

Information Library Stipend--Report

During the Fall of 2013 I received an Information Literacy stipend to work with Kevin Norris, the Art History Library liaison, in my course "African Art and Aesthetics" (ARTH 225). I had taught the course three times before, and although the course had always involved a research paper, I had never spoken to a librarian about it, or followed the students as closely in their work as I had to do as a result of my collaboration with Kevin.

In preparation for the semester, Kevin and I met twice: once to speak generally about what he does and a second time to determine more specifically, with syllabus in hand, what exactly I wanted the students to learn from his conversations with them and when he could meet with my class. After reading some of the reports of previous Information Library Stipends, we decided that Kevin should meet with the students twice during the semester instead of only once. Some previous comments had shown that having the librarian speak to students only once was not very helpful, since students rarely had their research topic on hand at the time they met the librarian and so the gain of the introduction to research databases was lost between the meeting with the librarian and the actual writing of the paper.

Kevin, then, met my class twice: once to introduce us generally to the databases and resources that we could use for our research (I say "we" because I learned a lot too!), and the second time, for a hands-on lab, with student topics in hand, each at a computer, looking for actual articles for the paper. Kevin also remained available for one-on-one meetings with interested students who felt lost in their research and needed more help than the lab provided. During the lab, Kevin and I monitored the research and Kevin offered helpful suggestions for keywords and how to go about navigating various databases.

The quality of the research papers the semester that I worked with Kevin Norris was far superior to that of any of the papers I had read until last semester. Students were more confident in their papers; they were more involved in the classroom; they had more pride in their work. They wrote about their topic like experts and there was no case of plagiarism. I was so impressed by the difference that I am putting the meetings with the librarian in my syllabus permanently.

I have only one suggestion for improving the ILS program: I was surprised that librarians do not also receive a stipend for this program. Although we both worked on the project before the class started, Kevin did all the work during the actual meetings with my class. I learned a lot, and so did my students, but all *we* had to do was sit, listen, and ask questions. I wonder if it would not increase the desire for collaboration to split the stipend in half. It also seems like a matter of justice.

For my art history course, the resource of the librarian was not only helpful in general but actually improved student retention of the material. I am very grateful that I learned about its existence through the Information Literacy Stipend.