Easing the High School to University/College Transition

Building Effective Programming to Bridge the Information Literacy Gap

Friday January 31, 2020

OLA Super Conference

Sophie Bury, Samhita Gupta, Sarah Shujah, and Christopher Tomasini

Guest speakers: Heather Buchansky and Shelagh Straughan
Learning Outcomes

1. Understanding the characteristics of students research skills as they transition from high school to post-secondary school.

2. To facilitate relationship building with educator counterparts using the language of the Framework and Together for Learning the Inquiry process, so that we can better support students in the transition from high school to university in regards to information literacy skills.

3. Explore best practices of teaching research skills for students transitioning from secondary to post-secondary school with librarians from each sector.

4. You will come away with strategies and approaches to designing an effective onboarding transition program for high school students and first year university/college students.
Agenda

1. Student Characteristics
2. Information Literacy (IL) Frameworks
3. Examples of IL Best Practices
4. Easing the Transition Redesign Workshop (30 minutes)
5. Presentations
6. Closing Remarks
Transitioning Students

What do we know about them?
Shout out

What do students transitioning from high school to post-secondary struggle with most when it comes to research?

Photo by Priscilla Du Preez on Unsplash
Key points from our interviews with students

- Research in high-school mainly based on internet (Google) searching
- Uncertainty about using & searching library databases
- Uncertainty about evaluating credibility of a resource
- Uncertain what to do with a resource after finding it - “How do I read, assess and make use of this resource in my own paper?”
- Academic integrity expectations and citation experienced as intimidating and largely new (domestic students with more experience than international students)
Additionally, from the literature

- Over reliance on Google coming in to university/college (D’Orio, 2019; Head, 2013)
- Overwhelmed by variety of information sources (Dempsey & Jagman, 2016; Head, 2013)
- Experience challenges in developing search strategies and understanding scholarly sources (D’Orio, 2019; Head, 2013; Smith, Given, Julien et al., 2013;)
- Struggle with expectations for course assignments including knowing how to “dig deep”, evaluate sources, and master the critical inquiry process (D’Orio, 2019; Fosnacht, 2015; Head, 2013; Witteveen, 2018)
- Citation and academic integrity taught at high school but not generally translating to university expectations (Raven, 2012)
- Lack of knowledge of librarians’ roles at university and college (D’Orio, 2019), made more challenging by belief they should be self-sufficient and that asking for help not “the norm” (Head, 2013)
- Incoming students often overconfident at first about their research abilities (D’Orio, 2019; Dempsey & Jagman, 2016)
A difficult, yet potentially transformative, transition period

“Students making the transition from high school to university experience dramatic shifts as they are expected to manage their own learning. The learning expectations and environments change from highly structured tasks guided by teachers in high school to independent, less structured learning formats in post-secondary educational environments.”

Information Literacy Frameworks
In OSLA’s *Together for Learning*, the teaching of information literacy is embedded within the contexts of moving towards a learning commons and inquiry-based models of learning.
Together for Learning: Creating a Culture of Inquiry
Ideas for establishing a culture of “guided inquiry”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas to Consider</th>
<th>Instructional Staff</th>
<th>Learners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teacher/teacher-librarian directed</strong></td>
<td><strong>Learner generated</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Delivers integrated curriculum</td>
<td>• Individually explores area of interest</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Acknowledges background information</td>
<td>• Makes connections to other texts and transfers experiences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Establishes the context</td>
<td>• Generates deep inquiry questions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Guides the process</td>
<td>• Uses a wide variety of print, media, electronic and human resources</td>
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<td>• Scaffolds instruction and learning throughout</td>
<td>• Displays learning in personally significant way</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Designs inquiries based on real world situations</td>
<td><strong>Process</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourages developing open ended questions</td>
<td><strong>Teacher/teacher-librarian enabled</strong></td>
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<td>• Models and teaches specific information literacy skills (e.g., information organizers, online databases, social media tools, presentation formats)</td>
<td>• Emphasizes multiple sources</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Collaborating**
- Teacher/teacher-librarian enabled
  - Allows for flexible groupings based on interest
  - Facilitates inquiry process
  - Connects learning partnerships with outside experts, using technology
  - Monitors outside experts consulted
  - Contributes to/joins learning partnership(s)
  - Models learning during process
  - Leads with questioning

**Learner enabled**
- Determines scope of partnerships
- Seeks expertise beyond the school setting
- Contributes to a team according to own learning style and aptitudes
- Contributes to collective knowledge creation
- Reflects on learning with others
- Shares in the responsibility of ownership of collaborative products
“[T]he rapidly changing higher education environment, along with the dynamic and often uncertain information ecosystem in which all of us work and live, require new attention to be focused on foundational ideas about that ecosystem...The Framework offered here is called a framework intentionally because it is based on a cluster of interconnected core concepts, with flexible options for implementation, rather than on a set of standards or learning outcomes, or any prescriptive enumeration of skills. At the heart of this Framework are conceptual understandings that organize many other concepts and ideas about information, research, and scholarship into a coherent whole. These conceptual understandings are informed by the work of Wiggins and McTighe, which focuses on essential concepts and questions in developing curricula, and also by threshold concepts, which are those ideas in any discipline that are passageways or portals to enlarged understanding or ways of thinking and practicing within that discipline.”

ACRL Framework for IL for Higher Education

Defining Information Literacy

Information literacy is the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.

-- ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education

http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework

(ACRL, 2016)
Frames /Threshold Concepts

- Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
- Information Creation as a Process
- Information Has Value
- Research as Inquiry
- Scholarship as Conversation
- Searching as Strategic Exploration

(ACRL, 2016; Meyer & Land, 2005)
Information Literacy Instruction
Best Practices

Photo by Jasmine Coro on Unsplash
Example: School Library

Shelagh Straughan
Teacher Librarian
Trinity College School Library
Senior School Library
Trinity College School
Co-ed, day/boarding school in Port Hope, Ontario
Serving 455 students in grades 9-12
Workshop about using academic libraries

- Builds on existing research- and reading-based relationship with Gr 12s
- Working with each of Grade 12 guidance classes
  - 15-20 presentation followed by work session and sharing of findings
  - Aim to work together for 30 minutes of the 65 minute period
- Part of a “road ahead” series of classes run by guidance counsellors
  - Topics include course selection, residential life, budgeting, etc.
What’s worked...

Grade 9
What hasn’t worked...
Making it happen

- **Show potential value**
  - Inform yourself by connecting with academic librarians closest to your school and visiting academic libraries whenever possible
  - Demonstrate how the principles of *Together for Learning* reflect the *Framework* and how the work our students have done in discovery, inquiry, critical and creative thinking sets the stage for their post-secondary learning

- **Align with your school community**
  - Decide most effective “in” (an alternative to guidance class)
  - Choose examples from schools familiar to graduating students
  - Get feedback from grads to inform next year’s workshop
Example: Post-Secondary

Heather Buchansky
Student Engagement Librarian
University of Toronto Libraries
# First-year students at university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How it works</th>
<th>Goals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➔ Librarians reach out with advice through emails</td>
<td>➔ Make a personal connection to first-year students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➔ Students can contact librarian at anytime for help</td>
<td>➔ Identify key questions asked, to inform outreach</td>
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## First-year students at university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are they asking?</th>
<th>What do they find most difficult?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Known topic, need sources</td>
<td>• Selecting keywords to narrow down searches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How to search a database</td>
<td>• Filtering &amp; sorting through results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Citation help</td>
<td>• Identifying/selecting sources &amp; investigative methods from all available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Writing support</td>
<td>• Integrating &amp; summarizing writing styles from different sources/formats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(refer to Writing Centre)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(from PL email analysis)</td>
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(Top 4 results of Most Difficult Research Tasks from “Learning the Ropes” Project Information Literacy Report, 2013, Fig. 4, p.15)

All icons from [The Noun Project](https://thenounproject.com) via NounPro subscription
Ideas for bridging the IL gap

For academic librarians...

- **Create a high school-friendly webpage** (ex. A. Flak, McMaster University Library) to highlight first-year undergrad students’ required research skills

- **Offer IL workshops** (ex. U of T Scarborough) to high school students, either in-person, or online, *based on student assignments*

- **Host professional development sessions** for teacher-librarians at your institution or visit a school library
Ideas for bridging the IL gap

Work in progress...

OCULA / OSLA Information Literacy Toolkit

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Handout

Summary of Frameworks and Challenges
### Moving Forward in Easing the Transition

<table>
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<th>IL Concepts Challenging to Students / Frame</th>
<th>Characteristics of students transitioning from high school to post-secondary</th>
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<tr>
<td>Research as iterative / Research as Inquiry</td>
<td>- difficulties with digging deep and mastering critical inquiry process</td>
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<td>- Lack of knowledge of librarians’ and libraries roles</td>
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<td>Academic Integrity expectations / Information Has Value</td>
<td>- Expectations of citing are intimidating</td>
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<td>- Need help with proper citation</td>
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<td>Evaluating credibility and relevance / Authority Is Constructed and Contextual</td>
<td>- Uncertainty about evaluating the credibility of a resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using more than just websites / Information Creation as a Process</td>
<td>- Over reliance on Google</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Overwhelmed by the size and variety of information sources</td>
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</table>
Easing the Transition Workshop

IL for a Library Orientation/Introductory Session
Activity: Instruction for Orienting Students Transitioning from high school to post-secondary school

30 minutes

You will develop an orientation or introductory lesson in collaboration with members from OSLA, OCULA, and OPLA.

- Groups of 5 or so (mixed sectors)
- Handouts
- Flip Charts + Markers

Consider the frameworks, testimonials & characteristics of students, and examples discussed to develop an orientation or introductory lesson.
Scenario 1: Introducing Grade 11 Students to Library Research

Redesign an introductory IL class to develop student research skills

- Grade 11
- Two 15 minute sessions in the 70 min research periods offered for library instruction
- Research project essay
  - choose own topic
  - multiple perspectives
  - develop a thesis

Include active learning!
Scenario 2:

University/College Library Orientation for 1st Year Students

Redesign an orientation for a first year course.

- First year course
- Large lecture hall, ~100 students
- Invited to 2nd/3rd class of semester
- 50 minutes

Include active learning!
Presentations

IL for Easing the Transition
Scenario 1

Introducing Grade 11 Students to Library Research
Scenario 2

University/College Library Orientation
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References


Handouts

- Summary and Key Takeaways of a Student Transitioning from High School to University/College
- Scenario Handout
- Together for Learning
- Frames
- Threshold Concept Cards