

# Leddy Library Information Literacy Policy

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*[Information Literacy is] a new liberal art that extends from knowing how to use computers and access information to critical reflection on the nature of information itself, its technical infrastructure, and its social, cultural and even philosophical context and impact. (Shapiro and Hughes, 1996)*

## **Background**

Over the last century, academic librarians in North America have been actively engaged in teaching research methodologies to students. Traditionally, our focus has been on basic user education of the library's services and resources. Starting in the mid-90s, the increasing availability of technologies for delivering information in multiple formats led to rapid proliferation of published material and a concomitant increase in mechanisms for storing, organizing and representing information. The information explosion led to a growing demand for librarian assistance from professors who were facing the new challenge of teaching concepts, resources and skills related to the research process that exist outside of their disciplinary boundaries (Peacock, 2001).

Simultaneously, our interactions at the reference desk and elsewhere led librarians to conclude that researchers require a wider set of abilities than ever before when grappling with the current information environment. As testament to librarianship's new parameters, even our terminology evolved from the traditional "bibliographic instruction" or "user education" to "information literacy." The latter term represents a more sophisticated understanding of both the research process itself and the library's instructional role. An undeniable shift has occurred in our understanding of our place within the educational paradigm.

In the international context, national library associations in both the United States (ACRL, 2000) and Australia (CAUL, 2001) have endorsed information literacy standards and learning outcomes, and certain professional associations, such as the American Psychological Association, have included information literacy as a core generic skill that must be taught to future practitioners and scholars (Task Force, 2002).

The existing national standards suggest that information literate students will not only have a higher likelihood of academic success, but will also have the ability to transfer their literacy skills into other areas of their lives – personal, professional, and socio-political. The Leddy Library believes that it is in keeping with the goals of the University to graduate independent learners who can find and reflect critically upon information in all fields and formats. These competencies are crucial if our students are to function as effective members of the information society.

Therefore, as part of the 1999 Leddy Library Five Year Plan, the Library decided to focus its fiscal, staffing and physical resources in two main areas. The first area was the support of faculty and student research through collections development and maintenance of resources in a variety of formats. The

second focus area was the development of campus-wide partnerships leading to an overarching information literacy programme across the curriculum. This programme would foster student success and lifelong learning through an emphasis upon locating, evaluating and using information in whatever format or field it is presented. As specialists in information-seeking, the economics of scholarly publishing, information systems and the classification/organization of resources, librarians are well poised to lead collaborations with faculty and administrators to achieve our common goals.

The University is responding well to the Library's new initiatives in this area. The Programme Development Committee, in its second annual status report review of the Library's Plan (March 2002), commended the Library on its progress in information literacy thus far and encouraged the Library to take whatever steps necessary to ensure the implementation of a University-wide information literacy programme by the end of the Plan period. The Leddy Library's interest in information literacy also intersects with the President's Action Plan for the White Paper on Teaching and Learning (March 2002). In this plan, Dr. Paul asked Leddy Library to form a group to implement a University-wide student skill development programme with a focus upon research and study skills.

With these encouragements in mind, in May 2002 a group of Leddy librarians and staff participated in a half-day retreat to brainstorm a working definition of information literacy for the University of Windsor and a set of core competencies which characterize an information literate person. This document draws upon the discussions that took place at the retreat and elsewhere (with other groups on campus, other librarians, and with faculty and students) to articulate the Leddy Library's information literacy vision and the Library's role in a University of Windsor information literacy curriculum.

### **Audience and Scope**

Our Information Literacy Policy is intended to be read by any member of the university community who wishes to know more about our vision for this new programme. Included in this document, therefore, is our working definition of information literacy, a statement of purpose, a set of overarching goals and objectives, an outline of the pedagogical underpinnings for this programme and a list of the expected contributions of, and benefits to, various involved constituencies. Appended are a list of core competencies that characterize an information literate individual, an implementation plan, and the terms of reference of the Library's Information Literacy Working Group.

## **Definition of Information Literacy**

The Association of College and Research Libraries defines information literacy as a set of abilities requiring individuals to “recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information” (ACRL, 2000). The Leddy Library adopts this definition in principle, but would add to it by emphasizing the importance of critical thinking skills to information literacy. An information literate individual has the ability to reflect critically upon and evaluate their own research strategies, the tools used, the resources found and the context in which the resources were produced.

Information literacy, while related to computer literacy, is a distinct and broader set of abilities. Essentially, it is a framework for understanding, finding, evaluating and using information through one’s critical discernment and ability to reason. A researcher engaged in a process of inquiry will use computers and software, but the skills required to be effective are ultimately independent of any particular technology (ACRL, 2000).

## **Statement of Purpose and Goals**

In accordance with the University of Windsor’s mission statement, the Leddy Library is deeply committed to supporting excellence in research, teaching and learning as well as in providing an atmosphere which fosters creativity, discovery, critical thinking, service and communication (Office of the President, 1995). The development of a system-wide information literacy programme will help accomplish the University’s goals and enhance student success and lifelong learning.

We therefore intend to:

- promote information literacy to faculty, students and the community as a core competency for lifelong learning
- provide, in partnership with our academic colleagues, contextualized recursive learning experiences that enhance curricula, accommodate student growth, and support the University of Windsor’s teaching and research goals
- develop staff-focussed initiatives that refine librarians’ knowledge and practice in this area and encourage professors to incorporate information literacy objectives into their own teaching
- design our programme and curricula in accordance with needs and expectations articulated by faculty and students

## Objectives

In order to achieve the broad goals outlined above, we have developed the following list of narrower objectives to be used in planning information literacy programmes and activities:

- research student and faculty needs and expectations through qualitative research projects such as focus groups and interviews
- create promotional materials which outline our pedagogical approach and critical framework for both faculty and students
- recommend and advise upon policies and procedures for teaching and learning strategies, services, and resources in the area of information literacy at faculty and departmental levels
- provide workshops and other opportunities for librarians and faculty interested in embedding information literacy concepts into their classes and assignments
- provide a regular and easily adoptable mechanism whereby students and faculty can assess library instruction
- provide a working list of measurable learning outcomes for student assessment
- inform and be informed by curriculum development in individual departments or faculties with a view toward ensuring that information literacy development is always appropriately linked to disciplinary subject matter
- support the University's interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary efforts through a particular focus on the development of flexible researchers with the necessary habits of mind to perform research effectively in a multiplicity of fields and formats
- offer basic information literacy workshops to secondary school students and/or secondary school teachers

## Pedagogical Approach

The Leddy Library adopts the recommendations of the Boyer Commission Report, *Reinventing Undergraduate Education*. The Commission recommends strategies that require the student to engage actively in “the framing of a significant question or set of questions, the research or creative exploration to find answers, and the communications skills to convey the results. . .” (Boyer, 1998). Our approach to developing information literacy is grounded in the idea that effective researchers are engaged in an active process of inquiry.

Additionally, the Leddy Library adopts the pedagogical foundation outlined in the ACRL Best Practices Initiative document “Characteristics of Programs of Information Literacy that Illustrate Best Practices” (2001). As such, the librarians of the Leddy Library will strive to:

- adopt a diverse, multidisciplinary approach to teaching and learning
- encompass critical thinking and reflection

- support student-centred learning
- include active and collaborative learning activities
- build on the existing knowledge that students bring into the classroom
- incorporate variations in teaching and learning styles
- involve various combinations of teaching and learning techniques for individuals and groups
- include collaboration with classroom faculty and student researchers
- relate information literacy to ongoing course work
- experiment with a wide variety of methods

This approach is in keeping with the philosophy outlined in the President's White Paper on Teaching and Learning (November 2001), wherein the development of independent and interdependent lifelong learners is articulated as an overall goal of the University's teaching and learning programmes.

### **Institutional Constituencies – Contributions and Expected Benefits**

The success of the programme will depend largely upon the efforts and understanding of librarians, library administrators and faculty members. Collaboration among these groups is crucial. A successful collaboration will benefit not only students, but also the groups that have come together to deliver this programme.

#### Librarians

Librarians will contribute by:

- providing library instruction designed to foster information literacy
- evaluating student progress toward information literacy
- collaborating with faculty to embed information literacy concepts into assignments and curricula
- engaging in ongoing development in the discipline of teaching and learning
- developing promotional and outreach initiatives for library instruction
- creating research guides, handouts, tutorials (online and in-person)
- engaging in planning activities designed to provide structure and direction for the programme

Librarians will benefit from:

- higher information literacy levels within the campus community
- increased visibility on campus
- increased professional development and scholarly research opportunities
- increased contact with students and faculty leading to better overall knowledge of campus needs

and culture

### Faculty

Faculty members will contribute by:

- developing an understanding of the concept of information literacy through attending workshops and collaborating with librarians
- integrating information literacy concepts into assignments and teaching methodology
- evaluating student progress toward information literacy
- participating in educating students about discipline-specific approaches to research and incorporating information into scholarly research papers

Faculty members will benefit from:

- higher information literacy levels within the campus community
- better research papers from their students and higher rate of student success
- less individual time spent counselling students on research processes
- more proficient research assistants
- increased knowledge of current research methodologies and tools

### Library Administration

Library Administration will contribute by:

- promoting the information literacy programme on campus and in university-wide committees
- supporting and recognizing librarians' teaching efforts
- providing ongoing resources and staff development opportunities in order to sustain the programme
- assisting with planning and policy development

Library Administration will benefit from:

- higher information literacy levels within the campus community
- the development of an Information Literacy programme, fulfilling Objective 4 in the Five Year Plan
- the creation of more professional development and scholarly research opportunities for librarians, fulfilling Objective 8 of the Five Year Plan
- increased visibility of the Leddy Library and librarians' research expertise on campus
- further university-wide recognition of the Library's role in research, teaching and learning

### **Conclusion**

Perhaps what is most critical to the Leddy Library's approach to information literacy is our focus

upon student-centred programme design. We are deeply committed to researching the needs, expectations and attitudes of both students and faculty as we develop our programme. This stems from the conviction that too often services are designed solely from the perspective of the providers, rather than from the point of view of the people being served. The latter approach would place librarians out of touch with our community and would compromise both the utility and the integrity of the programme we hope to develop.

This policy framework articulates the Leddy Library's vision for information literacy instruction, outlining our pedagogical principles and delineating goals and objectives to foster information literacy in our community. Additionally, we have discussed contributions from and expected benefits to the institutional constituencies whose involvement will be necessary in developing an integrated programme of information literacy instruction. Ultimately, as information proliferates at an astounding rate and the mechanisms for storing, retrieving and representing that information becomes increasingly complex, our attention to information literacy will contribute not only to the University and its students, but also to society as a whole.

This document was submitted to the members of the University Library Administrative Committee for review and approval by the Leddy Library's Information Literacy Working Group, December 18, 2002.

**Lisa Sloniowski** (Chairperson of ILWG and Information Literacy Librarian)

**Karen Baracat** (Social Sciences Librarian)

**Jocelyne Poirier** (Acting Human Kinetics Librarian)

**Mita Sen-Roy** (Science Librarian)

**Leila Wallenius** (Head, Reference Department and Engineering Librarian)

**Peter Zimmerman** (Arts and Humanities Librarian)

**Approved by ULAC: January 7, 2003**

**Approved by Academic Policy Committee, April 29, 2003**



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## Appendix A – Core Competencies

The proposed Leddy Library Information Literacy Standards listed below originated from a discussion held at the Library's information literacy retreat in June 2002. Participants were asked to reflect upon and discuss the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (2000) produced by the Association of College and Research Libraries. The general consensus was that, while the ACRL Standards were a useful starting point, it would be desirable for the Leddy Library to develop a set of standards more reflective of local needs and concerns.

In addition to the ACRL Standards, the Teaching Library Working Group has also used as a source the *Information Literacy Standards* (2001) produced by the Council of Australian University Librarians. There is no equivalent Canadian standard. At present, the Teaching Library Working Group has developed only top-level standards; the intention is to develop, in a separate document, a fully articulated set of standards, performance indicators, and outcomes.

### Information Literacy Standards

1. The information literate person recognizes the need for information and determines the nature and extent of the information needed.
2. The information literate person accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.
3. The information literate person evaluates information critically.
4. The information literate person uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.
5. The information literate person understands cultural, economic, ethical, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information.
6. The information literate person understands cultural, economic, ethical, legal, and social issues surrounding the production of information.

(While Standard Six may seem, at first, to repeat Standard Five, it incorporates an important difference. The first five standards are, appropriately, developed from the perspective of the consumer of information. The "production" focus of Standard Six introduces for discussion issues of how the production, structure, organization, accessibility, technological requirements, and cost of information take place within society.)

## Appendix B – Implementation Plan

While it is anticipated that the development of a fully curriculum-integrated programme may take some years to develop, the Information Literacy Working Group thought it would be valuable to articulate an action plan for the next two years. This plan outlines specific initiatives that the Information Literacy Working Group intends to take over the next year (or have already taken since our retreat) in order to support the goals and objectives outlined in the policy framework. Also listed are relevant and ongoing initiatives that were developed since the Information Literacy Retreat in Spring 2002 and during the writing of this document.

In the area of user research:

- perform focus groups to identify student information literacy needs, behaviours and expectations
- perform a faculty research project to determine their expectations of students, experiences and approaches in regards to the teaching and learning of research skills
- provide evaluation forms for teaching librarians to distribute in class
- present and publish results of our studies

In the area of promotion and partnership:

- create promotional material for faculty
- create promotional material for students
- revise the research help section of the Leddy Library web site in order to improve visibility and usability of online help guides
- revise the instruction section of the Leddy Library web site in order to emphasize our new approach to instruction
- develop new research help guides (print and web versions)
- reconcile existing print and online help guides
- design an Information Literacy logo and design strategy to be used in all promotional print or on-line documents

In the area of curriculum development:

- seek a few key pilot projects which allow us to embed information literacy into departmental or faculty curriculum
- provide a working list of measurable learning outcomes for student assessment
- create “tips for developing information literacy” documents to assist teaching librarians and

faculty

- create handouts that all librarians can use in their teaching, as well as sample lesson plans
- review the WILD project
- examine the feasibility of building or acquiring a basic online module for first year students which attempts to address Standards 1 and 2

In the area of staff development:

- emphasize staff development and the creation of a teaching culture within the library through informal colloquia, working groups, guest speakers, and other means
- create “tips for developing information literacy” documents to assist teaching librarians and faculty
- create handouts that all librarians can use in their teaching, as well as sample lesson plans
- provide evaluation forms for teaching librarians to distribute in class

In the area of policy and planning:

- refurbish existing classroom space and continue to lobby for funding for library teaching labs
- review staffing and workload issues
- review implementation plan at the end of 2004
- review policy within 5 years

## **Appendix C – Information Literacy Working Group Terms of Reference**

At the Information Literacy Retreat in May 2002, participants suggested that a working group or task force be formed to take the lead in planning and development of an over-arching programme for the University. It was felt that the programme could not be delivered by one person alone, and would require a team of experienced teaching librarians with contacts in a range of academic departments who would meet regularly to work on initiatives in this area. Member were recruited and the group began meeting that same summer. The working group is chaired by the Information Literacy Librarian, whose primary workload focus is dedicated to the design and implementation of a campus-wide programme in this area.

### **Mandate**

To develop a University-wide Information Literacy programme.

### **Membership**

- Karen Baracat, Arts & Social Sciences Librarian
- Mita Sen-Roy, Science Librarian
- Lisa Sloniowski, Information Literacy Librarian (Chair)
- Leila Wallenius, Engineering Librarian and Head of Reference
- Peter Zimmerman, Arts & Humanities Librarian

### **Meeting Frequency**

Monthly

### **Terms of Reference**

Efforts will be focussed in five areas:

- Staff development
- User research
- Policy and planning
- Curriculum development (including learning outcomes, handouts, sample lessons)
- Promotion and partnership