

**University of Dayton**  
**ENG102/200 pilot library instruction assessment**  
**Spring 2011**

The Roesch Library instruction team conducted a small portfolio assessment in Spring 2011 to review learning outcomes as they relate to library research. There are currently no measures in place to assess the library instruction component of English Composition 102. Because the group had not conducted a portfolio assessment before, we decided to use a small sample to see if it was a viable means of conducting assessment for our learning outcomes.

As a team, we decided on the following goals for the assessment: 1). Formulate a way to evaluate ENG102/200 sections and develop a baseline measure; 2). Evaluate the degree of student information literacy at end of ENG200/102, rather than stick to outcomes developed for ENG102 by the instruction team, since most of those outcomes are process oriented and hard to measure from the essays; 3). Establish baseline results for the team and decide how this type of study can specifically be used later.

This portfolio method is currently used by the English Department's Composition Committee as part of their efforts to assess the English Composition pilot program that is intended to replace the ENG101, 102, and 114 curriculums. Because of Department's practice of evaluating portfolios and librarian membership on the Composition Committee, it was relatively easy to secure student portfolios.

Other libraries have used this approach and we found a workable model in Lorrie Knight's chapter, "Assessing student learning through the analysis of research papers" from the book, *Assessing student learning outcomes for information literacy instruction in academic institutions* (ed., EF Avery). Knight used ACRL's Information Literacy competencies as a basis for assessment; each standard had its own set of performance indicators as well as outcomes for each indicator. We followed Knight's model and focused on four specific outcomes, one for each information literacy standard, around which we constructed a rubric. The rubric listed specific markers for each outcome, markers that we would expect to find within the portfolios, and that would characterize a beginning researcher, intermediate researcher and experienced researcher within the context of First-Year Composition courses. See the appendix for the rubric developed by the team.

These standards are taken from the ACRL Information Literacy website (<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency.cfm>). The text for the standards, performance indicators, and outcomes is language used by ACRL.

**Standard 1:** The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information need.

**Performance Indicator:** The information literate student identifies a variety of types and formats of potential sources for information

**Outcomes:** Identifies the purpose and audience of potential resources (e.g., popular vs scholarly, current vs historical)

For the rubric, then, we determined that an experienced first-year researcher would meet this outcome if the following criteria was documented in the portfolio: Sources are mostly scholarly; popular sources are used as needed. Sources are of an appropriate variety of types (journals, magazines, books, dataset, website, etc.) in accordance with the discipline.

**Standard 2:** The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.

**Performance Indicator:** The information literate student retrieves information online or in person using a variety of methods.

**Outcomes:** Uses various search systems to retrieve information in a variety of formats

It was determined that a student who had an excellent understanding of this outcome would show evidence of the following in his or her portfolio: Sources are retrieved from an appropriate combination of systems, including at least one discipline-specific system (catalog, multiple databases,

freely available Internet). Students who showed an intermediate understanding, in comparison, would use fewer sources: At least two different systems were used to retrieve sources (e.g. online catalog and article database, two different databases, database and website).

**Standard 3:** The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base.

**Performance Indicator:** The information-literate student synthesizes main ideas to construct new concepts.

**Outcomes:** The information-literate student recognizes interrelationships among concepts and combines them into potentially useful primary statements with supporting evidence.

Here we were looking for the following evidence to determine if student was an experienced first-year researcher: The student discusses and synthesizes the major ideas of the resources selected for the paper with evidence of evaluation. A student would be rated as a beginning researcher if the portfolio showed evidence of the following statement: The student mentions sources without synthesis, discussion, or evaluation of why they were selected.

**Standard 5:** The information-literate student accesses & uses information ethically & legally.

**Performance Indicator:** The information-literate student acknowledges the use of information sources.

**Outcomes:** Uses MLA style correctly and consistently.

The following evidence statement was used for an experienced first-year student researcher: The student cites sources correctly and consistently and distinguishes between online and print sources in accordance with MLA style. The evidence statement used for rating the work as belonging to a beginning first-year researcher was this: The student fails to cite sources or does so in a haphazard manner.

We evaluated a total of sixteen student portfolios: eight portfolios from a class that had come to the library for an instruction session (the sample group) and eight student portfolios from a class that had not scheduled a library visit for formal library instruction (the control group). We wanted to see if we could determine measurable differences between the two groups. Each student portfolio was evaluated by two different librarians, for a total of 32 evaluations.

## Results

The portfolio evaluations yielded clear distinctions among the standards and between the two groups. In measuring the outcome associated with standard 1 (The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information need), the class that received library instruction—the sample group—utilized more appropriate resources and demonstrated a greater understanding of the outcome associated with this standard (Identifies the purpose and audience of potential resources, e.g., popular vs scholarly, current vs historical). The same was true for standard 2 (the information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently), which was measured by the following outcome: Uses various search systems to retrieve information in a variety of formats.

Students in both classes fared less well with standard 3; the information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base. As was the case with the other standards, students who did not attend a library instruction session did not perform quite as well as students in the sample group. It was also the case that both groups showed fewer characteristics of an experienced researcher for standard 5 (the information-literate student accesses & uses information ethically & legally). The control group fared even worse than the sample group on this standard. Clearly, students had the most difficulty in demonstrating the ability to use MLA style correctly and consistently, which was the outcome selected to measure that standard.

Standard 1.2.d	Beginner	Intermediate	Experienced	N/A
Sample		1	<b>15</b>	
Control		5	11	
Standard 2.3.a	Beginner	Intermediate	Experienced	N/A
Sample		6	<b>10</b>	
Control	2	9	4	1
Standard 3.3.a	Beginner	Intermediate	Experienced	N/A
Sample	1	10	5	
Control	6	6	4	
Standard 5.3.a	Beginner	Intermediate	Experienced	N/A
Sample	5	5	6	
Control	<b>12</b>	3	1	

## Discussion

The team met afterwards and discussed the process. The team liked the portfolio review as an assessment instrument, as it helped the instruction librarians see the end results of the library instruction efforts. The portfolio review worked well in terms of a process and the team had a relatively easy time constructing a rubric and using it. To that end, we achieved our assessment goals of developing a baseline measure for evaluating ENG102/200 sections as well as establishing baseline results for this kind of assessment.

There was discussion as to how much this approach provided observable benefits from library instruction, with concern that the data may not point at all to library influence but rather to student and Composition instructor factors. The team had acknowledged this challenge to a degree when developing the assessment goals, noting that we were evaluating how information literate students were rather than evaluating the process-oriented outcomes we have in place for the ENG102/200 library instruction sessions. This assessment method is an indirect approach to evaluating our instruction program for ENG102, but it can still provide helpful insight for our course goals and curriculum design in terms of what is going well and what could use improvement.

It was observed that our current instruction goals are not necessarily aligned to what we evaluated in the rubric, especially with regards to citing sources as well as evaluation & synthesis of various points of view. To a degree, however, the standards used in the rubric reflect similar outcomes articulated in the University's General Information Literacy Competencies. Although they do not align specifically to the outcomes articulated for the ENG102 library sessions, the ACRL information literacy standards are appropriate for this kind of assessment. Given that the group took inspiration from a chapter about portfolio evaluations and utilized the same ACRL information literacy standards as the article, we will need to consider our own program outcomes more carefully when selecting the appropriate information literacy standards to evaluate. The instruction team will meet this semester to not only select the most appropriate information literacy standards for the next evaluation of the ENG200 pilots, but it will also review the results in light of how we conduct library instruction for the upcoming ENG200 classes and what, if any, changes need to be made to our approach in teaching research skills for these classes.

The team looked at how the current library instruction for English Composition might be adjusted to include some additional emphasis on citation practice; suggestions included additional discussion during instruction sessions about the availability of citation generators within databases & OLINKs or possibly a fourth component of the library tutorial. Others questioned whether this aspect of research was appropriate for the instruction program. While it is clear that students in both groups sampled have difficulty with writing correctly-formatted citations in MLA style, the extent to which we can or should provide instruction merits further discussion at a future instruction team meeting.

Having established a baseline with this pilot project, the instruction team finds that this approach is a viable method for assessing library instruction efforts—with additional changes. The team identified a need for improvement in inter-rater agreement, which was inconsistent and varied at times. Additional discussion and group rating on a single sample portfolio is advisable before a bigger group is evaluated. In addition to working on inter-rater agreement, the group will also review the standards used for the assessment to make sure that they are more appropriate for this library's instruction program. And lastly, the group intends to use a different sampling model now that a baseline set of results were achieved with this pilot project. Because all ENG102/200 pilot classes are required to schedule a library research session, there will not be a control group. We intend to sample more classes with fewer samples per class, in addition to making sure that the sampled classes include sessions from each member of the instruction team.

<a href="#">ACRL standard 1.2.d</a>	<b>Beginner</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Experienced</b>	
<p><b>Standard 1:</b> The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information need.</p> <p><b>Performance Indicator:</b> The information literate student identifies a variety of types and formats of potential sources for information</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b> Identifies the purpose and audience of potential resources (e.g., popular vs scholarly, current vs historical)</p>	Sources are exclusively popular in nature and in only one format (e.g., popular magazines).	Sources are mostly popular in nature and in a specific format, but include at least one other types and/or formats (e.g., popular magazine article and scholarly journal article, scholarly journal article and scholarly book).	Sources are mostly scholarly; popular sources are used as needed. Sources are of an appropriate variety of types (journals, magazines, books, dataset, website, etc) in accordance with the discipline.	N/A
<b>RATING</b>				

<a href="#">ACRL standard 2.3.a</a>	<b>Beginner</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Experienced</b>	
<p><b>Standard 2:</b> The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.</p> <p><b>Performance Indicator:</b> The information literate student retrieves information online or in person using a variety of methods.</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b> Uses various search systems to retrieve information in a variety of formats.</p>	All sources come from a single system (e.g., online catalog)	At least two different systems were used to retrieve sources (e.g, online catalog and article database, two different databases, database and website)	Sources are retrieved from an appropriate combination of systems, including at least one discipline-specific system (catalog, multiple databases, freely available Internet).	N/A
<b>RATING</b>				

<a href="#">ACRL standard 3.3.a</a>	<b>Beginner</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Experienced</b>	
<p><b>Standard 3:</b> The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base.</p> <p><b>Performance Indicator:</b> The information-literate student synthesizes main ideas to construct new concepts.</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b> The information-literate student recognizes interrelationships among concepts and combines them into potentially useful primary statements with supporting evidence.</p>	The student mentions sources without synthesis, discussion, or evaluation of why they were selected.	The student summarizes ideas and explains why sources were used.	The student discusses and synthesizes the major ideas of the resources selected for the paper with evidence of evaluation.	N/A
<b>RATING</b>				

<a href="#">ACRL standard 5.3.a</a>	<b>Beginner</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Experienced</b>	
<p><b>Standard 5:</b> The information-literate student accesses &amp; uses information ethically &amp; legally.</p> <p><b>Performance Indicator:</b> The information-literate student acknowledges the use of information sources.</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b> Uses MLA style correctly and consistently.</p>	The student fails to cite sources or does so in a haphazard manner.	The student cites sources in a consistent manner.	The student cites sources correctly and consistently and distinguishes between online and print sources in accordance with MLA style.	N/A
<b>RATING</b>				