Chapter 31

Wheaton College

Equipping Lifelong Learners

Joshua M. Avery and Cathy Troupos

Population Served

Wheaton College is a Christian, liberal arts institution located in the western suburbs of Chicago with an undergraduate population of 2,400 students, 89 percent of whom live on campus. The college maintains a robust focus on undergraduate teaching with an undergraduate-faculty ratio of eleven to one. Undergraduates have a strong academic profile with an average SAT score 300+ points above the national mean and, nearly 5 percent are National Merit Scholars. The college offers around forty undergraduate programs in the liberal arts and sciences, with a strong emphasis on the integration of faith and scholarship.

Program Scope

The current information literacy (IL) program at Wheaton College began in 2016 when the college initiated a new general education curriculum, moving toward a distribution model that would incorporate course-level, embedded information literacy instruction. Prior to this, information literacy had been a part of the undergraduate curriculum, although instruction did not reach all students equally. First-year writing students attended a one-shot session and took an online library skills test as part of their coursework; however, some students tested out of this course. Students completed another library assignment as part of a required Biblical studies and theology class, but instruction was specific to the assignment and did not focus on broader information literacy concepts. Subject liaison librarians visited classes by faculty request; some departments had more active engagement with the library than others.
When the college began planning for the new general education core, the library seized the opportunity and advocated strongly for the place of information literacy within the curriculum. Through persistent effort and strategic planning, information literacy changed from informal, disconnected activities to a fully embedded program based on the six threshold concepts of the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. The four components of the IL program were implemented over a student's four years of study and are

- **First-Year Seminar (FYS):** Students take an online, interactive tutorial within the FYS course in the learning management system (LMS), Schoology. This tutorial introduces students to the foundations of academic research, including the research cycle, types of information, the peer-review process, and citation basics, as well as the library website, the catalog, and interlibrary loan. The grades are recorded in the LMS, and students must achieve at least 70 percent to pass. All first-year and transfer students take FYS during their first semesters at the college.

- **Advanced Integrative Seminar (AIS):** Students take an online, interactive tutorial within the AIS course in the LMS. This tutorial builds on the FYS tutorial and deepens understanding of the scholarly conversation, academic disciplines, database searching, synthesizing sources, and integrating faith into research. The grades are recorded in the LMS, and students must achieve at least 70 percent to pass. AIS is a required course under the new curriculum and is generally taken in a student's sophomore or junior year.

- **Course in the Major (CIM):** Subject liaison librarians present discipline-specific research strategies and resources within a departmentally designated, research-based CIM. As part of the general education core, each CIM is identified in collaboration with the subject liaison librarian, the department chair, and the Dean of Library and Archives. The students apply what they learn to a research-based project for the course. Instruction for most courses takes place face-to-face.

- **Capstone:** Students attend a workshop focused on research beyond Wheaton College. There are two tracks: one for those entering the professional world and one for those continuing their academic careers. For profession-bound students, participants learn how to transfer their “research skills” to “information skills” that are necessary in the workplace. For those going on to graduate school, the discussion centers on academic publishing. All students take a capstone course within their majors; most take it during their senior year.

**Operations**

There are nine library faculty at Buswell Library at Wheaton College, all of whom report to the Dean of Library and Archives. In addition to working within a major group within the library (Special Collections, Operations, Teaching and Outreach, and Resource Description and Digital Initiatives), each member of the library faculty serves as a subject liaison librarian with responsibility for various duties, including instruction and collection development for their assigned subject area. The Teaching and Outreach Group is comprised of four library faculty and is responsible for leadership and oversight of all library assessment, instruction, outreach, and reference. The Teaching and Outreach Group also organizes a variety of workshops throughout the year, focusing on bibliographic technologies (e.g.,
reference management software) or specific research skills that would typically fall outside the scope of either a one-shot session or the formal IL curriculum. Marketing is done through campus email discussion lists and on social media, with details and reservations managed through the LibCal booking platform.

Within this group, the instruction librarian coordinates IL program. Additionally, the instruction librarian develops new elements (such as the capstone workshop), creates and maintains online tutorials for the FYS and AIS, tracks statistics, and serves as the formal liaison between the library and the Dean of Curriculum and Advising, who is responsible for the general education core.

The subject liaison librarians utilize a variety of tools for scheduling and recording instruction data. A LibGuide serves as a central point of information for librarians about their liaison responsibilities, including instruction. Teaching schedules are tracked through a shared Outlook calendar, which allows for communication of schedules and general oversight by the instruction librarian. After all instruction sessions, librarians enter session data (e.g., attendance, course number, department, etc.) into a Google Form; the instruction librarian maintains the form and uses this data to monitor and assess departmental compliance with the CIM portion of the IL program.

Assessment

Tutorial data is also important in capturing compliance with the plan and student progress. After several semesters of trial and error, the most effective method of inserting the tutorial into the courses and tracking the data has been to add the instruction librarian as an administrator of each FYS and AIS course in the LMS. This method ensures that the tutorials are loaded correctly and that the instruction librarian has easy access to student grades and rates of completion. In addition, student issues are filtered directly to the instruction librarian, who can then access the students’ tutorial attempts. Since the tutorials have launched, compliance with the requirements has been very high, and the vast majority of students pass. Should the data indicate a change in compliance or completion rates, the tutorials will need to be revisited.

Because the IL program is part of the general education core curriculum for the college, the final responsibility for assessment of the plan resides in the Office of the Dean of Curriculum and Advising. Unfortunately, the Dean of Curriculum and Advising does not currently provide robust assessment of information literacy outcomes, and the library is not able to collect assessment data or feedback. However, the library does assess instruction informally. Subject liaison librarians voluntarily participate in a peer-teaching scheme that pairs up librarians for feedback throughout the academic year; many librarians distribute evaluation forms to students or use pre- and posttests during their instruction sessions. Additionally, course faculty have an opportunity to give feedback to subject liaison librarians after each instructional session.

Collaboration

We feel very fortunate to have a robust IL program embedded into the general education curriculum that is supported by the administration; however, because the program is a
part of the curriculum, oversight by library faculty is limited and largely falls to the Office of the Dean of Curriculum and Advising. In practice this means that, on occasion, required components of the IL program are left out of course planning by general education teaching faculty. Teaching faculty are generally supportive of the library, yet in the midst of other requirements from their departments or the college, IL can fall between the cracks. As expected, there are constant and ongoing changes—new chairs of departments do not know the IL program; a major suddenly changes course requirements, and the designated CIM is eliminated; each semester, different faculty teach FYS and AIS courses, and most are unfamiliar with the format, content, and administration of the tutorials. Therefore, in the absence of oversight from the dean or department chair, there is a continual need for subject liaison librarians to monitor the IL program and educate teaching faculty about their need to participate and integrate these elements into their classes. While we could simply inform our teaching faculty colleagues that these elements are required, we strive to go beyond these types of interactions and educate faculty on the vision of the plan and the benefit to students. Our hope is that faculty then will help to educate students on its importance when incorporating the IL program into their curricular planning.

Changes within the library also affect the program. There are frequent changes to the website, resources, and processes at Buswell Library, any of which can cause the tutorials to fall out-of-date. Not a semester goes by where the instruction librarian does not need to make updates; sometimes, the changes are minor—a tweak to one slide or an additional set of instructions for students—but sometimes the changes are significant, such as when all interactive components needed to be updated to reflect a website redesign. Revising and testing tutorials, embedding them in the LMS courses, and communicating with faculty takes significant time for the instruction librarian.

In addition, since the tutorials are preloaded into the courses, they cannot be updated during the semester. Timing for website updates, then, is crucial, and changes that affect the tutorials can take place only during semester breaks. Communication between the library’s website developer and the instruction librarian is important in maintaining the tutorials.

Many of these challenges are, in great measure, a result of the newness of the general education curriculum. As the curriculum (and the IL program) become more familiar to the teaching faculty, we expect greater understanding and compliance with the IL program. We are well aware that the ongoing success of this plan largely depends on the support we receive from both the Dean of Library and Archives and the Dean of Curriculum and Advising.

**Role of the One-Shot**

While not a formal component of our IL curriculum, one-shot instruction is an important dynamic in helping to inform students of what the library offers, especially as it relates to a particular course. One-shot instruction, like CIM instruction, is provided by subject liaison librarians in communication with departmental faculty. There is no formal oversight or assessment of one-shot instruction. One-shot instructional sessions tend to be tailored specifically to the courses or disciplines in which they are delivered, and the IL curriculum is largely related to developing information literacy skills that are not confined to disciplinary boundaries.
Marketing for one-shot sessions is largely the responsibility of individual subject librarians, with materials and resources provided by the librarian for outreach and promotion. Subject liaison librarians are encouraged to develop relationships with subject faculty, maintain awareness of faculty research priorities and interests, and regularly communicate with faculty. These efforts allow librarians to create opportunities for one-shot instruction session invitations.

Pedagogical Highlights

**FYS and AIS Tutorials**

Both the FYS and AIS tutorials are embedded in LMS courses. The tutorials were developed using Articulate Storyline, an interactive course-creation software, and take around one hour to complete.

The FYS tutorial gives an overview of the research process based on a scenario that students are likely to encounter at Wheaton College—a study-abroad opportunity (see figure 31.1). This is not an academic research topic though the tutorial does utilize library resources to address the research question. Students go through the research process (information need, search, evaluate and reflect, and refine) while interacting with the library website and tools. They learn about library-based resources, such as interlibrary loan and research guides. The tutorial covers search strategies, introduces basic citation practices, and discusses ways to prevent plagiarism.

![Figure 31.1](image-url)

The scenario from the FYS tutorial (Nancy Falciani-White, “‘Into All the World’ Library Tutorial Fall 2018 | Schoology,”)
Integration of the tutorials within the FYS courses varies. Anecdotal evidence from students and faculty suggests that, while some faculty simply present the tutorial as a required component of the course, others contextualize and discuss how information literacy is a crucial component of the students’ intellectual lives. Our hope is that all faculty would engage with the content so students could understand its importance rather than see it simply as an assignment to check off the list.

For most students, the tutorial is their initial interaction with the library as they must take it within the first half of their first semester at the college. The seminar is perhaps not the best place in which to situate the tutorials since the course does not include a research project, but the timing is ideal in ensuring students receive accurate foundational information about the library soon after they arrive.

The AIS tutorial goes more deeply into the topic of the scholarly conversation; students learn the unique perspectives of different academic disciplines. Since the AIS courses are designed to examine topics from interdisciplinary perspectives, in the tutorial, students probe one particular research question—How does access to clean water impact education?—through multiple lenses. In addition to exploring the topic from standard disciplinary viewpoints, students also learn skills, strategies, and resources to develop an informed Christian perspective on a topic, namely by exploring resources relating to research of scripture, theological scholarship, and tradition (see figure 31.2). While taking the tutorial, students explore the ATLA Religion Database, which includes biblical and theological scholarship; in addition, the tutorial presents various types of commentaries, dictionaries, and encyclopedias that shed light on the cultural, textual, and historical issues present in scripture that can help students understand how, for instance, a biblical

![Figure 31.2](image)

*Introduction to the Faith and Learning portion of the AIS tutorial (Nancy Falciani-White, “AIS Faith and Learning Tutorial Fall 2018 | Schoology.”)*
concept of justice can relate to the global water crisis today. The tutorial also discusses how to organize and synthesize sources. Students apply the learning from this tutorial to a research project for the course that must integrate interdisciplinary research.

**Course in the Major (CIM)**

Each CIM was selected by the academic department offering that particular major in collaboration with the subject liaison librarian, the department chair, and the Dean of Library and Archives. Within each department, the designated course is one that is required for all majors and includes a major research component tied to the research methods of the discipline. Prior to the new curriculum, some departments, such as English, already included IL sessions at several points. For other departments, such as mathematics, the CIM broke new ground in including a required library element. Most departments were willing to work with the library in implementing this new component, but some that had little interaction prior with the library were resistant. Similarly, some departments could easily identify courses that are a good fit for collaboration with the library in that there is a required course that focused on discipline-specific research; for other departments, major requirements are more flexible, and at times, multiple courses are identified to ensure that all students were exposed to discipline-specific library instruction.

Knowing the students have taken the FYS tutorial and learned basic concepts and skills before entering the CIM frees the subject liaison librarian to focus on more advanced concepts and resources related to a particular discipline. While the CIM content and outcomes are developed by the subject liaison librarian in collaboration with the teaching faculty, librarians are encouraged to utilize the theme of the information landscape, which we define as the shared resources and tools that help people discover and use information in a particular context. This theme exposes students to a wider context of information than they may need for the immediate project but gives a deeper understanding of what research is within the discipline. While the shared theme is encouraged, subject liaison librarians are free to tailor their CIM instruction to content most appropriate for the discipline and research project of the individual course. This results in a wide variety of approaches to CIM instruction; below are a few examples.

The instruction for English courses begins with a discussion about the information landscape of literary scholarship (see figure 31.3). Students encounter this course early in their major coursework; the theme of learning how to research like a literary scholar plays well with the overall purpose of the course, which the course catalog describes as an introduction “to terms and techniques of literary analysis, important questions within the discipline, and the research process.” As each feature of the landscape is explored, the class discusses the kind of sources found in that category and how a literary scholar may use those to inform their work. For example, students are encouraged to enlarge their view of primary texts to not just the novels, poems, plays, and stories they are studying, but also to include manuscripts, journals, maps, and any other sources that a literary scholar might use to illuminate those texts. While students most likely will not turn to an archive or special collection while researching their own topics for this introductory course, discussing the role that archival material plays in literary scholarship may help them better understand the scholarship that they encounter in their research.
Other CIMs use a presession online element. The CIM designed by the biology liaison librarian uses a Guide on the Side tutorial to teach students about research in the sciences as they explore the database Web of Science. As they search the database, the tutorial prompts students to reflect on their experiences (see figure 31.4). Students answer

**Figure 31.3**
An overview of the English literature information landscape

**Figure 31.4**
Guide on the Side tutorial for the biology CIM (Terry Huttenlock, “BIO252—Explore Web of Science.”)
questions such as What worked? What didn’t work? What would you do differently next time? The tutorial also instructs the students in how to download and use the reference management software Zotero in preparation for their group projects. The results of the tutorial are reviewed and graded by the subject liaison librarian. While the presession tutorial could stand alone as a learning tool, the librarian does a follow-up session in which the class has more time to focus on problem areas and questions revealed by the tutorial.

Another variation of instruction occurs within Survey of Twentieth Century Music, the CIM for students majoring in music. There is no in-class session for that course; rather, the music liaison librarian meets with the students individually for a reference/instruction session after the students have chosen their topics. This model is perhaps not sustainable for all CIMs, but it has created an inroad for instruction where there was none before; as music faculty increasingly see value, there will be more opportunities for formal instruction.

**Capstone**

The final component of the IL program is integrated within the capstone courses for each major. This was perhaps the biggest challenge in developing the program—How to create an engaging library session for seniors who have one foot out the door? The answer was to focus on that next step—research beyond Wheaton College. Two workshops were developed that are offered several times throughout the semester; students are required to attend one as part of their capstone course.

Since the majority of students head to the professional world upon graduation, the first workshop developed focused on information in the workplace. Wheaton College students largely prove themselves to be competent academic researchers by graduation; however, research shows that, in general, new graduates are not transferring these skills to their jobs, proving their research skills to be “inadequate.” The challenge was then to help students navigate this gap in a seventy-five-minute session. The concept of the information landscape proved helpful in addressing this need. The session is structured as follows:

- Students first discuss what they already know as the class develops the information landscape for college research.
- The instructor then discusses the skills that new graduates lack according to employers and how the concept of an information landscape could help address these skills.7
- Students then form small groups; each group watches an online interactive module based on interviews with recent alumni. At the end of the module, the group is presented with a scenario in which they must develop and present an information landscape that could help them address a workplace issue.

For those going onto graduate school, the workshop is designed to enlarge understanding of the world of scholarly communication and academic publishing. This workshop draws heavily on the concepts of critical information literacy. The session looks as follows:

- Students first discuss what they know as they sketch out and discuss the peer-review process.
- The instructor then shows how this process fits into the wider context of academic publishing.
- Students watch brief videos of Wheaton College faculty discussing how publishing and access affect research in their own fields.
• Students then work in groups on scenarios in which they must find appropriate venues to disseminate research.

These workshops are not intended to teach everything students need to know upon graduation in one session; rather, they seek to expose students to the idea of an information context and encourage them to think about their own participation in those settings.

What We Wish People Knew

Embedding an information literacy program within the general education curriculum is rewarding; however, it is not always straightforward. Developing and maintaining a program requires many skills and expertise, including the ability to design instruction and assessment, collaborate with and persuade key campus partners, and organize and administer the plan elements. Most of all, maintaining and improving the program requires flexibility. The program components are tied to many different courses and require the cooperation of many faculty; while there is general support for the plan, changes are constant, and the plan needs to be flexible in adapting the components to match the standards of the campus. Having college-wide support for the plan is encouraging; ensuring its success requires a committed, engaged, and flexible team.

Notes


Bibliography


