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Communications in INFORMATION LITERACY

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[ARTICLE]

DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING AN INFORMATION LITERACY COURSE IN THE HUMANITIES

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ABSTRACT

In 2008, Wake Forest University's Z. Smith Reynolds Library expanded its program of basic-level information literacy courses to include an array of advanced courses devoted to specific discipline areas. As part of this initiative, two reference librarians, a rare-books curator, and a cataloger, all of whom double as subject specialists in literature, the arts, religion, and music, respectively, were asked to form a team charged with developing and teaching a credit-bearing elective course covering the humanities as a whole. This article describes how a diverse set of professional backgrounds was leveraged to develop LIB250: Humanities Research Sources and Strategies; the experience of teaching the course in the Spring semesters of 2009 and 2010; and ideas for improving the course.

INTRODUCTION

Wake Forest University is a mid-sized, liberal arts college located in Winston-Salem, NC. Wake Forest University has an undergraduate population of about 4,500 students and offers over 3 dozen majors in the arts and sciences, as well as interdisciplinary programs. The university also offers graduate programs in arts and sciences, law, business, divinity, and medicine that educate an additional 2,500 students towards master and doctoral degrees. Wake Forest prides itself on its traditional teacher-scholar faculty model and small class sizes. It also takes pride in its controversial recent decision no longer to require SAT scores from undergraduate applicants and in its reputation among students as "Work Forest."

Three libraries on two campuses serve the faculty, staff, and student populations of the university. The Coy C. Carpenter Library supports the Wake Forest University School of Medicine and North Carolina Baptist Hospital, while the Professional Center Library is affiliated with the School of Law and the graduate students in the School of Business. The Z. Smith Reynolds Library (ZSR) serves the remainder of the graduate schools and the undergraduate population. The ZSR Library is a central location on campus, and one of the few places that students can gather to work together and find study space outside of their dorm rooms. Since 2008, ZSR has also been open 24/5, making it an even more popular destination for Wake Forest students.

ZSR librarians have non-tenure faculty status. The annual review process, comprising both statistical as well as narrative components, involves submission of the year's accomplishments in three broad areas: librarianship, scholarship and professional achievement, and service (to the library, the university, and the community). Teaching information literacy courses in addition to traditional one-time bibliographic instruction sessions falls under the librarianship rubric and is subject to evaluation by the departmental heads, team leaders, the dean of the library, and ultimately the provost of the university.

LIB100: ACCESSING INFORMATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In spring 2002, the Reference Department of ZSR received approval from the University Curriculum Committee to teach an elective, 1-credit information literacy course for undergraduate students, with the initial two pilot sections to be taught in spring 2003. At that time, all information literacy instruction was delivered via traditional bibliographic instruction sessions for individual courses, and there was no university-mandated curricular research methods requirement. The head of the Reference Department attended the Association of College and Research Libraries Information Literacy Immersion program and subsequently shared the contents of the program with the reference librarians in a series of topical meetings. The original LIB100 course syllabus closely adhered to the Information Literacy Competency Standards as articulated by Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL).

The creation and implementation of this original course were a team effort, with seven reference and instruction librarians helping to write and teach the course. While this division of labor lessened the planning and teaching load for

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the individual librarians, it also caused other practical difficulties. With seven instructors teaching one or two class sessions each, it was difficult for students to know who the lead instructor was and whom to go to for help with assignments. Because the librarians taught only one or two class sessions, they did not get to know the students or their topics well, making it more difficult to evaluate individual student progress in the class. Student feedback from this pilot was positive, however, and the librarians observed that the course met a real student need for research help. The student feedback and need, combined with a desire at the university for academic-level, 1 -credit courses, made LIB100 a permanent part of the curriculum.

The transition of LIB100 to an official course necessitated several significant changes, which addressed the various problems of the pilot course. As the number of sections increased from 2 to 15, additional members of the library staff joined the ranks of instructors. This allowed the instructors to teach a section either individually or in teams of two. In fall 2004, the library director created an information literacy coordinator position to oversee administrative details such as scheduling and course evaluations, as well as the construction of a template course that could be used by all of the instructors. This template course was especially helpful for new instructors, as it gave them a foundation to work from while they gained confidence in their teaching.

With such a large number of sections, however, no two LIB100 courses were the same because each instructor or pair of instructors usually customized the course as they became more familiar with the content and their own strengths as instructors. This variety in approaches and styles has been beneficial in several ways, as it has led to both formal and informal collaborations among instructors. At least once a year, and usually once a semester, all of the instructors meet for a swap and share and discuss new teaching techniques or assignments that were tested during the previous semester, as well as what did not go according to plan. In fall 2008 and spring 2009, the instructional design librarian and the information literacy coordinator organized a 2-semester series, Teaching Teaching, which introduced the instructors to important instructional design and educational psychology principles, which are not typically part of the library science curriculum (Tedford & Pressley, 2010, p. 49-51). Both of these efforts allowed instructors to gain new ideas to incorporate into their class sessions on a regular basis and gave them new techniques for designing and evaluating their course content.

The basic LIB100 course structure centered on an annotated bibliography as the final project. The class topics and assignments, such as finding a reference source or a scholarly journal article, were the smaller building blocks that made up the content for the final bibliography. Students could select their own topics for research; and if they had a large research project in another class, they were allowed to use the same topic for both, with the permission of the other professor. Other topics covered were copyright, citation style, and effective search strategies. Modifications to this basic structure included focusing student research topics on information issues such as net neutrality and copyright, incorporating group work and presentations, and using daily quizzes and in-class response systems to gauge student progress throughout the course.

LIB250: Humanities Research Sources and Strategies

Since fall 2003, ZSR has offered at least 15 sections of LIB100 a semester, with 15 to 18 students in each section. The classes are consistently full with waiting lists, a popularity that has been attributed both to its 1-credit hour and to student word-of-mouth advertising. With the popularity of the LIB100 courses established, ZSR received permission to expand to offering a series of advanced information literacy courses (the LIB200-level courses), which would be open to declared majors and minors. The LIB200-level courses are discipline specific, focusing on research methods and sources specific to each of the social sciences (LIB210), sciences and mathematics (LIB220), business and accountancy (LIB230), and humanities (LIB250) areas. Librarians identified a need for these courses as there is no consistent offering of advanced research methods courses across the academic departments. In spring 2008, a pilot course for the social sciences was offered; and in fall 2008, a rotation was set up: LIB210 and LIB230 in the fall semester and LIB220 and LIB250 in the spring semester.

In order to create and plan these advanced information literacy courses, each instructor, or group of instructors, received a semester off from teaching. In the case of LIB250, to ease planning among four participants, the instructors used several Web 2.0 technologies. The instructors created separate Google Docs for the different types of resources and topics to be covered in the course, and the online environment made it very easy for all instructors to have the most current version of each document as well as to see the periodic changes and updates being made. Delicious.com and the Zotero bibliographic program made it easy to share and keep track of relevant online resources.

As demand for the information literacy program has increased, the program recruited instructors from all departments of the library. The LIB250 team comprised two reference librarians, the rare books curator, and one cataloger. These individuals were selected because they were the liaisons to the arts and humanities academic departments (the two reference librarians to the arts and literature, the rare books curator to religion, and the cataloger to music), and all had advanced subject degrees in the relevant humanities disciplines. In addition to their subject knowledge, the rare books curator and cataloger contributed added expertise based on their professional functions in the library. Thus, the rare books curator led the discussion on special collections and the use of archival materials in the library's Rare Books Room, and the cataloger provided advanced instruction in searching the library's catalog and using Library of Congress Subject Headings and Classification.

Literature Review

When planning of the course began in fall 2008, the instructors consulted the literature in education, library science, and the various subject disciplines relating to the course to survey information literacy topics in the humanities. Resources such as discipline research guides, articles pertaining to subject-specific bibliographic instruction and discussion of information literacy instruction in general were found, but few current articles that considered teaching a complete information literacy course on the humanities as a whole were discovered.

There is a substantial body of literature that addresses information literacy instruction in

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individual disciplines. A project of the Music Library Association (Cary & Sampsel, 2006) is an example of a number of adaptations that have been made of the ACRL standards for a specific subject area (ACRL, 2011). The Music Library Association (MLA) document reprised the five ACRL standards—defining information needs, accessing, evaluating, and using information, and awareness of the ethical and legal environment—and inserts its own instructional objectives for undergraduate music students. Examples include demonstrating an understanding of work identifiers such as opus number and uniform title; of investigative methods distinctive to the field (musical analysis, discography, etc.); of the differences between editions of scores (performing, critical, etc.); of the use of sound recordings, reviews, etc. to inform performances; and of the ethical use of audio and video materials. An article by Jane Gottlieb (1994), describing reference services to music students at The Juilliard School, exemplified a similar body of literature, especially by music librarians, addressing the special information needs of performing artists.

In the field of art, Joan Beaudoin (2005) completed her own literature review to survey the research skills and needs of art historians. Beaudoin highlighted the centrality of the image for art research, as well as the continued reliance by those in the field on print sources, such as monographs and reference materials, and traditional research methods. These traditional methods include “footnote chasing” (p. 35), browsing in the stacks, and using print bibliographies and indexes. However, since Beaudoin’s review, more online techniques for the location of such material are beginning to take hold.

John W. East’s "Information Literacy for the Humanities Researcher: A Syllabus Based on Information Habits Research" (2005) used the skills of successful humanities researchers to inform the development of an information literacy course outline (p. 134). It was one of the more useful articles, especially in regards to its broader discipline approach. East mapped the research skills to a specific learning objective, information that assisted in the creation of a list of the most important research skills and types of resources that needed to be incorporated into LIB250. East's learning objectives were varied and included both theoretical and practical skills such as "Establish how information is disseminated in the discipline...," "Be aware of the importance and limitations of inter-library loan services," and "Understand the importance of regularly scanning core journals and browsing journal shelves in libraries" (pp. 140-141). While East's discussion and list of learning objectives proved useful, there was still a need for information on and examples of instruction techniques and types of assignments and projects that would help to convey the course content to a new generation of students.

The instructors of LIB250 found all these sources helpful insofar as they provided a framework for incorporating discipline-specific material and research approaches into lesson plans; but there are virtually no recent studies that consider the teaching of an information-literacy course on the humanities as a whole. Library instructors considered these sources in combination with the experience they had gained from teaching LIB100 and bibliographic instruction sessions, in addition to internal library training such as Teaching Teaching. All this information contributed to the creation of the new course.

Marketing the Course

The instructors marketed the new course using methods that had proven effective with LIB100. They emailed academic advisers and faculty in the humanities and arts and asked administrative assistants in the relevant departments to forward an email message to their majors and minors. Flyers were posted in the library, the student union building, and buildings housing humanities and arts departments. As with LIB100, the most effective marketing tool proved to be word of mouth; in the course's second iteration, many students reported hearing about the course from peers or receiving recommendations from professors or advisors.

Teaching the Course

Purpose

The purpose of the course was to provide students with an understanding of the sources and strategies essential to research in the humanities (comprising literature, classics, religion, art, music, theater, dance, philosophy, and history). Broadly stated, topics included strategies for developing research projects, identification and evaluation of resources available in the disciplines, and characteristics of humanistic scholarship and communication. As subject-specific information literacy courses have emerged, instructors have modified their statements of the ACRL Information Literacy Standards to reflect subject-specific issues and to make the statements appear more relevant to students taking the courses. Thus, in the case of LIB250, the course guide provided a summary of topics covered and course objectives based on the Standards:

By the end of the course, students will demonstrate an understanding of:

- the **print and electronic resources** available through the ZSR Library catalog and their locations
- relevant **databases** to humanities disciplines and how to use them
- how to access resources in other **institutional and scholarly collections**
- the role **professional associations and organizations** play in the humanities and the offerings of each
- **research processes** distinctive to the humanities
- ways the **critical evaluation** of resources allows the researcher to recognize exemplary humanities research
- the role **primary sources and historical research** have in humanities scholarship
- how to locate **scholarly web resources** in the humanities

Course Content

- 2009 original course blog: http://cloud.lib.wfu.edu/blog/lib250/
- Current course LibGuide: http://guides.zsr.wfu.edu/lib250

Syllabus

The course syllabus reflected the course's dual themes of scholarly or artistic practices and the traditional humanistic research process. It consisted of the following schedule of topics and assignments:

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- Introduction to the course: class discussion and overview of LIB250 content and the research process
- Scholarly associations, professional paths, alternate career paths; research question submitted for approval
- Reference resources
- The library's online catalog: search strategies for the humanities
- Accessing other libraries' and institutions' catalogs and resources; presentations of interviews with faculty or practitioners
- Core humanities databases
- Cross-disciplinary databases; Google Scholar
- Special collections (in Z. Smith Reynolds Library Rare Books Reading Room)
- Research into historical context; use of primary sources
- Tracing critical reception and reviews; tracking critical or theoretical approaches
- Web resources, tools, and evaluation
- Emerging technological tools, including Zotero and Twitter, open source; final project work session
- Final project presentations
- Final class: evaluation, final project questions
- Submission of final project

The rationales for many elements of the syllabus are self-evident; others perhaps invite explanation. Commencing with the role that scholarly associations play in academic and professional life, the initial class outlined the various resources and services offered by these organizations, even for the pre-professional aspirant—including publication programs that variously include core journals, books, research guides, or online bibliographic resources; and professional and career services such as conventions, jobs listings, task force reports, graduate school guides, and prizes and awards. Students' blog postings reflected favorable responses to the amount of information and assistance provided by such bodies, which they could avail themselves of as they progressed in their own academic careers. In some instances, students used relevant professional association webpages as research resources for subsequent assignments in the course (e.g., locating core journals or digitized collections).

Online Catalog

The online catalog class emphasized search strategies specific to humanities research. Although online research has evolved to consist largely of keyword-generated approaches, the ability to recognize and to incorporate humanities-specific subject terminology in catalog records optimizes search results. This session noted the usefulness of recognizable Library of Congress subject headings in catalog records and the subdivisions that are particularly relevant to the humanities, e.g., criticism and interpretation, history and criticism, catalogues raisonnés, etc. The catalog demonstration focused on the typical search paradigm of artist/author and artistic/literary work and theme/issue, stressing the need to brainstorm and to generate synonymous or related terms in order to enhance retrieval. This format approach continued into the class on humanities databases, selected to reflect the broad subject areas of the students' research

without replicating the students' specific topics. The interdisciplinary nature of current scholarly approaches prompted consideration of multidisciplinary resources such as *JSTOR* and *Academic Search Premier*, as well as suggestions of non-humanities databases that, depending on a research topic, may address various facets of a multi-pronged query.

Databases

The second iteration of the course conflated the two database classes and instead offered a session devoted to characteristics of scholarly journals and the Open Access movement in scholarly communication. In addition to defining the movement, its salient objectives and rationales, and possible paths to creating openly accessible scholarship, the session also addressed issues in research and publishing, the prominence of the scholarly monograph as a signature of mature scholarship, and promotion and tenure in the humanities, all of which constitute a unique context for Open Access.

Historical Context and Primary Sources

The impetus for a class devoted to historical context and the use of primary sources derived from the prevalence of research assignments in humanities courses that involve New Historicist approaches. This movement was advanced notably by early modern scholar Stephen Greenblatt in a seminal essay published in 1982, "The Forms of Power and the Power of Forms in the Renaissance" (pp. 1-2). Greenblatt called for creative works to be considered not as isolated and self-contained artifacts, but rather as the products of cultural, historical, social, and political forces. New Historicism has persisted in academe, even as other theoretical and critical lenses have emerged to elucidate creative works in new ways; and the historical research tools that enable a researcher to view literary and artistic works against a historical horizon offer unique challenges in their diversity of structure, features, and content. The session included demonstrations of history databases for secondary scholarship and a diverse array of primary source databases such as *EEBO/Early Books Online*, *Proquest Historical Newspapers*, the *Times of London Digital Archive,* and *African American Newspapers*.

Critical Reception and Approaches

The session devoted to critical reception, reviews, and critical or theoretical approaches addressed the recurring call to trace the initial and perhaps subsequent critical reception of a literary, artistic, or historic figure. These research needs are conspicuous in courses that exhaustively study such a figure or in assignments to create a scholarly edition in miniature of a literary work, incorporating early reviews, seminal critical writings, and exemplars of salient theoretical approaches. Similarly, historical research, whether for its own sake or as part of contextual analysis for artistic or literary works and individuals and movements may frequently reflect theoretical frameworks through which historical events, issues, and individuals are interpreted. This class explained the rationales for such research, cited prominent theoretical approaches and demonstrated the use of search methods within the online catalog and databases, as well as some print resources (e.g., the Gale *Literature Criticism* and *Modern Arts Criticism* series, as well as *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*).

Assignments

Blog Postings

A bi-weekly class blog posting provided a means of demonstrating and gauging the research that students were conducting on

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their projects (10 posts, each worth 3 points). Each response was to include two components: an assessment of the material covered in that day's class and the application of that session's research process or type of resource to the student's final project topic. Specific questions elicited appropriately specific postings, and each post was due within 1 week of each class period. Because students tended to elaborate more freely on their reactions to the class period than on the research process account, the class assessment is now optional, with priority given to the research strategy component. In the 2010 course, instructions for each posting included questions designed to prompt reflection on the specific type of resource covered in that class session. This tactic elicited more focused responses from the students. *See Table 1: Individual Class Blog Response Questions.*

Faculty/Practitioner Interview

An interview of a faculty member or practitioner in the arts (based on a questionnaire devised by the Library's Information Literacy Coordinator) and an in-class presentation (worth 15 points) provided an opportunity for students to gain a sense of the scholarly or artistic professional life and the academic background of scholars or practitioners in a field of interest in the humanities. Students interviewed either a full-time faculty member in one of the arts and humanities departments at Wake Forest University or an active practitioner in one of these fields. They were to address specific questions and include a final reflection on the experience. Students submitted the interview in writing and also summarized the experience in a brief class presentation.

The students' analyses of and reflections on the interviews were thoughtful and positive. In addition to expressing appreciation for the time faculty members took to discuss their professional engagement and research interests, students regarded the interviews as informative, noting that the conversations provided personal insights into their professors' interests, cleared up misconceptions

TABLE 1 — INDIVIDUAL CLASS BLOG RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Research Process & Strategies: Apply what was discussed in class to your final project topic. In paragraph form, incorporate the following questions to show us WHAT you found and HOW you found it:

Where did you look?

- What search terms did you use?
- How did you state your research query?
- What results did you obtain?
- How did you modify your research strategy?

Classroom Response:

- What was particularly helpful or significant in class today?
- What do we need to cover in more detail?
- Do you have any other questions about what we discussed?

TABLE 2 — INTERVIEW TEMPLATE	
Your name:	Person interviewed:
Date of interview:	Undergraduate degrees and institutions:
Graduate degrees and institutions:	Dissertation topic:

When did you come to Wake Forest University (or your current position), and how did you find out about the job?

How would you define your discipline?

What misconceptions do you think exist about your discipline based on what may be portrayed in the media, books, movies, etc.? How would you correct them?

Has research in your discipline changed since you did your graduate work, and if so, how?

Primary area of research or practice currently—did you receive outside funding; from whom?

Membership in professional organizations:

What do you see as the benefits of belonging to professional organizations?

Conferences and other professional activities attended in the past 2 years:

How do you use networking in your job? How has it benefited you in your profession?

Scholarly or professional journals personally subscribe to:

Publications, performances, or exhibitions in the last 2-3 years:

How do you conduct research? What resources do you use?

Do you assign research papers in your courses?

What is the one research skill you wish your students could improve upon?

My analysis of the interview:

What did you learn that you didn't know? What surprised you? Did the experience give you a greater understanding of the discipline or of the humanities in general?

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regarding the field of study, offered valuable advice, and clarified differences among the various disciplines within the arts and humanities. *See Table 2: Interview Template*.

The interview responses to the desired research skills query in particular were illuminating for the students (and have been excerpted on the new course guide). Reiterated desiderata included more careful reading and closer critical attention to published scholarship, curiosity and enthusiasm for research, a better capacity to follow leads and clues to open up research efforts, proficiency with citations in bibliographies and footnotes, and, finally, the perennial desire for students to get into the library stacks and to look at actual books, rather than opting primarily for online resources.

Final Project

The final project was an annotated bibliography on a research topic in the arts and humanities, as approved by the instructors early in the course. Students could select topics related to research papers they were working on for other courses, with the permission of the other professors involved (in order to avert self-plagiarism problems). The assignment permitted students to integrate resources they had retrieved for the class blog into the bibliography; hence, the bi-weekly assignments became building blocks for the final project. The instructors posted examples of successful projects from earlier courses in order to assist students unfamiliar with the nature of this assignment (used with permission). A final class presentation on the project topic (worth 10 points) posed the following points and questions which students addressed:

- Brief introduction to your topic
- Overview of your research process
- What problems did you have?
- What unexpected discoveries did you make or unanticipated paths did you uncover?
- What would you want your fellow students to know about your research experience?
- In summary, what did you learn about the research process in the arts and humanities?

The presentation was limited to 5 minutes and included a visual component (e.g., PowerPoint).

The final project write-up (worth 35 points) was in part the compilation of resources selected by the students throughout the semester in the form of an annotated bibliography. In addition, an evaluative component required discussions of why they selected the resources and how the resources contributed to an understanding of the research topic. *See Table 3: Annotated Bibliography Template.*

Technology and Web 2.0

Web 2.0 applications facilitated course planning and instruction. A blog stored the course content, and students blogged their class responses. Google Docs provided the means of cooperative course development, and individual instructors contributed lecture notes and database demonstration scripts for each class topic. Submission of student assignments in Google Docs permitted commentary by the four instructors, but due to problems with establishing email addresses in Google

Docs, the instructors reverted to Word file submission via email for the next offering of the course. One class session presented Zotero as an optional citation management system, and one of the instructors created a series of mindmaps to summarize class content, covering reference resources, library catalog keyword searching, and the publication process in humanities literature.

Lessons Learned

For guidance in improving the new course, the instructors relied on three sources of feedback: a student course evaluation, comments in students' blog postings, and the instructors' own observations.

The student course evaluation instrument (see Supplementary File) was designed by ZSR instructional librarians for the basic-level LIB100 course and later adapted for the LIB200 courses. Administered at the end of the semester through the university's course management software, it queries students on the following:

- Topics or sessions found to be most valuable and least valuable
- Perceived problems of the course
- Effectiveness of technology used in the course
- Opinion, expressed in a Likert scale, on the instructors' competence, preparedness, enthusiasm, and encouragement of critical thinking

Responses were anonymous, and participation was voluntary. Of the 10 students who completed LIB250's inaugural semester in 2009, 7 responded. Of the 11 students who completed the course's second iteration in 2010, 6 responded.

Students in both iterations of the course rated the instructors high on competence, preparedness, enthusiasm, and encouragement of critical thinking. In response to the question "Which course session(s) did you find most valuable?" students in both 2009 and 2010 cited the search strategies that the instructors demonstrated throughout the course and the session on rare books and archival collections. Students in 2009 also cited the sessions on scholarly associations and on databases, as well as nuts-and-bolts topics such as citation and reference-management software. Students in 2010 also cited the sessions on primary sources and on metasites.

These responses partly reflect demographic differences between the two groups of students. The 2009 class displayed a wider range of skill levels, even among upperclassmen, than was anticipated, obliging the instructors to devote more time to reviewing basic research skills and less time exploring the more specialized humanities resources. By the time the course was offered again in 2010, word had spread among faculty. The heads of both the English and history departments broadcast-emailed a recommendation of the course to their majors. Because these two departments do a good job of integrating information-literacy skills into their own curricula, LIB250's 2010 class consequently was dominated by students whose research skills were already quite sophisticated. The challenge then was to provide enough new material to keep these students engaged. Metasites, professional associations, WorldCat, and Google Scholar were the resources least familiar to them.

The two sessions that received the most mixed reviews in student course evaluations were those on rare books and archival

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TABLE 3 — ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY TEMPLATE

Research Question: State your research question or topic.

Scope Note: Tell us about your topic. What will you be including or excluding and why?

You will need at least one example from each of the following categories:

1. Reference resource
2. Scholarly book (must be in available in the Library, in print or electronic)
3. Scholarly journal article
4. Arts/humanities database
5. Secondary database (not arts/humanities)
6. Primary source (e.g., diaries, letters, contemporary magazine/newspapers articles, art or manuscript reproductions, autobiographical materials, early reviews, digital images)
7. Scholarly website
8. Two core scholarly journals for your topic and discipline
9. Professional or scholarly association in your discipline
10. Major special or archival collection on your topic

Consider the following descriptive and evaluative issues in writing your annotations:

- Why did you choose this source over others on the same topic? Consider currency, comprehensiveness, specificity, and author's credentials.
- What is the work's main purpose, points, or argument?
- How does the bibliography or works cited list contribute to the authority of the source?
- List any special features, highlights, or important aspects of the source and how they add to the value of the work.

The following additional questions should also be considered when evaluating web resources:

- What kind of organization is responsible for the content? What can you glean about this organization from the information on the website? How does this impact your own research?
- Compare the substantive content of the web resource to what you might expect to find in a print resource. Are there unique capabilities or features that augment what might be found in print?

If you are not sure what an annotated bibliography looks like, please see the final project examples page.

collections and on scholarly associations. These sessions were named as both "most valuable" and "least valuable" (presumably by different respondents). While most students responded positively to both topics in their blog postings and in class discussion, the negative responses may reflect some larger issues observed by the instructors as the course progressed. For one, a few students appeared confused by the course's dual themes of scholarly practice and research process. These students had difficulty seeing the purpose in a research-skills course of covering practice -oriented topics such as scholarly associations (in which the lecture covered professional and career services in addition to publications) and the interview assignment (in which one evaluation response and questions asked by a few students in class reflected dissatisfaction that more questions on the interview template were not devoted to research methods and fewer to the subject's professional and publishing activities). A more concerted effort to clarify the objectives of the scholarly-practice component of the course—namely, to develop an understanding of how scholars' activities inform publication patterns and of the benefits to students aspiring to humanities-related careers—may be needed.

Two factors may have contributed to the negative responses, mainly from the 2009 class, to the session on rare books and archival collections. One was the number of students who were not majoring or minoring in the humanities. Another was the wide range of skill levels mentioned previously and a similarly wide range of exposure to and attitudes towards primary sources and historical research. Some humanities majors seemed curiously unfamiliar with the concept of primary sources or with the specific types of source materials important in their field. Others had been introduced to primary sources in several of their courses but reported that their professors had never given them practical advice on how to analyze the source materials with which they were asked to work. Non-humanities majors generally expressed appreciation for the exposure the course gave them to resources and related research tools that they previously had not had occasion to use. Yet others, despite the instructors' best efforts, remained unconvinced of the relevance of historical research ("the session in the Rare Books collection [was] interesting, [but] the area doesn't really apply to the modern university student in the research process"). A more deliberate effort to explain the role of primary sources in humanities scholarship and ways new knowledge of the past impacts the present may be needed.

In course evaluations, students consistently rated sessions on multi-disciplinary databases as "least valuable." Students said they were already familiar with them. Accordingly, in 2010, the course presented reduced coverage.

When asked in evaluations what problems they perceived with the course, non-humanities majors in both 2009 and 2010 mentioned difficulties adjusting to the humanities-related content and assignment requirements. The course, in fact, attracted a significant number of science and social science majors, a development the instructors had neglected to consider in their planning of the course. Faced with an inaugural class almost evenly divided between humanities and non-humanities majors, the instructors responded by adapting assignments, for instance, by accepting a science-related research topic as long as it incorporated some aspect of the humanities (ethics, history, relation to

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literature or the arts, etc.) and by revising lesson plans to devote more time to interdisciplinary connections between the sciences and the humanities, comparison of American Psychological Association (APA) and Modern Language Association (MLA) citation styles, and differences in the scholarly literature (structure of journal articles, methodologies, etc.). Nonetheless, the limitations of this approach became apparent in instances when students had difficulty locating sufficient material relevant to their topics when the type of resource they were required to use was more distinctive to the humanities (primary sources, critical reception, humanities-related bibliographic databases) and when search terms carried different connotations in various disciplines (for instance, when "archives" used as a search term for a social sciences-related topic retrieved journal back issues but no rare books or special collections). Given the resources covered in the course, it may be necessary either to narrow topic-selection criteria to a more exclusively humanities focus or to give non-humanities majors closer guidance on topic selection.

Additional problems were cited by evaluation respondents in the course's inaugural semester. They noted that lectures tended to run overtime—an issue precipitated by the challenge of coordinating the material of four co-instructors. Despite the use of collaborative tools such as Google Docs in lesson planning, redundancies crept into lectures when two or three instructors took turns during one class period; there were instances when two instructors chose the same student's topic on which to base their demonstrations of search strategies or touched upon the same general principles while addressing their own subject specialty. More careful coordination would have made more efficient use of class time to address more students' interests. This became easier in 2010 when the number of co-instructors decreased to two.

Students in 2009 asked for more in-class time devoted to hands-on practice and one-on-one coaching. Accordingly in 2010, the instructors scheduled 10 minutes of free time at the end of each class period for that purpose.

The 2009 class also expressed confusion regarding the design of the final project. The instructors had structured the course so that one class period was devoted to each type of resource required in the final annotated bibliography, and blog postings were designed to allow students to prepare a MLA citation and notes for an annotation for each resource they found. Nonetheless, when the time came to compile data from their blog postings into their bibliography, students had many questions regarding which of their resources belonged under which heading in the bibliography template. In 2010, the instructors supplied additional cues by including the related class session dates and topics in the template headings. More attention may also need to be paid in class lectures and course materials to defining the various types of resources more precisely.

Evaluation respondents in the course's second iteration reported nearly unanimously that they had no problems with the course. (The one exception was a non-humanities major referred to previously.) This suggests that the instructors were largely successful in correcting the design flaws uncovered in the course's inaugural semester, or it may simply reflect demographic differences: The majority of students in 2010 were seniors and had benefited from prior bibliographic

instruction provided by the English and history departments. The next step needed for improving the course is the application of a formal assessment methodology capable of isolating the effects of these and other factors.

Asked to comment in evaluations on the use of technology, students in both iterations of the course had positive things to say about the blog postings ("It made me keep up with my annotated bibliography assignment, instead of putting it off, … [and] also made me more aware of what my classmates were doing in terms of their research projects"). Students in both years also remarked that the instructors appeared sufficiently adept in the use of the technology. Students in 2009 expressed dissatisfaction, both in the course evaluation and in class, with the number of places they had to go for their course materials: the blog for course content and their bi-weekly postings; Google Docs for submitting their other assignments; Blackboard (the course-management system then used by the university) for their grades. For the second iteration of the course in 2010, the instructors chose the wiki-based LibGuide software, which offers significant versatility, to create an online course guide that both contained the course content and served as a single portal for all the course's online applications. Student response was positive ("I liked how the course information, examples, blog and syllabus were all online and could be easily accessed through a website").

CONCLUSION

Since its inception, LIB250 has been taught once per academic year, unlike the other advanced information literacy courses in the social sciences and business, which have been taught each semester due to high student demand. A planned advanced information literacy course devoted to history research methods may impact the number of history students who choose to enroll in the humanities course. In fall 2010, Wake Forest migrated from Blackboard to Sakai for its course management system; this will necessitate learning new software and integrating it into the syllabus for future iterations of LIB250. Finally, due to the departure of one of the original four instructors, as well as changes in staffing needs at the LIB100 level, the course is currently taught by two co-instructors on a rotating basis.

Although the planning and teaching of this advanced course presented challenges in terms of time commitment and the balancing of other job responsibilities (cataloging, rare books curating, collection development), the instructors welcomed the opportunity to create a course that would draw on their research areas and life interests. The instructors have enjoyed sharing these passions with students and hope that this course experience has enriched their appreciation of, and aspirations in, humanistic pursuits.

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