LIRT News

LIRT'S Top Twenty for 2010

Selected and reviewed by the LIRT Top 20 Committee: Susanna Cowan, Joe Hardenbrook, Wendell Johnson, Tom Kaun, Ben Oberdick, Jo Angela Oehrli, Mary O'Kelly, Mark Shores (Co-Chair), Connie Stovall (CoChair), and Eamon Tewell.

Using a rubric to consider timeliness, content, originality, depth, and breadth, the committee evaluated over one hundred articles related to information literacy and library instruction. The articles range from the practical to the theoretical, and while most of the studies center on academic libraries, special attention was made to include articles helpful to K-12 libraries.

Abdullah, Szarina. "Measuring the Outcomes of Information Literacy: Perception vs. Evidence-Based Data." *International Information and Library Review* 42.2 (2010): 98-104.

Much like doctors and lawyers rely on specific instruments and evidence to draw conclusions, Abdullah contends that librarians must rely on evidence-based facts rather than perception-based opinions to draw conclusions regarding information literacy programs. The author provides concrete examples of evidence based data from the medical and legal fields and how that kind of data is used in libraries, from assessments of the quality of collections to the effectiveness of library services. Libraries can convert desired outcomes into specific behaviors and test those activities to find both areas of high quality results and gaps in the library's instruction program. Citing numerous studies and examples of evidence-based research, Abdullah provides various methods for information literacy programs to translate preferred outcomes into tangible, measurable, individual behaviors.

Anderson, Karen and Frances A. May. "Does the Method of Instruction Matter? An Experimental Examination of Information Literacy Instruction in the Online, Blended, and Face-to-Face Classrooms." *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 36.6 (2010): 495- 500.

The authors measured the impact that instructional format (face-to-face, online, or blended instruction) has on the way in which information literacy (IL) is taught to students. Most IL instruction is confined to a single session library orientation and ignores the process of fostering critical thinking. The authors administered a pre-test and post-test to students in an introductory communications class (n=103) to measure the students' ability to retain and recall information. On the

basis of their assessment, Anderson and May discovered that the students already possess basic information seeking skills and that face-to-face and computer-assisted instruction are equally effective in engaging these skills. They conclude that librarians need to move beyond basic bibliographic instruction and offer a for-credit course that includes broad conceptualizations of IL.

Avery, Susan, and David Ward. "Reference is My Classroom: Setting Instructional Goals for Academic Library Reference Services." *Internet Reference Services Quarterly* 15.1 (2010): 35-51.

In this study, Avery and Ward examined chat reference transcripts in an effort to identify, test and analyze instructional goals that may be present in a reference setting. The authors endeavored to bring together two sometimes compartmentalized services (Instruction and Reference) by identifying teachable moments during chat reference. The instructional goals they used were defined by the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards, especially Standards One, Two and Three. Through their analysis of these transcripts, the authors were able to ascertain moments when librarians taught students specific skills as opposed to times when the opportunity was lost. The authors identified the teaching techniques that they observed as well as areas where further reference training could be provided to optimize these teachable moments. Finally, Avery and Ward provide two rubrics, entitled "User Skills Assessment" and "Reference Interview Instructional Behaviors," which librarians can use to make chat reference transactions a viable way to impart information literacy concepts.

Burkholder, Joel M. "Redefining Sources as Social Acts: Genre Theory in Information Literacy Instruction." *Library Philosophy and Practice* 2010: 1-11.

Burkholder says that teaching students to only use the standard sources in their research papers, namely scholarly journal and magazine articles, books, book chapters and so on, ignores the complex information environment that students operate in. The checklist model of website evaluation, where students look for formal indicators of high quality information: authority, accuracy, currency and so on, is also inconsistent. For instance, since it is not always possible to determine the author of a government website, should students avoid using it? We tell students to look for citations or references, but then we make Wikipedia - which uses references - out to be a suspect source of information. Instead, Burkholder offers several summaries of genre theory, which posits that researchers should consider sources as "social acts" made by discourse communities (e.g. scientists, journalists, bloggers) for the purpose of accomplishing specific tasks. Picking the right sources, then, becomes an issue of understanding the purposes those sources serve instead of being limited by "arbitrary content types or forms." Students learning to communicate effectively need to be sure to use the right kinds of sources for the task at hand, whether the source is a peer-reviewed scholarly article or a Facebook status update, because that decision on which

sources to use has an effect on their intended readers. This is not to say that all sources are equal; students who have to write a literature review on a scientific topic will still have to rely on peer-reviewed scientific papers. Burkholder ends the article by laying out the challenges of applying genre theory to the ACRL Information Literacy Standards and the challenges of librarians' typical short amount of time working with students (i.e. the "one-shot" instruction session).

Cordell, Rosanne. M., and Linda F. Fisher. "Reference Questions as an Authentic Assessment of Information Literacy." *Reference Services Review* 38.3 (2010): 474-81.

Does an information literacy program lead to more sophisticated reference questions from users? This was the question undertaken by librarians at Indiana University-South Bend. The authors theorized that students with more sophisticated research skills gleaned through a required information literacy course would, in turn, ask more sophisticated reference questions. The study measured the level of reference questions received prior to the campus-wide IL course requirement and then examined the level of questions following course implementation. For each reference transaction, the librarian completed a questionnaire about the student's question, and the student indicated if he/she completed the IL course. Results show that students' reference questions did increase in sophistication since the implementation of the course requirement. The authors stress that the data demonstrates the importance of information literacy to the university curriculum.

Detmering, Robert. "Exploring the Political Dimensions of Information Literacy through Popular Film." *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* 10.3 (2010): 265-282.

For those looking for ways to demonstrate to students the importance of information literacy beyond the assigned research paper, Detmering provides a rare, strong alternative pedagogy by employing popular film in library instruction sessions. After discussing the importance of situating information literacy in social and political contexts that are culturally relevant to students, Detmering argues that use of popular film is effective because they are both comfortable and engaged with movies. To strengthen his case, Detmering presents readers with similar arguments from information literacy researchers, as well as film studies and literacy researchers; further, he supplies methods of employing film in semester long classes as well as one-shot sessions. For more practical specificity, Detmering explains how he uses the films Thank You for Smoking, Burn after Reading, and W in the classroom, with much emphasis on problems of reliable information, alternative viewpoints, ethics, and bias.

Dinkelman, Andrea L., Jeanine E. Aune, and Gail R. Nonnecke. "Using an Interdisciplinary Approach to Teach Undergraduates Communication and

Information Literacy Skills." *Journal of Natural Resources & Life Sciences Education* 39 (2010): 137-144.

This article describes an excellent faculty-librarian partnership to incorporate information literacy concepts into a foundational English communication course taught within the context of a student's major. This particular section of English 250 at Iowa State University is geared towards horticulture majors and is co-taught by a librarian and a faculty member from both the Horticulture and the English departments. The ACRL Information Literacy Standards as well as the learning outcomes of the Horticulture department were used as a guideline for the development of classroom activities and assignments. Students chose from a list of possible topics and produced an annotated bibliography, a research paper and a research poster during this course. The librarian and the horticulture faculty developed the assignments while the English instructor and the librarian graded the annotated bibliographies together. The horticulture faculty gave presentations on rhetoric and argumentation in horticulture, similar to what is presented in a standard communication class, only putting them into context for the horticulture students. The horticulture faculty also provided a lot of feedback on research papers and the research posters. Student assessments revealed that they were appreciative of librarian participation in the course, and student focus groups showed that they were grateful for the chance to interact with faculty from their major and get their input on their research projects. Faculty in focus groups appreciated how ENG 250 forged a link between information literacy, communication and horticulture. Other academic disciplines at Iowa State University have adapted the ENG 250 model for collaborating with English faculty and librarians.

Green, Rosemary. "Information Illiteracy: Examining our Assumptions." *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 36.4 (2010): 313-319.

Green writes a thought-provoking article about the role of library-based assumptions in the implementation of information literacy programs in higher education. Specifically, Green's study focuses on doctoral students going through the process of literature review for their dissertations in order to uncover both research practices and information literacy paradigms. Green used interviews to answer questions about how doctoral students learn how to do a literature review and what they learn as they do the review itself. Key to her argument is the notion that, in upholding an information literacy model, librarians also promulgate the notion of information illiteracy, which carries with it ideas that students lack informational skills. In fact, Green argues, doctoral students demonstrated they were fairly proficient in using techniques such as following citations. These skills were generally developed independently of librarians and using both learned and discovered principles of searching that don't neatly fit librarians' beliefs about what users should learn and how they should best learn

it. Green asks us to challenge our own assumptions about information literacy and refocus our attention on how users learn and practice information seeking in order to revise our working assumptions. Howard, Jody. K. The Relationship between School Culture and the School Library Program: Four Case Studies. School Library Media Research 13 (2010). Web. This study is a cross-case analysis of the culture of four different schools with award-winning library programs. The author investigated whether there were common cultural themes within each site or district which informed the way library programs developed. Can such common themes be identified and defined? Schools studied included grade levels K-12 and school types, including public and independent, suburban and urban, magnet and comprehensive. The author found via interviews with classroom teachers and observations of students, staff, and administrators that some common patterns emerged. Although over three dozen themes were documented in the course of the study, the author found that three themes were shared by all the sites. Each one exhibited a collaborative culture, a principal who used a collaborative leadership style, and high expectations for the students and staff. The report gives specific examples of each theme in action at each site, and it explains how they made the libraries a vital part of each school program. The author concludes that more studies of this nature need to be undertaken to confirm the findings at a greater range of schools and to help discover whether the three common themes are, in fact, the foundation of great library programs or whether other patterns might also lead to such programs. We all want to know the answer to what conditions make for a great library program in our schools. The methods used in this study are well worth duplicating at schools that do not have such exemplary library programs to see which, if any, of the themes are missing at those sites.

Katz, Irvin R., Catherine Haras, and Carol Blaszczynski. "Does Business Writing Require Information Literacy?" *Business Communication Quarterly* 73.2 (2010): 135-149.

Katz, Haras, and Blaszczynski argue that information literacy is critical to the success of business students both in school and after graduation when they enter the workplace. Although "information literacy" is mostly absent as a term in business literature, equivalent concepts of skills in information seeking and assimilation appear regularly. The authors used the ETS (Educational Testing Service)-designed iSkills assessment to evaluate to what degree information literacy skills correlate with the writing skills of business students. The authors further examined if there is a relationship between knowledge of English and this correlation. Their findings suggest that there is a direct relationship between information literacy skills and success in doing business writing (memos, emails, etc.), and that this relationship is in evidence regardless of the language the student knows best. The study is significant for drawing connections between information literacy (as measured by iSkills) and competency in writing within a

specific discipline/ profession. Establishing such connections is crucial for supporting information literacy as a measure of both student and professional success.

Krause, Magia G. "It Makes History Alive for them: the Role of Archivists and Special Collections Librarians in Instructing Undergraduates." *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 36.5 (2010): 401-411.

This article looks at the role of archivists/special collections librarians in providing instruction to undergraduate students in the use of primary sources. The author conducted interviews with twelve leading professionals in the field, each of whom had between 4 and 25 years of experience working with undergraduate students. Interviewees were asked how they taught undergraduate students about primary sources, what they thought undergraduates needed to know about primary sources, and how they (archivist/special collections librarians) saw themselves as educators. She found that archivists/special collection librarians saw themselves as contributing to the education of undergraduates through their knowledge of primary sources and collections, their navigation skills, and the information literacy instruction they provided. As to what students need to know about primary sources, the author found that it was important to these professionals to make undergraduates aware of what archives are, how to access them, and how to use them in research. The interviewees also noted the importance of trying to get students excited about using primary sources and the archives. When it comes to instruction, the author found that the archivists/special collections librarians were using a lot of active learning, hands-on and visual learning, and collaborative and group learning with undergraduate students. Many of the interviewees talked about the benefits of letting students "touch and feel" the primary sources they are working with and the importance of moving past a "show and tell" approach. The author finished the article by listing possible topics for further study.

Lim, Adriene. "The Readability of Information Literacy Content on Academic Library Web Sites." *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 36.4 (2010): 296-303.

Creating tutorials, handouts, FAQ pages, and research guides is something that librarians do every day. But are these materials "readable" to special populations, particularly first-generation college students? This article examines information literacy content posted on 21 urban university library websites. The authors used several readability "formulas" to assess the content on the library websites, assigned grade reading levels to the content, and sought expert opinions from professionals who work with first-generation college students. Results from content assessment, as well as comments from the professionals, show that many libraries use overly complicated language with their materials, use too much jargon without definitions, and do not provide a positive or engaging experience for students. Because first-generation college students are often

more likely to drop out than others, it is important that libraries tailor materials to this population.

Little, Jennifer J. "Cognitive Load Theory and Library Research Guides." *Internet Reference Services Quarterly* 15.1 (2010): 53-63.

This article looks at how to create research guides, as well as assess guides already created, to avoid giving users cognitive overload. This is important because an individual's cognitive load capacity for learning is limited, and a person may easily become overwhelmed and disoriented when a lot of information needs to be processed simultaneously. To design effective, pedagogically-sound research guides that are easier for students to use, the author focuses on managing intrinsic cognitive load (amount of cognitive processing required to learn the basics of something), minimizing extraneous load (when cognitive processing is overtaxed and information is disorganized), and promoting germane load (when learners effectively organize and integrate the new material). The author provides a wealth of advice and suggestions for how best to approach the creation and assessment of research guides in terms of the three main types of cognitive load, along with many helpful and practical examples; for example, intrinsic load can be limited by chunking, segmenting the research process into smaller parts, and providing links for direct access to the material. Following these suggestions and advice will help guide creators/editors to produce research guides that do not contribute to cognitive overload in users. Mestre,

Lori S. "Matching Up Learning Styles with Learning Objects: What's Effective?" *Journal of Library Administration* 50.7 (2010): 808-29.

Mestre provides an insightful examination of how various learning styles may be applied to online instruction. The author's methods, including two surveys of librarians as well as student usability studies and interviews, aim to get at the root of the best ways to accommodate diverse learning styles in an online environment. In particular, the author asks librarian survey respondents which tools they use to create learning objects, and, in a separate survey, the design and learning style considerations they employ for tutorials. Mestre's article also provides recommendations for making tutorials more effective and engaging, and as such will be of particular interest to librarians in the process of creating or modifying online instructional tools.

Muir, Gordon, and Holly Heller-Ross. "Is Embedded Librarianship Right for Your Institution?" *Public Services Quarterly* 6.2 (2010): 92-109.

The authors thoroughly explored whether or not embedded librarianship was a good fit for their institution (SUNY Plattsburgh) by applying several analytical questions to two embedded librarian case studies. When the authors applied the findings from several related research studies on the efficacy and strategic best

practices of embedded librarianship to SUNY Plattsburgh's 2004 pilot program with a biology course and a 2005 pilot program with an online nursing course, they confirmed that embedded librarianship was a good fit for this institution, and that further exploration of an embedded librarian program was justified. This positive fit was defined by examining the challenges, academic goals, institutional culture, librarian skills, and library focus. The series of questions that were given to demonstrate the process of determining institutional fit could also be applied to other institutions interested in clarifying their own embedded librarian program goals.

Price, Bronwyn. "Teaching Effective Literature Use Skills for Research Reports in Geography." *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*. 34.2 (2010): 247-264.

Bronwyn Price from the University of Queensland, Australia, designed a study to answer three questions about student literature use in a geography course: Have the students gained understanding of the importance of effectively using literature when conducting and writing up research projects? Have the students demonstrated the ability to effectively use literature to explain the results of their research project? Did the students find the new learning activities interesting, useful and successful, and did they understand the purpose? Students were evaluated before and after an intervention workshop, in which the instructor used problem-based learning to complete a specific research assignment. Effective literature use was explained, and small group discussions in which students had to identify good and bad examples of literature use were followed by a discussion of those examples involving the whole class. Students then completed their research projects. Results showed improvements in effective use of the literature by students explaining their own research results, and showed that the students used higher-quality literature. Explicit teaching of specific methods for reading, selecting, and using assignment-specific literature was shown to improve these students' understanding of why careful literature use is important and how to apply it to their research.

Rosenblatt, Stephanie. "They can find it, but they don't know what to do with it: Describing the Use of Scholarly Literature by Undergraduate Students." *Journal of Information Literacy* 4.2 (2010): 50-61.

Rosenblatt provides an illuminating, two-part study regarding the quality of resources used in upper-division undergraduate research papers—and how effectively those students used the resources. The first part of the study reveals, through citation analysis, that 85% of the 20 students studied met requirements of finding quality resources, even though a quarter of the class did not receive library instruction. However, students' ability to synthesize and incorporate those quality resources represented the larger challenge. Using a rubric to indicate the level in which students incorporated resources, Rosenblatt found that only 10 of

the 20 students could effectively make connections between the cited resources and to their own ideas to support claims within their papers.

Shiao Feng, Su, and Jane Kuo. "Design and Development of Web-Based Information Literacy Tutorials*." Journal of Academic Librarianship* 36.4 (2010): 320-8.

Su and Kuo conduct a detailed study of online information literacy tutorials contained in the Peer-Reviewed Instructional Materials Online (PRIMO) database. The authors' content analysis approach examines what the tutorials consider to be most important in terms of topics or skills taught as well as the methods used to achieve learning. Specifically, Su and Kuo look at Tutorial Objectives and Teaching Strategies, including tutorial content such as Academic Tools, Information Literacy Concepts, and Library Resources and Services. The article will be of particular interest to librarians involved in online instruction.

Schroeder, R., and E.S. Cahoy. "Valuing Information Literacy: Affective Learning and the ACRL Standards. *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*. 10.2 (2010): 127-146.

Current ACRL information literacy standards heavily stress cognitive leaning skills, according to authors Schroeder and Cahoy, who assert that while ACRL information literacy standards serve as a tried and true model for instruction librarians, changes need to be made to incorporate more emphasis on the role of affect in learning. For Schroeder and Cahoy, affect and cognition work in a symbiotic relationship in the overall learning process, even though affect has been largely ignored partly because of the difficulty in measuring and assessing affect. Affect, to be more specific, includes inquisitiveness, concern, alertness, trust, flexibility, willingness, diligence, and persistence, along with confidence and motivation. The authors point out that The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) has already incorporated affect into their new standards, and that ACRL can draw upon the new AASL standards to enhance their own. A draft of such new standards is provided, along with ideas for assessment.

Westbrock, Theresa, and Sarah Fabian. "Proficiencies for Instruction Librarians: Is There Still a Disconnect Between Professional Education and Professional Responsibilities?" *College & Research Libraries* 71.6 (2010): 569-90.

In 1993, Diana Schonrock and Craig Mulder investigated ACRL's proficiencies for bibliographic librarians. Westbrock and Fabian revisited the earlier study and sought to answer four questions: (1) Are the current ACRL Proficiencies for Instruction Librarians perceived to be relevant to practitioners? (2) Where are librarians acquiring these proficiencies? (3) Where do librarians think they should acquire these proficiencies? (4) Are librarians acquiring these proficiencies in library school nowadays more often than they did in 1993? The authors found that the proficiencies remain relevant to the practice of librarianship, but that librarians are more apt to acquire these proficiencies outside of library school. Moreover, the individual proficiencies are at least as important as the ACRL

Information Literacy Competency Standards. Since librarians, in general, do not acquire teaching skills in library school, library administrators would do well to provide opportunities for continuing, professional education for instructional staff.