Information Literacy Assessment with Art History Classes at Framingham State College

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Collaboration and Alliances

• I had a good relationship with the art department in the past, having done numerous traditional library instruction sections for them.

• My subject background in this field made for a natural alliance with the art historians.

• Thus, with the connections in place, I thought this would be a good place for me to start when trying to implement an information literacy assessment component to a course.
Courses for Collaboration

- Worked with two different professors who taught advanced courses in art history.
- A seminar on “Women in Art” (approx. 15 students)
- A course on “Baroque Art” (approx. 30 students)
- A seminar on Japonisme (approx. 11 students)
- Included students of varying levels of research experience in art history.
- The goal in my choosing these particular courses was to determine how much students really knew about advanced research in art history.
Information Literacy Assessment

- Fifteen minutes on the first day of the course was devoted to the questionnaire or pre-test.
- I went to the professor’s classroom to administer the pre-test, and she introduced me as the librarian with “the expertise” in this subject area.
- The pre-test was distributed and required of all students in each class.
- The beginning of the questionnaire asked about the student’s educational level and research experience.
Information Literacy Assessment Cont.

• The main questions were asked about searching the online catalogue, as well as searching and reading citations in subject specific databases such as Art Index or Art and Architecture Complete, and utilizing inter-library-loan.
• Screen shots were employed to see if the students recognized these research tools.
• The “tests” were evaluated by myself as well as by the professor. We then discussed what we saw as common problems.
• It turned out that very few students missed less than three questions.
• The “tests” were returned to the students, marked but ungraded.
The Library Instruction Session

• The pre-tests were used by me to gage what points needed to be highlighted in the library instruction session.

• Trouble points found were emphasized in the instruction session. included:
  1. Thinking Google was the best place to find scholarly articles.
  2. Not knowing how to read a citation in Art Index through FirstSearch (now we have Art and Architecture Complete)
  3. Not knowing about interlibrary loan (the in-house online form as well as the form online through FirstSearch).
  4. Not recognizing a book or a journal citation as being from the catalogue or from an online database.

• Lastly, I encouraged the class to come to me for help after they had started their research.
Librarian Involvement in the Course over the Semester

• I did have a number of students ask for individual help during the course of the semester. The fact that they had seen me twice before, demonstrated my commitment to them and to the course material.

• At the end of the semester, I sat in on some oral presentations in the seminar.

• I also looked at some of the bibliographies for the research papers, to examine what sources the students ended up using.
Post-Library Skills Assessment

- During the last days of the course, I distributed a post assessment questionnaire (or post-test).
- This post-test asked many of the same questions concerning as in the pre-test.
- But this time, students were asked to give their opinion about whether the library instruction session enhanced their ability to do research effectively.
- Most of the students believed that the library instruction had helped them, and that the librarian had been helpful and obliging.
Post-Library Skills Assessment Cont.

• Also, something that needs to be emphasized for a project like this, is that enough time needs to be given to students to work on the post-assessment and a seriousness towards doing this assessment must be emphasized.

• At the end of the semester, students tend to look at an assessment like this as an unnecessary, additional thing to do, and support from the professor regarding the time and the content is crucial.
Conclusion

- This assessment project was a good experience. However, it has been difficult to continue because of:
  - The retirement of one of the professors
  - The subsequent hiring of new faculty
  - The other professor’s not doing upper level classes, and then going on a sabbatical.
  - The most challenging thing about a subject focused assessment project such as this, is getting the faculty on board in the collaboration process and having them give you the extra time you need to make the project work.