to Understand the Educational Power of Information Literacy." *The Reference Librarian* 89/90 (2005): 63–80.

This article offers an interesting look at tactics that academic librarians can use to integrate information literacy instruction more thoroughly into college and university curricula. The article begins by discussing the cultural differences between teaching faculty and librarians and provides some examples of the misunderstandings that often pervade the relationship. The author then goes on to explore the various methods that librarians have used, including collaboration, evangelism, and demonstration of skills, to encourage teaching faculty to integrate information literacy instruction into the curriculum. After critiquing the approaches listed above, the author presents an argument for embedding for-credit information literacy courses into departmental curricula. The author concludes the article by providing an example of how he was able to successfully work with the Communications Department at his institution to develop a credit bearing information literacy course and provides a compelling argument for instructional librarians to invest the time and energy necessary to move in this direction.

Brown, C. "Where Do Molecular Biology Graduate Students Find Information?" *Science & Technology Libraries* 25.3 (2005): 89–104.

Secondary only to traditional scientific journals, bioinformatics databases such as GenBank and the Protein Data Bank (PDB) are the primary research tools used by graduate students in molecular biology. Graduate students rely on these "data

warehouses" much more than they do on the bibliographic databases commonly held by academic libraries, with the exception of the National Library of Medicine's PubMed database. Despite this, few information professionals address bioinformatics databases in library instruction—most students are introduced to these tools by faculty or other graduate students. Consequently, many molecular biology graduate students do not take advantage of the vast resources available through research databases such as Web of Science and Biological Abstracts. Brown argues that science and technology librarians should educate themselves in these bioinformatics resources and must actively incorporate these resources into their instruction. The author also argues that information professionals must continue to build bridges to this scholarly community both by improving the transparency of library instruction and by recruiting more molecular biologists into librarianship.

Burke, Gerald, Carole Anne Germain, and Xu Lijuan. "Information Literacy: Bringing a Renaissance to Reference." *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 5.3 (2005): 353–70.

The authors of this study analyzed the increase in student transactions at the reference desk following the start of for-credit information literacy (IL) classes at the University of Albany. Specifically, the study was designed to measure student use of the reference desk before, during, and after such a course. Results indicate increases in not only visits to the reference desk overall but in multiple visits by individual students during IL courses. Additionally, a clear connection could be made between what resources (reference books, databases, etc.) were pushed in IL classes and the content of reference desk questions. The data further suggested that most students who had been to the reference desk as part of taking an IL class stated that they would return to the reference desk for help in the future. The authors use this study as validation for the implementation of for-credit information literacy programs. The study is particularly interesting for its discussion of the direct impact of IL instruction on a key library service.

Bury, Sophie, and Joanne Oud. "Usability Testing of an Online Information Literacy Tutorial." *Reference Services Review* 33.1 (2005): 54–65.

Bury and Oud include a review of the literature of usability testing in libraries, noting that there are few articles specifically covering usability testing of online tutorials. Although the tutorial they were studying included various evaluation tools that indicated there were problems with the tutorial, usability testing allowed the developers of the online tutorial to define the nature of the problems much more precisely. The authors discuss the differences between the way a library Web site is used and the way tutorials are used and how this affected their methodology. The tutorial, the methodology of the usability testing, and the

changes made to the tutorial based on the results of the usability testing are all discussed in detail.

Buschman, John and Dorothy A. Warner. "Researching and Shaping Information Literacy Initiatives in Relation to the Web: Some Framework Problems and Needs." *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 31.1 (2005): 12–18.

Buschman and Warner re-examine some recent studies on student use of the Internet for research. They argue that "the programmatic emphasis on information literacy is currently seen as the answer to both the academic promise and perils of the Web" and that this framework shapes the conclusions drawn in these studies while alternate conclusions are ignored. Among their criticisms of the literature: too much data is drawn from students' perceptions about their own skills; we ignore the differences in background and skill levels between faculty and students; the commercial nature of the Web is downplayed and the Web is not as effective as traditional library resources in providing access to quality research materials. The authors conclude that "[o]ur framework of analysis of academic information seeking on the Web must become broader, deeper, and more thoroughly connected to the economic and social realities in which we operate."

Finley, Priscilla, Susie Skarl, Jennifer Cox, and Diane VanderPol. "Enhancing Library Instruction with Peer Planning*." Reference Services Review* 33.1 (2005): 112–22.

In this article, the authors outline the steps of a pilot program at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Libraries, that was designed to enhance the effectiveness of library instruction through emphasizing peer coaching, team teaching, and the use of active learning techniques. An enhancement team, comprised of the head of instruction and several other librarians, worked with colleagues who were interested in modifying techniques used in teaching library instruction sessions. The enhancement team designed this pilot program as a five-step process. The team held a meeting to introduce the instruction librarians to this program and to talk about various styles of teaching and learning. Next, the team held brainstorming sessions with these librarians to discuss classroom teaching modifications, such as incorporating active learning techniques into their lesson plans. Then, using these revised lesson plans, the librarians taught the instruction sessions, with assistance, if needed, from enhancement team members. After the instruction sessions had concluded, the librarians completed a questionnaire concerning their perceptions of the project. Finally, there was a wrap-up session for the team and for the librarians who participated in the project.

Gold, Helene E. "Engaging the Adult Learner: Creating Effective Library Instruction."
portal: Libraries and the Academy 5.4 (2005): 467–81.

Today more and more adult learners are entering our classrooms. They are often "re-entry" (i.e. older) students, with jobs and families, and also perhaps not as comfortable with electronic and computerized information systems as the traditional student body. Ms. Gold's article looks at this population of students as a group that has different social and developmental needs and suggests some useful ideas to create effective instruction for them. In the course of describing a specific course of IL instruction, Gold points to the need for creating an active learning environment and to adjust our instructional techniques to the individual learning needs of our students, regardless of their background. A well thought out and useful contribution to the discussion on "how to teach".

Hearn, Michael F. "Embedding a Librarian in the Classroom: An Intensive Information Literacy Model." *Reference Services Review* 33.2 (2005): 219–27.

The literature of information literacy is replete with discussion about how to work more closely and more effectively with teaching faculty in order to promote the goals of information literacy. Mr. Hearn's article is a welcome addition to this area of concern. Though he writes from the perspective of a small college, his plan for "embedding a librarian in the classroom" (in a specific class) is detailed and specific enough to be of help to any librarians who want to develop a collaborative model for relations with teaching faculty. Although this is a very specific teaching situation, many of his ideas are applicable to other schools and other classes. The article raises and explores issues related to assessment and evaluation of effective use of librarian time. Both of these areas will be of concern to those who want to repeat in whole or in part the model presented here. This is a valuable article for the clarity of its presentation and its possible use by other institutions.

Hogenboom, Karen. "Going Beyond .gov: Using Government Information to Teach Evaluation of Sources." *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 5.4 (2005): 455–66.

Throughout the course of this article, Karen Hogenboom makes a compelling argument for the usefulness of government documents as a teaching tool that can be used across a number of disciplines. She argues that government documents can be used to teach students how to identify and evaluate a particular author's point of view, purpose, and intended audience. She also believes that government documents provide an excellent means by which to teach students how to evaluate the way different media outlets interpret the same government report. She concludes the article by offering suggestions for incorporating government documents into both in person and online instructional

sessions. Although this article is focused on instruction to college and university students, the wide availability of government documents as well as the types of higher-order thinking skills that can be taught to students make the ideas suggested here applicable to middle and high school libraries as well.

Larkin, Judith E. and Harvey A. Pines. "Developing Information Literacy and Research Skills in Introductory Psychology: A Case Study." *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 31.1 (2005): 40–45

Psychology professors Larkin and Pines present a case study as a model for incorporating library research instruction into course work. Context for an out-of-class library assignment was provided by a research project in which the class posed the question: "Do girls prefer 'bad boys?'" To minimize the amount of in-class library instruction, students were given written instructions on locating the library's databases and searching the literature. Librarians were provided with copies of the assignment, and they were given advance notice that students might be seeking assistance. Data from an assessment of the students' performance on a subsequent library assignment demonstrated the effectiveness of the hands-on research project. This article provides much food for thought and support for well-constructed library research assignments. Despite the noticeable absence of collaborative faculty-librarian efforts in the development of the research project, the article may, as the authors suggest, help to "pave the way for greater faculty-librarian collaboration."

Lightman, Harriet and Ruth N. Reingold. "A Collaborative Model for Teaching E-resources: Northwestern University's Graduate Training Day." *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 5.1 (2005): 23–32.

Lightman and Reingold present a successful collaborative effort between Northwestern University's teaching faculty, librarians, and information technology/ computer systems personnel. The groups came together to bridge the gap between teaching research skills and computer skills—sets of skills which are often viewed as dichotomous. The organizers designed a mandatory one-day set of classes for first-year humanities doctoral students, in which they were taught a variety of things, from using EndNote software to advanced searching in subject specific databases. Additionally, a 90-minute faculty forum session was added, whereby six faculty digitally-enabled projects were showcased. The purpose of the forum was to "amaze and inspire" the students, thus demonstrating specific examples of a seamless merger of technology and research. The Office of the Dean provided funding for food, supplies, advertising, and some staff time. The university's Center for the Humanities contributed a small sum from a Mellon Foundation grant. The vast majority of staff time was donated, as was server space and physical space, thus keeping overall costs for

such a large-scale project at a minimum. This project serves as an excellent example of how best to bring together and utilize the expertise of individuals from different departments to achieve a common goal.

MacMillan, M. "Open Resume: Magic Words for Assessment." *College & Research Libraries News* 66.7 (2005): 516–20.

In her article, MacMillan describes a unique and insightful way to evaluate information literacy skills from the user's perspective. MacMillan's idea is to have students develop and refine an information skills resume, known as the I-SKILLS resume (Information Skills and Knowledge Inventory for Lifelong Learning Success) over the course of a three year period. They are encouraged to reflect upon and articulate in their own words the skills they know or related tasks they can do (and do so in a familiar format: a resume). The advantages to this are that the students can focus on their strengths, thus promoting self-efficacy, rather than struggling with jargon-laden questions they often can't decipher, as is often the case with many pre- and posttest information literacy exercises. The end product is a document they may be able to use in developing professional resumes and portfolios. The sample ISKILLS resume included in this article is extremely helpful in illustrating for readers the value of this tool as an exercise and information literacy assessment component.

Markey, Karen, et al. "Testing the Effectiveness of Interactive Multimedia for Library-User Education." *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 5.4 (2005): 527–44.

In the October 2003 issue of Portal, Markey described the LUMENS (Effectiveness of Multimedia for Library User Education) Project, whereby librarians from four different universities were trained to build interactive multimedia tutorials using Macromedia Flash software. This follow-up article summarizes the project's training and development phases and presents statistical and anecdotal evaluation results of the overall project and the specific tutorials that were produced. Through empirical research, the authors demonstrate the benefits of using interactive online tutorials as a form of effective, student centered instruction, such as reaching remote users and accommodating different learning styles (visual v. hands-on, slow or fast-paced). The authors are honest and realistic in describing some of the obstacles they encountered (primarily time constraints and complexity of the Flash software). This project serves as an excellent example for librarians seeking opportunities to merge and apply their reference/instruction skills with their technological skills.

Nichols, Janet W., Lothar Spang, and Kristy Padron. "Building a Foundation for Collaboration: K-20 Partnerships in Information Literacy." *Resource Sharing and Information Networks* 18.1/2 (2005): 5-12.

The authors discuss efforts at the Wayne State University David Adamany Undergraduate Library to develop successful collaborative partnerships with K-12 educators and school library/media specialist students. These efforts include, but are not limited to: workshops developed collaboratively by K-12 and university library staff; a continuing education course in information literacy for teachers and school librarians; and a graduate level library science course in information literacy for school library/media specialist students. The authors provide eight suggestions that will ensure successful collaborations, and offer information on future avenues of collaboration between K-12 educators, school librarians, and academic professionals.

Scales, B. Jane, and Elizabeth B. Lindsay. "Qualitative Assessment of Student Attitudes Toward Information Literacy." *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 5.4 (2005): 513-26.

In this article, Scales and Lindsay describe the final project for their online undergraduate information literacy class. The assignment calls for students to reflect on the definition of information literacy and its role in their lives. After an introductory section, in which the authors discuss how their course uses a learner-centered philosophy geared toward online learners, the project is described in greater detail. The instructors asked the students such questions as "Where does it [information literacy] begin?;" "Where does it end?;" and "How will you use information literacy in your future?" Scales and Lindsay also describe the process by which they evaluated the student responses, using "ATLAS/ti," a qualitative analysis software package. They found that while the students had varying attitudes and beliefs about information literacy, the vast majority of them thought about the concept globally, not as something that was only tied to the library or their schoolwork.

Scales, Jane, Greg Matthews, and Corey M. Johnson. "Compliance, Cooperation, Collaboration and Information Literacy." *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 31.3 (2005): 229–35.

This article outlines the issues faced at Washington State University when revising their information literacy course to meet new state general education standards. There were several challenges to the collaborative process. These challenges include assumptions (by librarians and by faculty), authority (who had final say), group dynamics, and language (lack of commonality). This article provides a unique insight to collaboration of librarians of differing backgrounds and faculty outside of the library. The issues raised in this article affect all institutions in the process of developing information literacy standards, improving

programs, and incorporating information library into the general education curriculum.

Simmons, Michelle H. "Librarians as Disciplinary Discourse Mediators: Using Genre Theory to Move Toward Critical Information Literacy." *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 5.3 (2005): 297–311.

Simmons posits that faculty are often too close to a discipline to fully understand the difficulties students have in grasping the language of a particular discipline. She argues that academic librarians, especially subject specialists, are in a unique position to act as mediators between the "non-academic discourse of entering undergraduates and the specialized discourse of faculty." Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the profession, Simmons contends that librarians are both insiders and outsiders in a discipline and are positioned to facilitate students' understanding of disciplinary discourses.

Smith, Nicki M., and Prue Presser. "Embed with the Faculty: Legal Information Skills Online." *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 31.3 (2005): 247–62.

This article serves as an excellent model for developing system-wide standards and incorporating information literacy into the curriculum. It discusses the Legal Information Skills Tutorials (LIST) program at the University of Melbourne Law School. The authors describe the process by which the LIST was developed, instituted and evaluated. Included in the description of the LIST program was the formation of the Council of Australian University Literacy Standards (CAUL IL Standards). Aspects of the LIST program include a library orientation and an online tutorial containing sections on research, location, evaluation, planning, documentation, writing, collaboration, and quizzes.

Tao, D. "Bibliographic Instruction for a Diverse Population: Understanding, Planning, and Teaching in the Twenty-First Century." *Art Documentation* 24.1 (2005): 29–37.

In this must-read article for all instruction librarians, Tao brings to light the challenges in reaching international, ethnic, and returning and non-traditional students during a library instruction session. The author outlines the challenges and offers techniques to improve the instruction process. The techniques include understanding cultural competencies, recognizing different learning styles, and improving communication. Suggested readings on how to enhance the learning experience for each student are also included.

Warner, D. G., et al. "High School Peer Tutors Teach MedlinePlus: A Model for Hispanic Outreach." *Journal of the Medical Library Association* 93.2 (2005): 243– 52.

In a predominantly Hispanic community in the Texas Rio Grande Valley, a group of librarians from the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio was looking for ways to improve health information literacy skills of the residents. Through NLM funding, they embarked on a project to train peer tutors at a regional health sciences magnet high school, with the knowledge that these students often served as a bridge to family and other community members. The small group of students, along with the high school librarians, took part in extensive training on the use of MedlinePlus, using case studies and other experiential learning methods. After their training, they taught MedlinePlus to other students, teachers and administrators at their school. The students also trained parents and other community members at an open house. The project was evaluated through surveys, focus groups, and interviews, and was found to be a success. Among the positive outcomes, the tutors claimed a higher comfort level with adults and with public speaking, the school found increased usage of MedlinePlus in assignments, school librarians felt more involved in the curriculum, and students reported showing MedlinePlus to family members.