

Information Literacy: the Long View

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Two Plots, One Story

Plot 1: How we have been / are approaching information literacy and information literacy assessment at UConn & UCL

1. Grand over-views: Project SAILS & iSkills trials
2. Focusing on a key program: InfoLit & Freshman English

Plot 2: Hoorah! We won!

Can we move on now?

1. What's missing?
2. What would "real" assessment look like?
3. Time to let go of "information literacy"?

UConn & InfoLit: institutionalization

In May 2003 the University Senate approved the General Education Guidelines, which included requirements, competencies, and principles.



The competencies are

- computer technology
- writing
- quantitative skills
- second language proficiency
- “and information literacy”

UConn & InfoLit: getting it on paper

GEOC competencies “all” have 2 parts:

- Entry-level expectations
- Graduation expectations

Of note:

“It is unreasonable to place the institutional responsibility for developing these competencies solely on individual courses. Therefore, a plan has been developed to enrich the instructional environment through the development of a Learning Center, a place where students can come for asynchronous learning supported by tutors, advisors, teaching assistants, peer preceptors and faculty, as well as through the use of technology.”

UConn & InfoLit: the fine print

Information Literacy is the only Gen Ed competency with no entry expectations.

Exit expectations are essentially the ACRL standards and are to be developed

1. At a basic level with incoming students (FE)

“Basic information literacy will be taught to all freshman as an integral part of ENGL 1010/1011.”

2. At an advanced level by way of departmental requirements (approved at School/College level)

“The subject area specialists at the University Libraries will provide support.”

UCL & Information Literacy

Like many, began bibliographic instruction intensely in the 1990's: subject-based and general (1st year composition)

- Supported by large liaison/reference area in library, who staffed the ref desk, held consultations, and taught classes

Early 2000's saw increased focus on/expansion in work with Freshman English (FE) program

- By 2005, “all” FE classes were offered librarian-led sessions (at the height, this was up to 90+ sessions during fall semester)
- Supported by some liaisons and an increasing pool of “instruction librarians” and part-time staff

The IL Core: Freshman English

Increasing emphasis on

- Principles over button-pushing (“scholarly conversations”)
- Integration of library visits with specific assignments
- Collaboration between TA’s and librarians
- Assignments other than research papers
- Experiential/hands-on learning
- Less is more
- Online instruction: LibGuides, video, podcasts, etc.



Where We've Been



UConn & InfoLit: Assessment

In the mid 2000's, UConn took part in two “big” assessments, run without or without Libraries

- Project SAILS (2004 & 2007)
- ETS-ICT trial (2006)



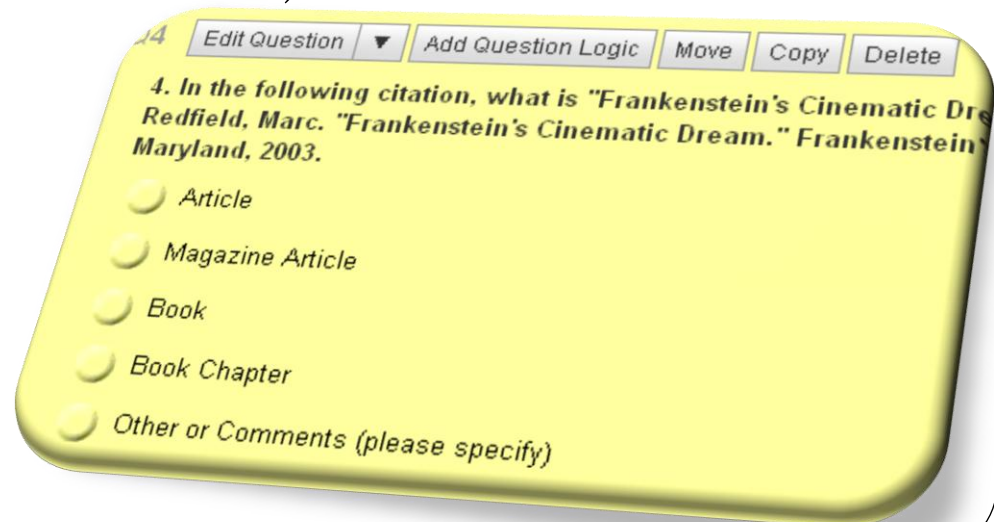
The results were informative, in the most general sense:

- On average UConn students performed about the same (\leq in '05, \geq in '07) as students at other participating institutions on both standards (ACRL) & skills
- 35% of students scored over 80th percentile on ECT (210/300 put one at 99th percentile, so...)

UCL & InfoLit assessment

At the Libraries level, information literacy assessment has focused on a core program: Freshman English

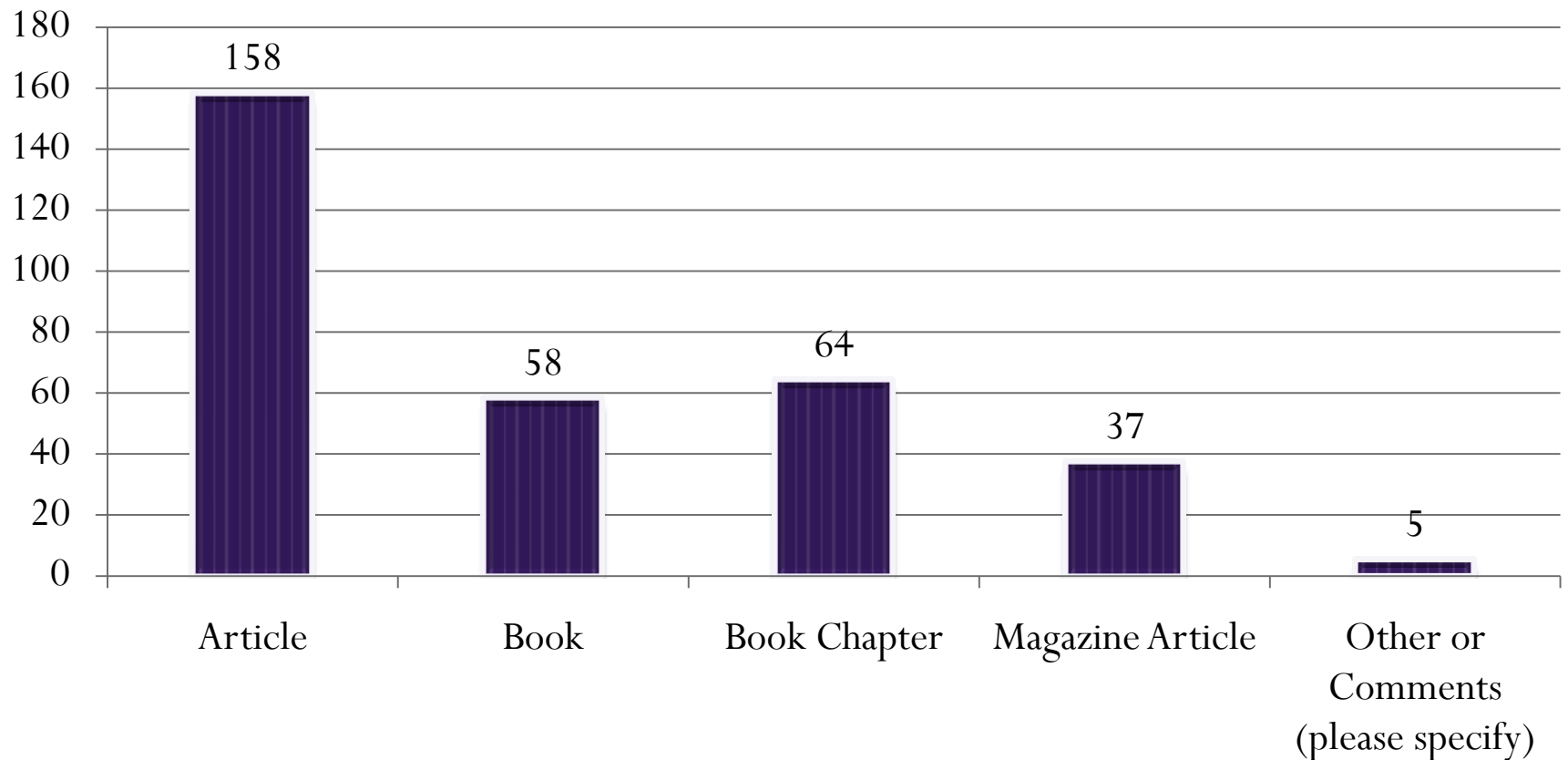
- In-session pre/post quizzes
- In-session exercises
- Surveys of TA satisfaction with sessions
- Semester pre/posts (paper → online)



Results of semester pretests

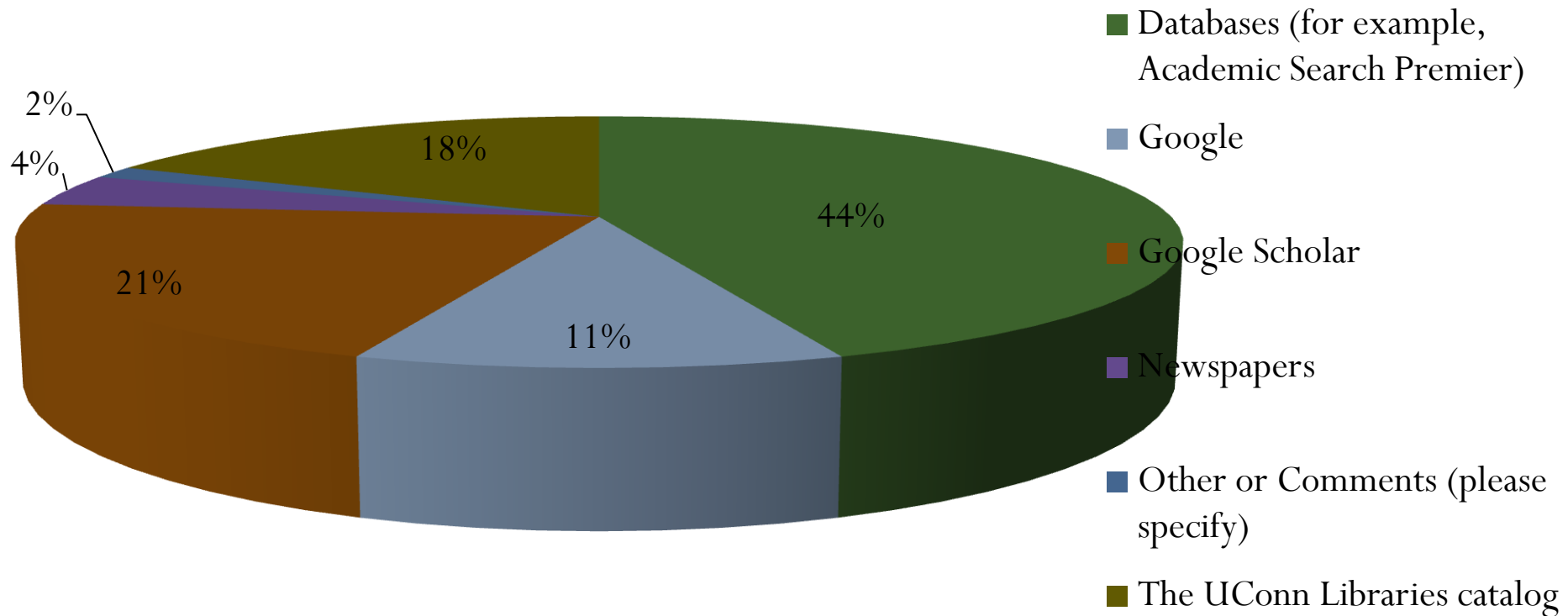
Citation identification still a problem

**Redfield, Marc. "Frankenstein's Cinematic Dream."
Frankenstein's Dream. College Park, MD: U of Maryland, 2003.**



They're also pretty clear on...

- What count as primary sources in research
- Where to go for scholarly journal articles on x

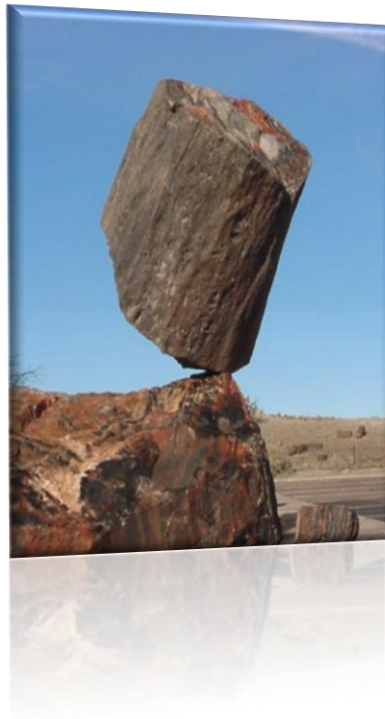


Pause for celebration, or...?

In 2009, just after reaching the highest # of classes taught/semester, we began the “Freshman English Transition”:

- Incoming Freshman English instructors (10-20) would be offered librarian-led sessions
- Experienced (2+ semesters) FE instructors would take on the library sessions themselves
- Librarians would continue as consultants and sources of supplementary material: LibGuides and such
- Pre-post tests (now online) would continue as means of keeping pulse on FE classes

Why?



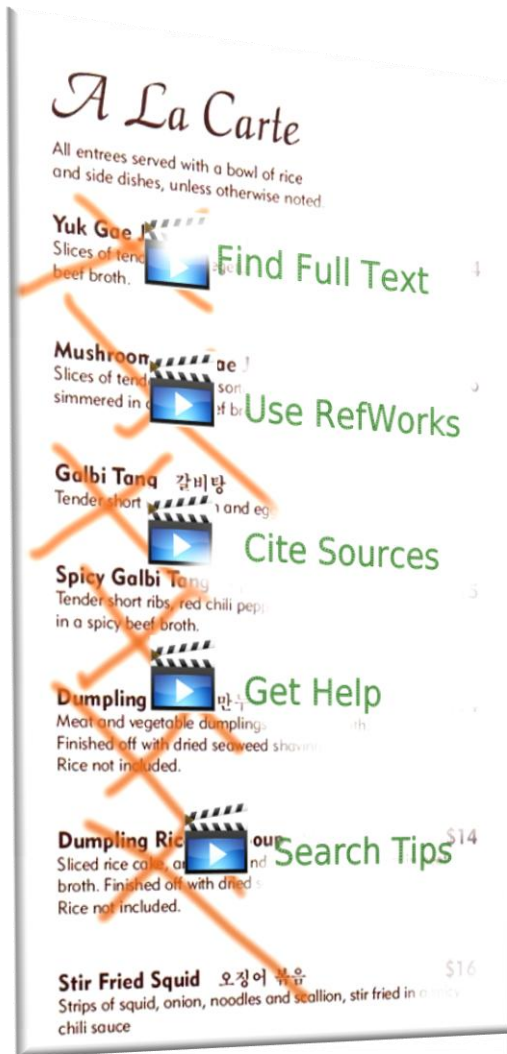
- Competing priorities
- The pedagogical plateau
- The balancing game:
 - exploration vs. exploitation (see Steven Bell)
- Instruction leaving the classroom
(reference as one-on-one instruction)
- Time to risk experiment while we have willing partners (FE)

Reassurance

- FE commitment grows rather than diminishes as we move forward
- The first semester we had fully made the “transition,” the # of FE classes dropped 25% (budget), but the use of the FE classroom in the library rose 14% and has remained at that level (i.e. they’re using the classroom more without us!)
- Informal and formal discussions with FE instructors tell us the transition is generally embraced, although there’s some sense of the need for a “hybrid” approach



Plans



- Intense effort toward online video content creation (summer 2011)
- Exploration of what “hybrid” might look like
 - Joint teaching?
 - Alternative teaching options?
 - Formal consultations?
 - Avatars or...?
- Continued assessment of both program and skills

So we just keep fine-tuning instruction?

(are we missing something?)

A “top 20” p.o.v.

Rosemary Green in “Information Illiteracy: Examining our Assumptions” (*JAL* 2010) writes:

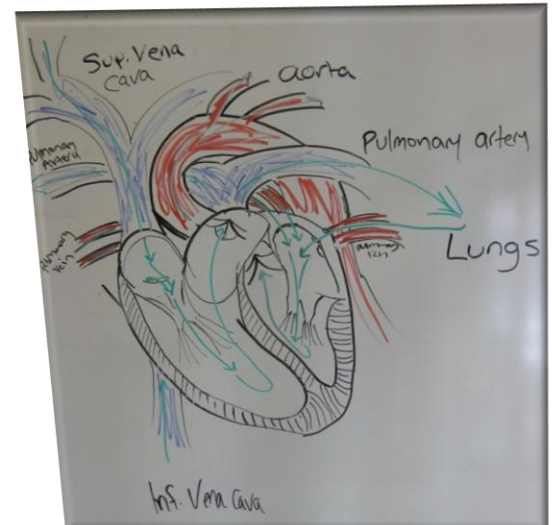
“The information literacy–information illiteracy dichotomy **oversimplifies and misinterprets learners' apparent absence from sites of information literacy instruction.**

Consequently, evaluating our assumptions of who is and who is not information literate may be a difficult, but necessary, task.

Doing so requires, as Lloyd [2006] suggests, rethinking how we identify information literate people and understanding information literacy in **learners' own terms.**”

We (librarians) are still too much the heart of the matter

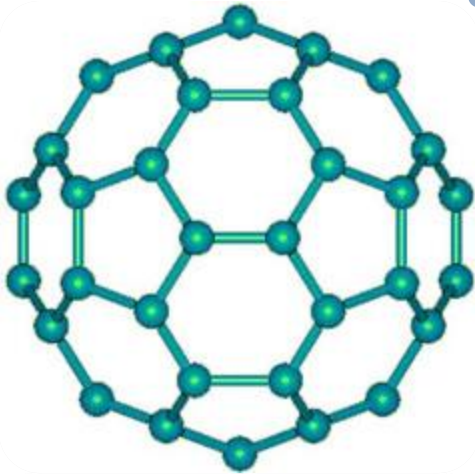
- It's hard to let go
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- It's especially hard to let go when we've spent 20-plus years to reach the point of celebration (exploitation)
- But we've got to consider that we've reached/are reaching the limits of what we can do in the classroom, whether we stand at the front of the room or not
- We need to find out how, where, why, when (and with whom) our students find information and try to fit the "academic" information cycle to that larger one...



...and that is “information literacy” (after all)...

What’s missing?

- Any systematic (and systemic) implementation and evaluation of information literacy at the University of Connecticut, which might (should?) include assessment of
 - Individual “IL” courses/assignments
 - IL “interventions” (online content, instruction, etc.)
 - How students’ proficiency grows (one hopes) across time
 - The interrelationship of the General Education competencies: why so many silos? (why so many “literacies”?)



And when it's time to let go, let's go!

- It may be that the “information literacy” wave has peaked
- After 25-ish years, how hard are we still working to “sell” the term to faculty? (& do we even bother with students?)
- Are we over-invested in a term because it's such a signifier of something we “won” as librarians? (*our standards...*)
- When we cling to “personal touch” as our *raison d'être*, have we stopped to ask whether “personal” is the same as f2f?
- If we leave the classroom, what might we have more time to do (that's equally or more effective, interesting, forward-looking, important, meaningful...)?

Where to next?





- Bell, Steven. (2010). “New Ideas for the New Year: From the Bell Tower.” *LibraryJournal.com*.
<http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/C6714960.html>
- Green, Rosemary. (2010). *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 36.4: 313–319.