Is Librarian-Professor Collaboration Worth the Time and Effort? Co-operative Strategies for Improving Undergraduate Research Skills

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What We’ll Talk About

- Prof/Librarian collaboration
  - The literature
  - Our experience

- Co-operative Strategies
  - Our approach to InfoLit
  - Our use of CMS
  - Course-embedded library instruction
    - Student achievement and comments

- How we benefit

- Discussion questions interspersed throughout
Who We Are

The Boss

Thinks He’s the Boss

Librarians as Predators

“The New Yorker, 2 February 2004
Prof/Librarian Collaboration: Literature

- **Attitudes of librarians**
  - See themselves as partners in instruction
  - Profs don’t like to share their classrooms
  - Profs have fragile egos

- **Attitudes of professors**
  - See librarians as support staff (not partners in instruction)

- **The challenge for librarians**
  - To have skills taken seriously
  - To be integrated into course objectives or overall curriculum
  - To “let go” of control of InfoLit

How much input should librarians have in curriculum development and course planning? Do they have the skills or expertise for such work?
Prof/Librarian Collaboration: Literature

- Features of successful collaboration
  - Endorsement of common mission
  - Acceptance of colleague’s expertise
  - Willingness to learn from differences in expertise
  - Interest in establishing common terms of reference

- “Communication is the key to every relationship.”


Our Working Relationship

“Is this the spot where we should be?”

What about here? This looks like a good spot for an argument.”

The New Yorker, 22 March 2004
Prof/Librarian Collaboration: Literature


The Instructional Bottleneck

- **Symptom: poor term papers**
  - Argument/analysis
    - Vague
    - Expository, not analytical
  - Information sources
    - Inappropriate – unacquainted with specialty resources
    - Incorrect source citations
    - Students didn’t see the problem

- **Diagnosis:**
  - Weak cultural analysis skills
  - Weak information literacy skills

General Learning Strategy

- **“Learning paradigm” à la Barr and Tagg**
  - Increase learner engagement
  - Foster learner autonomy and responsibility


- **Role of Course Management System**
  - Enable task-based learning approach
    - Design task to meet need
    - Provide feedback

- Push at UW to increase use of CMS

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Number of UW-ACE Courses from Fall 2004 to Winter 2007

Term
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Information Literacy Strategy

- Task-based model
  - Guided tasks teach InfoLit skills

- Scaffolded structure
  - Break up research process into manageable parts
  - Build up skills during term

- CMS delivery
  - Allows students to explore the resources on their own time (outside of class time)
  - Seamless integration of InfoLit instruction into course content
  - Seamless integration of Library resources (e.g. eReserves)
InfoLit and CMS


Critics of Information Literacy

- Information literacy is about “mastering computer skills, not promoting a love of reading and books. We teach students how to maximize a database search, about successful retrieval rates. What usually gets lost in the scramble is a careful reading of the material.”

- Information literacy “would have librarians teach students to be more like them . . . As Roy Tenant noted, ‘only librarians like to search, everyone else likes to find’.”


Are these critics right? Can we say anything good about library instruction and information literacy?

German / Fine Arts 359

- **German Directors in Hollywood**
  - Attracts different kinds of students
    - Fall 2004: Mostly Fine Arts students
    - Winter 2007: Mostly German majors
  - Ca. 12 students per term

- **Instructional Challenges**
  - Differentiating between film criticism and film scholarship
  - Locating good film scholarship

- **One of the Course Objectives**
  - To learn more about the sources of information that can aid us in the study of film.
InfoLit is embedded in the Term Project.

Module 1:

- **Module 1 - Essay Topic and Research** (due 26 October 2004)

### What is Film Criticism?

How do I distinguish between a film review and film criticism?

- The following chart will help you distinguish between film reviews and (scholarly) film criticism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film Reviews</th>
<th>Film Criticism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written by?</td>
<td><em>Journalists and lay people</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published when?</td>
<td><em>Appears shortly before or a few weeks after the release of a film.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published where?</td>
<td><em>Published in a variety of sources including newspapers (e.g. <em>The New York Times</em>), magazines (e.g. <em>The Film Comment</em>), and websites (e.g. <em>Sight &amp; Sound</em>: <a href="http://www.sightandsound.net/">http://www.sightandsound.net/</a>).</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length?</td>
<td><em>Tend to be short to medium length articles.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What's included?</td>
<td><em>Reviews typically include:</em>&lt;br&gt;- plot summary&lt;br&gt;- script and cinematography comments&lt;br&gt;- rating on the performance of the actors&lt;br&gt;- reviewer's opinion of the film&lt;br&gt;- viewing recommendation&lt;br&gt;(One final point: reviews contain less research (the lack of footnotes is evidence of this).)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship?</td>
<td><em>Reviews are considered to be popular, not scholarly. This does not mean that they cannot be used for scholarly purposes, only that there is less research put into them.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample MLA Citation:

1. Students read the topic.

2. Students read a sample database search (PDF).

Electronic Indexes and Film Research: The Quiz

1. Why is there so little overlap among the four searches?

Answer:

2. How can you get rid of the German records in the MLA search?

3. Students provide short answers to questions that check their ability to make sense of the results of the database search.
1. Why is there so little overlap among the four searches?

Each database (or index) indexes different journals and sources. That's why it is so important to look at more than one index when doing your research.

Points Earned: 0/1, This item will be graded later.
Correct Answer:
Your Response:

2. How can you get rid of the German records in the MLA search?

Change the search limits. This can help filter out the kinds of articles you don't need/want.

Points Earned: 0/1, This item will be graded later.
Correct Answer:
Your Response:

4. Automatic feedback is brief since individual feedback was provided to each student.

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Did Students Engage with the Material?

- **Yes: material accessed often**
  - Main InfoLit resource page very popular

- **No: only 2 of 11 students completed the online databases quiz**
  - The quiz had no explicit grade

- **Does accessing the information equal understanding the concepts?**
  - The take-home final exam would provide some answers!
InfoLit Lurked in the Final Exam

GER/FINE 359:
The Dreaded Final Exam

Questions

The exam consists of three questions, each of equal value. You should probably write about 500-750 words per question. If your answer is longer than that, be sure that it is not overly wordy or repetitive. Please note as well that you may not discuss any film more than once (e.g. if you use the film M question 1, you cannot use it in questions 2 or 3).

1. Select an article from the course reader and write a short abstract (100 words) of it in which you summarize the article and state its main argument(s). Then discuss the film in question by responding to the thesis of the article. You may want to argue for the thesis and supplement it, or you may wish to argue against it, or you may wish to modify it. Whatever you do, be sure that your own argument is supported by evidence from the film.
   - This question tests your ability to write an abstract, to identify the thesis of an article, and to analyze a film in response to a specific question/issue.

2. Using the UW library's wonderful resources, locate a scholarly article on expressionism in film. Explain what search process you undertook to locate the article, and why that article is "scholarly." Using that article, establish a definition of expressionism in film. Then take two films from the course that you think illustrate this definition, refute this definition, or do both.
   - This question tests your information literacy skills as well as your understanding of expressionism in film. Be as accurate as possible in explaining your search strategy and why the article is scholarly.

3. Answer ONE of the following questions:

Improving GER/FINE 359

- Is a prof ever satisfied?

- New “What is Film Criticism?” Task
  - Students read a film review and a scholarly film article, then fill out an empty table comparing the two
  - When students submit their version, the UW-ACE Agent Editor will release the task as completed by Laura and James
German 272

- German Thought and Culture (Mid-1800s to the Present)
- Alternative course for Faculty of Arts language requirement (taught in English)
- On-campus and Distance Education
- Second-year students
- Mostly non-majors (not a priority course)
- Winter 2007: 120 students (60 OC, 60 DE)

Learning Initiatives Fund: Study

- GER 272 and transferable skills
  - Student attitudes to skills (as opposed to content) acquisition
  - Impact of CMS on skills acquisition
  - Transferability of skills acquisition
  - June 2005 – May 2007

- Data collection
  - Questionnaires
  - Virtual and face-to-face focus groups
  - Course assignments
  - Ca. 150 participants in study over 4 terms
GER 272 is an introduction to German-speaking culture from the later 19th century until the present day. This period saw Germany become a united nation, modernize and industrialize rapidly, start two world wars, implement history’s most notorious genocide, divide along ideological lines, and re-unite as the largest nation in western Europe. These tumultuous events caused Germany to invent and re-invent its national and cultural identity a number of times. This course will look at how the arts – i.e. art, architecture, music, literature, film – define and reflect Germany identity in the modern age.

Course Objectives

- To learn about the cultural history of modern Germany by reading some important German literature, and to experience other forms of German culture (art, film, architecture, etc.)
- To develop skills in thinking, interpreting, and writing about cultural information
- To develop the independent learning skills by becoming better able to make use of the UW Library’s e-reference collection and on-line scholarly indexes

GER 272
Research - Feedback - Reflection Exercise

How it works

The exercise has three steps:

**Research Stage**

Objectives: To select a cultural object, to learn how to find information on that topic, and to learn how to formulate a discussion question.

Procedure: After selecting a cultural object that you wish to study, you do some Information Literacy exercises that help you find useful scholarship that discusses that object. You then write a 100-word summary, or abstract, of at least two articles, and formulate a discussion question on your topic. Submit the Research Stage, using the template provided, to your Study Team.

**Feedback Stage**

- a) Select an object and formulate a discussion question. These guidelines will help you
- b) Complete these Information Literacy tasks on how to research topics in UW Library’s indexes and Databases
- c) Learn how to correctly cite the article you find using the MLA Style Guide
- d) Read this page on how to write an abstract of an article

Embedded InfoLit Tasks
Scaffolded InfoLit: Basic Information

The functions of the operators are depicted in the diagrams below. Note that the blue shaded areas in the diagrams depict the number of articles retrieved in the search.

Dr. Skidmore OR Schnitzel
Dr. Skidmore AND Schnitzel
Dr. Skidmore NOT Schnitzel

Students read up on skills needed for index searching (e.g. the omnipresent Boolean operators)

Scaffolded InfoLit: Testing

1. Databases Quiz
   - Perform the following keyword search in all three of the databases. Do not apply any limits.
   - (Jew* or holocaust) and (memorial* or monument*) and ((Berlin or German*)
   - Browse through the results from the different databases and answer the following questions.

1. True or False? There is significant overlap in the results from each of the databases.
   - 
2. In general, why can you obtain little overlap in the search results from different databases (i.e., results obtained from performing the same keyword search in different databases)?
   - A. Each database keeps a record of your searches and results so as not to duplicate findings.
   - B. Each database indexes different journals.
   - C. Databases do not always index every article in a journal.
   - D. A and B
   - E. B and C

Students test their index-searching abilities with a short quiz.
Scaffolded InfoLit: Application

How it works

The exercise has three stages:

**Research Stage**

**Objectives:** To select a cultural object, to learn how to find information on that topic, and to learn how to formulate a discussion question.

**Procedure:** After selecting a cultural object that you wish to study, you do some Information Literacy exercises that help you find useful scholarship that discusses that object. You then write 100-word summaries, or abstracts, of at least two articles, and formulate a discussion question on your topic. Submit the Research Stage, using the template provided, to your Study Team.

Students apply what they have learned to the first stage of their term project (RFR exercise).

Scaffolded InfoLit: The Whammy!

1. The Humanities Full Text database keyword search (memorial* or monument*) will yield the following results:
   a) records containing memorials, monuments, monumental
   b) records containing memorials, monuments, monumental, memorial, monument
   c) records containing memorials or (monuments or monumental), but not both
   d) any record containing memorials, monuments, monumental, memorial, monument in the subject or descriptor field

2. Which of these resources is not useful for doing a topic search for journal articles related to German culture?
   a) MLA Bibliography
   b) Web of Science
   c) Humanities Full Text
   d) TRILL

3. How are descriptors used in database searches?
   a) They provide a controlled vocabulary (i.e. a list of constant terminology used by a database to describe a topic)
   b) They are the abstracts of the articles you find in a search
   c) They explain how the topic search will proceed
   d) Descriptors are not related to subject headings and therefore enable searches for an author's or subject's name

A couple of questions from the multiple choice section of the final exam test basic InfoLit skills.
How do you think students reacted to the InfoLit skills portion of the course?

InfoLit: Comments

- “Really I learned to research subjects a lot more than I did normally - and saw the value in it! At first I thought it was difficult and useless, but as I got better at it, I learned where to find the information I needed quickly and efficiently.”

- “It’s useful and you can apply it to all your other courses, too. And now it’s not only easier to find different articles, but you learn in a way how to analyze them a little bit better.”

- “No, I’m a fourth-year student so I have already had lots of practice when it comes to locating scholarly sources and conducting research.”

- “I had good skills with this before, so this course did not further those abilities.”

- “The process was rather frustrating. I would prefer to have the assistance of a real librarian.”

- “I do think it is probably easier [to] have access to flesh-and-blood librarian help.”
### Change: Library Help! Forum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ask what now</td>
<td>Jenny Ann Marguery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trouble...</td>
<td>Sarah Elizabeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bar: trouble...</td>
<td>Lisa Briggs (Bridge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bar: trouble...</td>
<td>Jenny Ann Marguery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>searching for articles</td>
<td>Lisa Briggs (Bridge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>library angst</td>
<td>Jenny Ann Marguery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bar: library angst</td>
<td>Lisa Briggs (Bridge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bar: library angst</td>
<td>Jenny Ann Marguery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>online reserves</td>
<td>Lisa Briggs (Bridge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bar: online reserves</td>
<td>Jenny Ann Marguery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bar: bar library angst</td>
<td>Lisa Briggs (Bridge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bar: bar library angst</td>
<td>Tammy Glance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fine chat</td>
<td>Lisa Briggs (Bridge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bar: fine chat</td>
<td>Tammy Glance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bar: fine chat</td>
<td>Cal Anne</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion forum gives students an opportunity to share difficulties with library research. A moderated discussion is also held.

### eReserves

- *eReserves for GER 272:*
  - Jakobs, P. Triumph of the Volks [Electronic Version]
  - Fitzgerald, N. Artifacts of Liberation: East & West [Electronic Version]
  - Cohen, J. Culture & Social Change: Political Debate in Germany [Electronic Version]
  - Schneider, P. For Germany: Volks, Volk & Army [Electronic Version]
  - Ansbach, N. Goodbye to Berlin [Electronic Version]
  - Danks, J. It's Not a Film, It's Not a History [Electronic Version]
  - Schifferer, B. Legions, Gold & East [Electronic Version]
  - Saldin, R. Memorial to the Martyrs, East [Electronic Version]
  - Haynes, G. Stalinist [Electronic Version]
  - Haynes, G. Propaganda [Electronic Version]
  - Tucholsky, H. The Culture of the East [Electronic Version]
  - Young, J. The Twisted Beauty of East Aesthetics [Electronic Version]
  - Baschet, T. The author: Rebellious and revolutionizing act called Theodor [Electronic Version]
  - Holloway, C. The Mind: How to be a Good Forming [Electronic Version]
  - Cohen, P. Telecommunications [Electronic Version]
  - Fitzgerald, N. Triumph: German Artist Thrive in Their Adopted Land [Electronic Version]
  - Heidbrink, G. Berlin: Life and Death [Electronic Version]
  - Holoway, C. The Mind: How to be a Good Forming [Electronic Version]

Electronic reserve material is easily linked to the course by means of JavaScript inserted in UW-ACE.

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Skills Transfer: Comments

- InfoLit – students recognize transferability to other courses
  
  – “You can apply it to all your other courses, too. And now it’s not only easier to find different articles, but you learn in a way how to analyze them a little bit better.”

  – “I think the most valuable thing that I have learned is how to effectively search for information that would be useful to me.”

- Students can transfer these skills to other courses. How transferable are online exercises from one discipline to another? Can you see ways of adapting these exercises to your own needs?
What I Learnt from James

- The Glorious German Empire!
- GER 272 Prof Moments used in Biochemistry courses
- Structure of GER 271 tasks transferred to PDEng 15

Prof Moments

- Content delivery via Flash videos of narrated PowerPoint presentations (produced with Camtasia)
- 5-10 minutes in length; 5-10 per unit
- For DE students, Prof Moments simulate in-class lectures
- For on-campus students, Prof Moments free up class time for discussion and activities
The videos are complemented with pdf guides for the lecture. Instead of just viewing the Prof Moment, students can take notes while watching.
Laura Steals My Good Idea

“It was absolutely fantastic. What a great teaching tool for web-based tasks!” (CHEM 434 prof)

GER 271

- **Instructional challenge**
  - Independent background preparation – students reluctant to learn basic information (persons / terms) on their own

- **Task**
  - Three birds / one stone
    - Basic info about persons / terms
    - Identifying suitability of resources to tasks
    - Matching quantity of information to need
Key background information that students can acquire on their own

Three resources that provide varying information on the general topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Literary Encyclopedia</th>
<th>Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy</th>
<th>Grove Art Online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the three periods of German Romanticism?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline the main contributions to German Romanticism of:</td>
<td>Friedrich Schiller</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friedrich Schlegel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Caspar David Friedrich</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any information on European Romanticism in general? Is it different from German Romanticism?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fill-in Chart

The Students’ Answers

- Made use of resources previously unknown to them
- Provided too much information
  - Cut-and-paste – didn’t summarize
  - Lack confidence to know what information is important
Students are introduced to the task – in this case, comparing online encyclopedias.

This is the actual exercise to compare the encyclopedia articles on “beer and beer production.”
In addition to filling out this comparison chart, students answer open-ended situational questions.

**Why Collaborate on InfoLit?**

- **Good for students**
  - Expert library instruction
  - Learnt relevant, transferable skills
- **Good for us (the librarian/the prof)**
  - Collaboration = professional development
  - Though time-consuming, we know students are learning more
  - We found ways (e.g. with UW-ACE) to introduce InfoLit without sacrificing course content
- **Good for the library**
  - “You mean, there are information sources other than Google or Wikipedia?”
  - Library gains understanding of faculty needs
Why collaborate on InfoLit? Can you think of ways to encourage collaboration here at the University of Toronto?

Contact Us

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In the prof-librarian partnership, who really wields the club?