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### Augustana College: Scaffolding to Success

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## Chapter 22

# Augustana College

## Scaffolding to Success

*Stefanie R. Bluemle*

### Population Served

Augustana College, in Rock Island, Illinois, is a private, four-year liberal arts college with a population of about 2,500 students. The college has a long history, going back to its founding in 1860, of serving first-generation college students, who in recent years have made up between one-quarter and one-third of each incoming class. Although Augustana remains a predominantly white institution, its student body is steadily diversifying, especially within the last decade; since the 2007–08 academic year, the proportion of domestic students of color in each incoming class has grown from about 10 percent to more than 25 percent, and the proportion of international students from less than 1 percent to nearly 10 percent.

The library's program of course-integrated information literacy (IL) instruction has been a defined component of Augustana's general education curriculum since 2003–04; many majors also emphasize IL and rely significantly on library instruction. Librarians recognize that entering Augustana students have had a wide array of experiences in secondary school, and the extent and nature of their prior experience with library research varies greatly, as well. Additionally, in the United States, budget cuts and inconsistent levels of political support have both reduced the presence of school librarians and increased pressure on public libraries. As a result of the above, we assume little about what incoming first-years are likely to know; even a concept as seemingly ubiquitous as the Dewey Decimal System can be unfamiliar when a tenth of students are international and many domestic students had no high school library or limited access to public libraries. Our program, therefore, places emphasis on reaching *every* student, especially in the first year, and scaffolding IL skills throughout students' time at the college.

# Program Scope and Curriculum Design

As this chapter is being written, in the 2018–19 school year, Augustana approaches a curricular transformation. In spring of 2015, the college faculty voted to move from a trimester system (three ten-week terms) to semesters with a three-and-one-half-week January term. The first school year on semesters will be 2019–20. Unsurprisingly, this curricular restructuring means significant changes to the library's information literacy program. Augustana librarians have approached these changes as an opportunity to strengthen and streamline our program and continue to improve collaborations with faculty. Yet our current trimester-based program is the foundation on which all of these developments will build; therefore, I will describe that program before looking ahead to planned changes under semesters.

## *Information Literacy on Trimesters*

All first-year Augustana students take a year-long sequence: either First Year Inquiry (FYI) or, for a selected subgroup, Honors. Although faculty bring their own content of interest to FYI, the sequence's primary purpose is to teach college-level reading, writing, information literacy, and oral communication skills. Christian Traditions, a 200-level religion requirement arising from the college's affiliation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, must be completed by the end of sophomore year. Majors culminate in a senior inquiry experience, which typically includes a research component. This academic program—structured around inquiry, with several experiences that all students have in common—permits information literacy to be scaffolded throughout the curriculum.

Information literacy, along with reading, writing, and oral communication, has been a defined skill in the FYI skills matrix since the sequence was introduced in 2003. The 2018–19 version of the skills matrix, which has been in use since 2013, focuses on high-level IL skills similar to the frames Authority Is Constructed and Contextual, Research as Inquiry, and Searching as Strategic Exploration in the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*:<sup>1</sup> exploratory searching (fall term), evaluating sources (winter term), formulating research questions (spring term), and allowing questions to guide inquiry (fall and spring terms). Students come to the library with their FYI classes four to five times over the course of the year-long sequence, allowing subsequent course-integrated sessions to build on one another. FYI faculty's participation in the library visits is nearly universal, and librarian-faculty collaboration is extensive. Similar IL skills—though at a slightly higher level—and universal faculty participation characterize first-year Honors. Therefore, the librarians work with 100 percent of first-year students repeatedly over the course of the year, introducing progressively more complicated IL skills.

The 200-level Christian Traditions requirement was originally part of FYI and continues to play a role in developing students' college-level writing, reading, and IL skills beyond the first-year sequence. Christian Traditions, therefore, serves as a bridge between the non-disciplinary IL skills of FYI and the disciplinary IL required within majors. Library visits—typically one for each Christian Traditions class—are planned in close collaboration between the religion librarian and faculty and push students beyond their FYI

experience to practice skills such as critical reading and high-level analysis of sources, or placing arguments in conversation with one another.

FYI and Christian Traditions form the foundation for disciplinary IL skills. These are integrated differently into each major, depending on the structure and needs of the curriculum. Linear majors—that is, majors in which a number of the required courses must be taken in sequence—such as biology, communication sciences and disorders, and psychology scaffold disciplinary IL skills throughout the curriculum; there are designated places for librarian involvement and other points at which teaching faculty are responsible for IL. Other, less-structured majors still incorporate disciplinary IL at key points, such as required introductory or methods classes, to ensure students have the research capabilities that the major’s curriculum requires. At the senior inquiry (SI) level, librarians work closely with students on advanced disciplinary research skills in settings that range from workshops with SI seminars to one-on-one meetings with SI students. Whatever form it ultimately takes, the scaffolding of IL skills within majors occurs in collaboration between departmental faculty and their liaison librarian, who provides instruction and professional consultation.

## ***Information Literacy on Semesters***

As the college moves to semesters, a first-year sequence—either FYI or Honors—consisting of two four-credit, semester-long classes will continue to be required. The new FYI curriculum, which the Honors curriculum echoes, was written by a group of eight faculty, including a research and instruction librarian, and approved by the full faculty. In the new FYI, the key information literacy skills are closely tied to the overarching question for each semester. The overarching question for FYI 101 (fall semester) is *How do you know what you think you know, and to what extent can you be certain?* The information literacy component of 101 involves not just basic skills, such as identifying keywords and constructing database searches, but also the ability to research from questions and articulate how new sources of information have changed one’s thinking about various topics. The overarching question for FYI 102 (spring semester) is *How is difference constructed, and what differences matter?* Correspondingly, students in 102 will consider source evaluation from the standpoint of both credibility and authority; they should develop a basic understanding of where authority comes from and how it is different from credibility. The IL concepts for both semesters deliberately echo elements of the ACRL *Framework*, particularly Research as Inquiry in 101 and Authority Is Constructed and Contextual in 102.<sup>2</sup> But just as importantly, IL also reinforces the actual content of each semester. Fall semester is about enacting a liberal arts education, and the IL skill offers one way for students to both develop and question their own knowledge. Spring semester turns to diversity and social justice; the corresponding IL skill asks students to consider whose voices are heard and whose are not heard in a given conversation, and how that comes to be.

Augustana’s librarians view the new FYI as an opportunity to strengthen and streamline our work with the sequence. Curricular restructuring, combined with the extensive faculty buy-in described above, creates a valuable opportunity to encourage more and more faculty to collaborate with librarians in ways that are most meaningful to student learning. Despite our ongoing efforts, some faculty still equate IL with “searching the databases” or “finding sources at the library.” But all faculty must redesign their FYI classes for semesters, and this creates an intervention point for the librarians: specifically, to nudge the more

reluctant faculty toward an understanding of IL that is more in line with the *Framework*. The alignment between the overarching question and the IL skills that has been written into the new curriculum is one important step in this direction.

Librarians' longer-term goal is to guide the culture of FYI toward one of weaving IL skills effectively throughout each class so that faculty will become less dependent on librarians for that component of the sequence. Ideas under consideration include the following:

- Developing tutorials faculty can assign to teach basic skills, such as reading Library of Congress call numbers, searching the catalog, or searching popular databases, to enable in-class time to focus on higher-level skills.
- Using existing librarian-faculty relationships to
  - encourage those faculty who have the greatest understanding and comfort level with IL to embed IL skills throughout their classes and reduce the need for sessions with a librarian
  - coach those faculty who value IL but lean on librarians' expertise so they can develop the confidence to teach more IL themselves, again reducing the need for sessions with a librarian

Our hope is to maintain and even strengthen our current relationships with faculty and build on their assumption that librarians are deeply involved in FYI, in order to both improve student learning *and* reduce the instruction burden on the library.

The Christian Traditions requirement will be renamed Reasoned Examination of Faith (REF) as the college moves to semesters. Religion faculty remain committed to REF as an opportunity to further develop students' skills from FYI. The religion librarian, for her part, hopes to create a shift with these classes similar to the one occurring in the first-year sequence. Particular frames from the *Framework* may align with goals and content for REF as they did with the overarching questions for FYI. Beyond that, the religion librarian intends to have conversations with REF faculty about what, exactly, IL should look like within these classes, again with the intention of integrating IL in a way that decreases the reliance on librarian-led instruction.

The component of the IL program that is likely to change least on semesters is liaison librarians' work with departments on discipline-specific information literacy skills. Certainly, liaisons will need to speak to their departments about their new curricula to understand how their work with majors and minors will need to adjust. These conversations will create important opportunities to rethink collaborations that need improvement and to ensure that IL is integrated into each major strategically so that librarian involvement occurs when it is most important.

## Operations

In 2012 the Augustana faculty voted to approve nine college-wide student learning outcomes; information literacy is paired with critical thinking as one of them.<sup>3</sup> By this point, nearly a decade since IL became integrated into the general education curriculum, it was enough a part of the campus's vocabulary that the college's assessment committee included it without prompting from the library. These circumstances—wherein the majority of faculty and academic administrators either understand information literacy or hear it spoken of enough to recognize its importance—arise from the library's long-standing

vision of itself as a teaching organization, with a mission to “serve Augustana College by making learning the touchstone of all library activities and decisions.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, librarians position themselves as educators alongside the teaching faculty.

Cultivation of liaison relationships is one way this positioning has occurred. Augustana has six faculty librarians—four research and instruction librarians, a special collections librarian, and a technical services librarian—a library director, a head of circulation, and five full-time staff. The four research and instruction librarians and the technical services librarian are each liaisons to, and members of, an academic division: natural sciences, social sciences, fine and performing arts, humanities, and business and education.<sup>5</sup> Each division comprises several academic departments, thereby creating natural liaison relationships between librarians and a group of related disciplines. Liaisons are responsible for providing course-integrated information literacy instruction for the departments in their division, collaborating with faculty to integrate IL into their departmental curricula, working with faculty to develop and manage the library’s collections in their liaison areas, providing research and other library assistance to students and faculty in their liaison areas, and communicating with their divisions about developments in the library. Attending division meetings as members of the division, in turn, keeps librarians apprised of concerns and issues their liaison departments face on campus and contributes to a sense of community and shared interests among librarians and teaching faculty.

While disciplinary instruction is always the responsibility of the relevant liaison, the four research and instruction librarians teach the bulk of course-integrated IL sessions for the FYI and first-year Honors programs. The instruction coordinator assigns sections of the first-year sequence to librarians based on liaison relationships where possible. If a particular division is heavily represented in FYI in a given term, the instruction coordinator will partner some librarians with non-liaison faculty in order to balance workloads. The instruction coordinator attempts to maintain librarian/faculty partnerships for FYI and Honors from year to year for the sake of consistency. The library director and technical services librarian both work with a small number of FYI sections as well.

Assigning FYI and Honors partnerships is only one component of the instruction coordinator role, which is always held by a research and instruction librarian.<sup>6</sup> The instruction coordinator is responsible for the big picture of the IL program: they develop vision and direction for the program in conversation with the other librarians; plan and implement assessment projects; monitor and participate in curricular developments on campus that are relevant to IL; and, often, act as spokesperson for IL on campus on behalf of the library. For example, in 2013 the instruction coordinator liaised between the library and the college’s general education committee as the committee revised the FYI skills matrix. The result was a set of IL outcomes for the sequence that were based on an assessment project recently conducted at the library, which the instruction coordinator had led.

## Collaboration

The most important allies on campus of the library’s information literacy program are undeniably the teaching faculty. In planning the integration of IL into the college’s general education curriculum in 2003–04, librarians worked tirelessly to demonstrate the value of our contributions, and IL more broadly, to student learning. The effort was spearheaded by an instruction coordinator who had a background in sales, which she used to teach her

colleagues a needs satisfaction approach—a concept from marketing that involves crafting a message based on the customer’s identified needs—to help faculty see the benefits of incorporating IL instruction into their classes.<sup>7</sup> As buy-in to the instruction program became more and more widespread, a culture of valuing information literacy developed on campus. Librarians are currently fortunate to know that, at least to some extent, new members of the faculty enter a climate where IL is already part of the community’s vocabulary and experienced faculty will recommend that they work with their division’s liaison. Yet we also recognize that we cannot take the culture we have built for granted. Collaboration is just as much a way of building and sustaining relationships as relationships are a gateway to collaboration.

Among the key relationships to maintain are those with the coordinators of the First Year Inquiry program and the chairs of the Honors program. The present (2018–19) faculty leading these programs are among the library’s strongest advocates on campus. In the 2017–18 school year, the library’s instruction coordinator worked with seven other teaching faculty, including the FYI coordinator at the time, to design the FYI curriculum. As the college approaches its transition to semesters, librarians have collaborated with the FYI coordinators to plan professional development meetings for FYI faculty about teaching IL skills in the new curriculum. Similarly, librarians will collaborate with the Honors chair in the 2018–19 year to determine how IL will be incorporated into its curriculum as it develops.

At the department level, liaisons are contacting department chairs and other interested faculty to have conversations about scaffolding IL in their redesigned semester curricula. In some cases, these discussions may reinforce relationships but not lead to significant changes in how librarians and faculty work together. In others, librarians might collaborate with faculty to rethink how IL fits in a particular major or to develop new delivery methods, such as online tutorials. These conversations are ongoing at the time of this writing.

Whatever their shape, department- and program-level collaborations are enabled and preceded by the work that occurs one-on-one between librarians and faculty. For example, a librarian recently collaborated with the faculty member for an upper-level class on critical theory to revise an assignment from a short research paper to a series of “source analyses,” each of which involved a page of careful writing about how the particular source engaged or illuminated the theory in question. The same librarian spent several hours brainstorming with a new faculty member about an assignment for a creative project that can tie the focus of the faculty member’s class to local history. In another case, a librarian is engaged in a casual, ongoing conversation with an FYI instructor about how best to guide students to write a simple research question. Collaborations such as these need not always result in IL instruction; their importance lies in bringing IL more fully into the curriculum.

## Assessment

With each graduating class, the college conducts a longitudinal assessment of one of the nine college-wide student learning outcomes: disciplinary knowledge, critical thinking/information literacy, quantitative literacy, collaborative leadership, intercultural competency, communication competency, creative thinking, ethical citizenship, or intellectual curiosity.<sup>8</sup> Students take the assessment at the beginning of their first year and again near the end of their senior year. Additionally, each department and program is asked to

pose, and collect data to answer, one question about student learning in its major each academic year. But even though information literacy is paired with critical thinking as one of the college-wide outcomes, the library has not formally been drawn into the assessment process. The graduating class for which critical thinking/information literacy was assessed took the “Need for Cognition” scale, which focuses on critical thinking.<sup>9</sup> The library is also not required to submit yearly assessment reports along with other departments and programs, although the college’s writing center, which would seem to have a similar relationship to student learning on campus, does submit such reports.

Librarians have considered various possible reasons for these circumstances, particularly our not being asked to submit yearly assessment reports.<sup>10</sup> We have debated whether to simply ask that we be included, a request that would likely be granted. One benefit to our inclusion would be the additional formal recognition of our role as educators. Up to this point, however, the library has chosen to follow the same approximate assessment cycle as other departments and programs—asking and answering a question about student learning each year—but without submitting reports to the college assessment committee. This approach has permitted us flexibility in how we conduct assessment while still giving us information to report as needed.

The library’s assessments of IL learning have shifted over the years from a reliance on multiple-choice assessments to performance-based assessments and from mechanical to higher-level skills. In the early days of IL integration into the general education curriculum, the library relied on a homegrown, ten-question, multiple-choice instrument. One year, it administered the HEDS Research Practices Survey.<sup>11</sup> Over time, however, librarians concluded that these assessments were not providing the information we needed to improve our teaching. In the 2011–12 school year, the research and instruction librarians instead conducted a series of performance-based assessments in FYI. We created simple assessment exercises in the form of in-class worksheets that were intended to be authentic and capable of being organically integrated across various sections of the sequence.<sup>12</sup> This project led to a shift in librarians’ pedagogy toward higher-level skills and a thorough reworking of the IL outcomes for FYI; these outcomes anticipated the kinds of complex thinking that would later become the focus of the *Framework*. The special collections librarian later adopted performance-based assessment as part of the first cohort for ACRL’s Assessment in Action program and published an early example of a study involving direct assessment of student learning in special collections.<sup>13</sup>

At present, librarians have paused direct assessments of information literacy learning until the semester transition; these will likely resume, with a focus on our new outcomes and curricular structure, after the first year on semesters.

## What I Wish People Knew: Working with Special Collections

Information literacy programs and special collections instruction often work in isolation from one another, as though their aims and outcomes do not overlap. Yet, while special collections librarians teach numerous literacies—including visual, primary-source, and archival literacy—that information literacy programs address partially or not at all, it



is arguable that most of what information literacy encompasses is also being taught in special collections.<sup>14</sup>

At Augustana, we find that aligning special collections and IL instruction results in a stronger library team and a richer IL program. This realization evolved over nearly twenty years, beginning in 2000, when the library hired a special collections librarian whom the director tasked with increasing students' use of the materials. She and a second special collections librarian, hired in 2007, conducted outreach to departments across campus, including not just programs like history and English but also anthropology, art history, education, geography, graphic design, and FYI, among others. The special collections librarians have always been fully integrated within the larger library team.

When a new instruction coordinator, who had worked in the archives as a college student and had a passion for special collections, began leading the IL program in 2012, it seemed natural for these two strong instruction programs to work more closely together. The library now writes all of its IL outcomes with the intention that they can be taught in special collections as well as in IL instruction sessions. As librarians prepare for FYI on semesters, providing faculty with suggestions about how to teach the defined IL skills, we are including options for assignments in special collections. Similarly, when the librarians wrote IL outcomes for the program as a whole in 2015, the special collections librarian was an equal partner in the process; the eight program outcomes, which we mapped to the ACRL *Framework* and the college-wide learning outcomes, are all taught in special collections as well as other IL instruction sessions.

Alignments such as these build on the demonstrated benefits of special collections instruction. A study by Project Information Literacy that surveyed employers about the information skills they need from college graduates suggests that the patience and ability to sift through print materials is still important in today's workplace, where not everything has been digitized.<sup>15</sup> Another recent study by the Brooklyn Historical Society found that conducting research in special collections increases undergraduate students' academic engagement and possibly their course grades;<sup>16</sup> it may even improve retention rates.<sup>17</sup> Close collaboration between IL programs and special collections, therefore, promotes an important aim of information literacy and libraries more broadly: empowering students to be successful both during and after their college educations.

## Notes

1. Association of College and Research Libraries, *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2016), <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.
2. Association of College and Research Libraries, *Framework*.
3. "Augustana Student Learning Outcomes," Augustana College, accessed October 9, 2018, [https://www.augustana.edu/files/2017-01/student\\_learning\\_outcomes.pdf](https://www.augustana.edu/files/2017-01/student_learning_outcomes.pdf).
4. "Strategic Plan for Thomas Tredway Library," Thomas Tredway Library, Augustana College, last modified September 27, 2019, <https://www.augustana.edu/library/strategic-plan>.
5. Liaison relationships with the departments in a sixth academic division, language and literature, are divided among three of the librarians due to current staff shortages.
6. Each research and instruction librarian coordinates an element of the library's services. The other three coordinator roles are research help coordinator, outreach coordinator, and displays and events coordinator.

7. Jim Blythe, "Need Satisfaction," in *Key Concepts in Marketing* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2009), 111–14, [https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/sageukmark/need\\_satisfaction](https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/sageukmark/need_satisfaction).
8. "Augustana Student Learning Outcomes."
9. Mark Salisbury, "Does Our Students' Interest in Complex Thinking Change over Four Years?" *Delicious Ambiguity* (blog), September 26, 2017, <https://markhsalisbury.org/2017/09/>; John T. Cacioppo, Richard E. Petty, and Chuan Feng Kao, "The Efficient Assessment of Need for Cognition," *Journal of Personality Assessment* 48, no. 3 (1984): 306–7, [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa4803\\_13](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa4803_13).
10. The focus on critical thinking over IL in the longitudinal assessment was less puzzling, as this was not the first time a component of one of the nine outcomes had been assessed rather than the entire outcome as defined. For example, oral communication was the focus when communication competency was assessed, although the college recognizes that reading, writing, listening, and speaking are all components of this outcome.
11. "Research Practices Survey," Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium, accessed October 17, 2018, <https://www.hedsconsortium.org/heds-research-practices-survey>.
12. Stefanie R. Bluemle, Amanda Y. Makula, and Margaret W. Rogal, "Learning by Doing: Performance Assessment of Information Literacy across the First-Year Curriculum," *College and Undergraduate Libraries* 20, no. 3–4 (2013): 298–313, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10691316.2013.829368>.
13. Sarah M. Horowitz et al., "Assessing Hands-On Learning in Special Collections: A Pilot Study" (poster presentation, American Library Association Annual Conference, Las Vegas, NV, June 28, 2014); Sarah M. Horowitz, "Hands-On Learning in Special Collections: A Pilot Assessment Project," *Journal of Archival Organization* 12, no. 3–4 (2014): 216–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332748.2015.1118948>.
14. See for example, the recent Society of American Archivists and Association of College and Research Libraries *Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists and Association of College and Research Libraries, June 2018) [http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org/acrl/files/content/standards/Primary Source Literacy2018.pdf](http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org/acrl/files/content/standards/Primary%20Source%20Literacy2018.pdf). One (then) current and one former Augustana special collections librarian served on the task force that wrote these guidelines.
15. Alison J. Head, *Learning Curve*, research report (Project Information Literacy, October 16, 2012), [http://www.projectinfolit.org/uploads/2/7/5/4/27541717/pil\\_fall2012\\_workplacestudy\\_fullreport-1.pdf](http://www.projectinfolit.org/uploads/2/7/5/4/27541717/pil_fall2012_workplacestudy_fullreport-1.pdf).
16. Alice Anderson et al., "Our Findings," TeachArchives.org, accessed June 11, 2018, <http://www.teacharchives.org/articles/our-findings>.
17. Education Development Center, *Students and Faculty in the Archives*, final evaluation report (Waltham, MA: Education Development Center, March 31, 2014), <http://www.teacharchives.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Final-FIPSE-Evaluation-Report.pdf>.

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