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Conference Report: 5th Annual Georgia Conference on Information Literacy

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Communications in
INFORMATION LITERACY

5TH ANNUAL GEORGIA CONFERENCE ON INFORMATION LITERACY [CONFERENCE REPORT]

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The 5th annual Georgia Conference on Information Literacy took place in Savannah, Georgia on October 3-4, 2008. Since its inception, this conference has drawn participants from across the United States and even a few from abroad. Jointly sponsored by the Zach S. Henderson Library, the Department of Writing and Linguistics, the College of Education, and the Center for Continuing Education at Georgia Southern University, the conference offers both theoretical and practical discussions of the complex issues involved in teaching students how to find, interpret and use information in emerging electronic technologies against the backdrop of one of America's loveliest cities.

BOTH K-12 AND HIGHER EDUCATION

This conference is designed to address the issue of information literacy in both K-12 and higher education settings. In fall 2008, 78 percent of the presentations were targeted toward audiences in higher education and about 22 percent to K-12 audiences. Several presentations, that of Linda Williams (Berrien High) and Jennifer M. Peper (Savannah College of Art and Design) and that of Linda Moore, Carol Hulse (U of W. Florida), and Nancy Collins (Pensacola Catholic High), specifically discussed helping students make the transition from K-12 to college.

VARIETY OF PARTICIPANTS

Participants in this conference represent a wide variety of professions that have a stake in information literacy. One of the benefits that participants have consistently praised about the conference is the opportunity it offers to discuss information literacy issues with those in other fields. Participants in the 2008 conference included librarians, media specialists, information technologists, K-12 teachers, writing center directors, writing teachers, and classroom faculty from a variety of disciplines;

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among those represented were English, history, mathematics, media studies, political science, sociology, foreign languages, nursing, art and design, and architecture.

THE SCOPE OF INFORMATION LITERACY

An important theme of the conference involved defining the conceptual geography of information literacy. For example, Tamara Shue and Beverly Santillo (Georgia Perimeter College) described how an introduction to information literacy needs to take into account the different needs of the many academic disciplines, while Marcia Ribble (U Cincinnati) discussed the role of media literacies in composition courses. Similarly, Rebecca Fleming (Charles Ellis Montessori Academy) considered the role of reader-response blogs to aid in critical reading. These presentations, and others, helped underline the widening scope of issues that fall under the umbrella of information literacy studies.

HOW TO TEACH INFORMATION LITERACY

The majority of the presentations offered specific, practical ideas for teaching information literacy skills to students. Lisa Nichols and Chris Du Rocher (Morehead State U) presented on assigning historic identities to students and having them do historical research in order to write in those voices. Susanna Coleman (Auburn U Montgomery) demonstrated how to make use of shortcuts in current communications technology that students already employ in order to train them in how to do effective online searching.

Some presenters discussed their opinions of specific information resources – good, bad, or mixed: for example, Joan Ellen Broome (Georgia Southern U) on Wikipedia; and Rebecca Amerson (Cherokee County Schools, Ga.) on primary sources available online from the Library of Congress. Megan Kelly (U Washington) and Paul Glassman (Long Island U), among others, discussed the design of physical space, and how to transform it into a functional learning environment.

PARTNERSHIPS

Another major theme of the conference was partnerships between librarians and classroom faculty to teach information literacy. Linda Colding and Stephen O'Connell (U Central Florida) described collaborations between the library and freshmen college orientation courses, as did Louise Ericson, Brenda Davenport, and Andrew Kearns (U South Carolina Upstate). Other such presentations showed cooperative efforts between librarians and classroom faculty in a wide variety of disciplines, including (among many others) the presentation of Mangala Krishnamurthy (U Alabama) on a collaboration between the library and the school of nursing, and the presentations of Alessia Zanin-Yost, Candace Roberts, and Jane Nichols (Western Carolina U) on a collaboration between the library and a course in Interior Design.

TOOLS

Several presentations were focused on different tools that facilitate education in information literacy. LiLi Li (Georgia Southern U) explained emerging technologies that are changing the face of information literacy instruction and needs, as did Ionut Emil Iacob (Georgia Southern U) and Kevin Kiernan (U. of Kentucky), who introduced an image-based XML tool that can aid humanities scholars in projects and research. Jeanette LaGamba demonstrated how contemporary cinema can be used to facilitate a critical awareness of information literacy, while Leecy Barnett, Charles Kuhn and Susan Montgomery (Lynn U) showed the utility of LibGuides to facilitate student research. Anthony Atkins and his students Amanda Cosgrove and Sarah McCone (U North Carolina Charlotte) presented on how their class used Web 2.0, reinforcing the notion for attendees that keeping informed about new tools is necessary in the changing landscape of information storage, retrieval, and delivery.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND PLAGIARISM

Legal dimensions of information literacy were

also explored, particularly in the keynote address by Carol Simpson, EdD. and JD, who discussed the changing nature of the rules governing fair use of intellectual property. This was a cutting-edge presentation informed by Dr. Simpson's current legal work as well as her educational experience. In addition to the keynote address, there were several presentations addressing plagiarism; one workshop directed by Donna Gunter (U North Carolina Charlotte) engaged participants in "a lively discussion about plagiarism" that included the controversy over plagiarism-detection programs like Turnitin.com. A related presentation by David Yates (U Maryland) addressed educating students in basic copyright law.

Space does not permit us to mention all of the many excellent and thought-provoking presentations that were given at the Georgia Information Literacy Conference in 2008. The program, listing the presentations with a short abstract of each one, is available online: http://ceps.georgiasouthern.edu/conted/infolitprogram08WEB.pdf. Information about the upcoming 2009 conference, together with the call for proposals, is at http://ceps.georgiasouthern.edu/conted/infolit.html.