

Report: Information Literacy Stipend
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WRTG 284: Rhetoric & Social Media

(Offered SP 2011 with stipend, offered independently in SP 2011 and proposed FSCC and CCC as WRTG 224 (W): Rhetoric & Social Media)

Through teaching the course WRTG 284: Rhetoric & Social Media, the researchers found that in the social media environment of Facebook students both are meeting traditional information literacy standards as articulated by the ACRL and developing new literacy practices that need to be considered when attempting to instruct students on information literacy.

The ACRL Information Literacy
Competency Standards for Higher Education

As for the traditional standards articulated in the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education, the researchers found that in some way or another, students meet each standard through their work in the course and their activity on Facebook, though some standards, performance indicators, and outcomes are more explicitly met than others. (The attached chart details which standards are met and how. Highlighted standards, indicators, and outcomes are met directly and repeatedly; underlined goals are met, but peripherally or less frequently; comments indicate where in the research materials evidence of student performance was found.)

Standard One: The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed. (NEED)

Moving students from “motion” to “action” was a main goal of the course. In rhetorical theory (first presented by Aristotle and refined by many, including Kenneth Burke) “motion” is involuntary movement generally inspired by outside forces (like a rock responding to gravity by rolling down a hill), whereas “action” is purposeful movement inspired by a desired goal and decided upon by the actor. In essence, it is the difference between “going through the motions” uncritically and making conscious choices. Students questioned their Facebook activity throughout the semester: every move on Facebook and every assignment was questioned, “Why are you/we doing this? What do you/we hope to accomplish? What is the best way to get to that information/end?” The researchers found that students at first were unaware of the motives behind their Facebook activity, but by the end of the course were making conscious choices in terms of the information they presented about themselves and the information they sought from others.

Standard Two: The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently. (ACCESS)

The researchers positioned Facebook as an information retrieval system within itself, with users determining information accessed by their network choices. Students determine which information they have access to by “friending” certain people, “subscribing” to certain feeds, and/or “liking” certain identities. Students manage the information attained through their network by setting news feed output.

Standard Three: The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system. (EVALUATION)

The researchers found that throughout the course of the semester, both because of practical instruction in the functions of Facebook as a tool itself and because of an investigation of critical and rhetorical theory, students became more critical of Facebook itself, the information accessed through it, and their and others' activity on the site.

Standard Four: The information literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose. (SYNTHESIS)

"Purpose" is the concept at the base of rhetoric, and as such was the overarching theme of the semester. Every discussion, concept, practical technique was related to "purpose" or "the message attempting to be sent" or "the goal in posting the information." As far as the ACRL articulation of this standard, students met these goals in two specific ways: (1) their reader responses, in which they had to summarize readings, offer personal opinion responses, and relate information to the course goals/discussions, and (2) by scaffolding the assignments, most of the coursework built on previous activity and was conducted through a series of tasks; students continually transferred, manipulated, and revised new and prior information. As Standard 4 is directly related to Standard 1, the researchers found that students moved from ambiguity to focus through the course of the semester.

Standard Five: The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally. (ETHICS)

Privacy was a reoccurring theme throughout the work of the semester. Discussions focused on freedom of speech issues; users being fired from jobs, arrested, removed from juries, or facing other consequences for Facebook activity; censorship and the role of social media in the Arab Spring; and "radical transparency" (real identity vs. anonymity and sharing activity with network). Students were taught directly how to make decisions about their privacy settings on Facebook. They investigated "netiquette" practices and the culture of Facebook, especially what is expected of users in terms of attribution of information and activity on their news feeds. In all, students learned how to analyze communities to discern conventions for behaviors as well as how those conventions are established by community members and outside forces.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT: The researchers found that students met many ACRL standards through their regular Facebook activity, and that students' proficiency in meeting these standards was enhanced by taking this course. Much in the ACRL Standards and the students' Facebook activity was complicated, though, by a "meta-level" examination of both. For example, what in Standard 3 Performance Indicator 1 is generally understood as students' ability to read a text and identify a thesis, through this course it became not only a demonstration of that skill when a "friend" posted an article from *Time* magazine, but also an analysis of the friend's motivation in posting such an article. In addition, the researchers found that students' dispositions toward information is developing in particular ways due to their activity in social media environments like Facebook, and that these emerging

attitudes and expectations need to be taken into consideration during information literacy instruction.

New Information Literacy Practices

As for the new literacy practices and dispositions toward information students are developing through their immersion in social media environments like Facebook, overall the researchers found information literacy is now situated within a social and decentralized (non-hierarchical) information environment. The researchers found the following four trends that need to be taken into consideration when approach instruction:

Information now comes to users (implications for Standards 1 & 2)

The nature of access is changing: our students no longer seek out and find information in various sources on the web, but rather the information comes to them via customized feeds. Algorithms in both search (i.e., Google) and feeds (i.e., Facebook news feed) mean that systems outside of the user (at times determined by the user, at times invisible to the user) are deciding what information to display, based on the user's previous behavior within that system. Our students have grown up with this automation and consider it the norm when it comes to finding and accessing information.

Information recall and attribution are now social (implications for Standards 2 & 5)

Students categorize information (and thus find information) not based on the content of the information (what the information says), nor based on the container of the information (i.e., publisher/textual source), but based on *who shared the information with them*. Put another way, their way of recalling a piece of information is not based on the published source of that information (for example, the *New York Times*), but rather based on the person who linked to that information (i.e., the Facebook friend that shared a link to article).

Evaluation is now social (implications for Standard 3)

How our students evaluate information is changing: the value of the information is directly related to how others in a student's network value the information, and also based on whether or not the information is relevant to a student's friends or to his- or herself.

Information is now open (implications for Standards 4 & 5)

Information flows both ways in ways it never did before. We are all publishers and authors, and sometimes we don't even know it. Our students value information (and in fact trust information) that is open and transparent more so than information that is closed and behind a paywall (copyright implications). In addition, their information seeking and sharing is always on display.

Standards, Performance Indicators, and Outcomes

Standard One

The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed. ← **NEED: Motion vs. Action; Purpose**

Performance Indicators:

1. The information literate student defines and articulates the need for information.

Outcomes Include:

- a. Confers with instructors and participates in class discussions, peer workgroups, and electronic discussions to identify a research topic, or other information need
 - b. Develops a thesis statement and formulates questions based on the information need
 - c. Explores general information sources to increase familiarity with the topic
 - d. Defines or modifies the information need to achieve a manageable focus
 - e. Identifies key concepts and terms that describe the information need
 - f. Recognizes that existing information can be combined with original thought, experimentation, and/or analysis to produce new information
2. The information literate student identifies a variety of types and formats of potential sources for information.

Outcomes Include:

- a. Knows how information is formally and informally produced, organized, and disseminated
 - b. Recognizes that knowledge can be organized into disciplines that influence the way information is accessed
 - c. Identifies the value and differences of potential resources in a variety of formats (e.g., multimedia, database, website, data set, audio/visual, book)
 - d. Identifies the purpose and audience of potential resources (e.g., popular vs. scholarly, current vs. historical)
 - e. Differentiates between primary and secondary sources, recognizing how their use and importance vary with each discipline
 - f. Realizes that information may need to be constructed with raw data from primary sources
3. The information literate student considers the costs and benefits of acquiring the needed information.



Outcomes Include:

- a. Determines the availability of needed information and makes decisions on broadening the information seeking process beyond local resources (e.g., interlibrary loan; using resources at other locations; obtaining images, videos, text, or sound)
- b. Considers the feasibility of acquiring a new language or skill (e.g., foreign or discipline-based) in order to gather needed information and to understand its context
- c. Defines a realistic overall plan and timeline to acquire the needed information

4. The information literate student reevaluates the nature and extent of the information need.

Outcomes Include:

- a. Reviews the initial information need to clarify, revise, or refine the question
- b. Describes criteria used to make information decisions and choices

Standard Two

The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently. ←

ACCESS: FB as central info stream

Performance Indicators:

1. The information literate student selects the most appropriate investigative methods or information retrieval systems for accessing the needed information.

FB *as* information retrieval system: foundation

Outcomes Include:

- a. Identifies appropriate investigative methods (e.g., laboratory experiment, simulation, fieldwork)
- b. Investigates benefits and applicability of various investigative methods
- c. **Investigates the scope, content, and organization of information retrieval systems**
- d. Selects efficient and effective approaches for accessing the information needed from the investigative method or information retrieval system

2. The information literate student constructs and implements effectively-designed search strategies.

Outcomes Include:

- a. Develops a research plan appropriate to the investigative method
- b. Identifies keywords, synonyms and related terms for the information need
- c. **Selects controlled vocabulary specific to the discipline or information retrieval source**

- d. Constructs a search strategy using appropriate commands for the information retrieval system selected (e.g., Boolean operators, truncation, and proximity for search engines; internal organizers such as indexes for books)
 - e. Implements the search strategy in various information retrieval systems using different user interfaces and search engines, with different command languages, protocols, and search parameters
 - f. Implements the search using investigative protocols appropriate to the discipline
3. The information literate student retrieves information online or in person using a variety of methods.

Outcomes Include:

- a. Uses various search systems to retrieve information in a variety of formats
 - b. Uses various classification schemes and other systems (e.g., call number systems or indexes) to locate information resources within the library or to identify specific sites for physical exploration
 - c. Uses specialized online or in person services available at the institution to retrieve information needed (e.g., interlibrary loan/document delivery, professional associations, institutional research offices, community resources, experts and practitioners)
 - d. Uses surveys, letters, interviews, and other forms of inquiry to retrieve primary information
4. The information literate student refines the search strategy if necessary.

Outcomes Include:

- a. Assesses the quantity, quality, and relevance of the search results to determine whether alternative information retrieval systems or investigative methods should be utilized
 - b. Identifies gaps in the information retrieved and determines if the search strategy should be revised
 - c. Repeats the search using the revised strategy as necessary
5. The information literate student extracts, records, and manages the information and its sources. ↖ FB *as* management system

Outcomes Include:

- a. Selects among various technologies the most appropriate one for the task of extracting the needed information (e.g., copy/paste software functions, photocopier, scanner, audio/visual equipment, or exploratory instruments)
- b. Creates a system for organizing the information
- c. Differentiates between the types of sources cited and understands the elements and correct syntax of a citation for a wide range of resources

- d. Records all pertinent citation information for future reference
- e. Uses various technologies to manage the information selected and organized

Standard Three

The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.

EVALUATION: Awareness-->Behavior

Performance Indicators:

1. The information literate student summarizes the main ideas to be extracted from the information gathered.

Outcomes Include:

- a. Reads the text and selects main ideas
 - b. Restates textual concepts in his/her own words and selects data accurately
 - c. Identifies verbatim material that can be then appropriately quoted
2. The information literate student articulates and applies initial criteria for evaluating both the information and its sources.

Outcomes Include:

- a. Examines and compares information from various sources in order to evaluate reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness, and point of view or bias
 - b. Analyzes the structure and logic of supporting arguments or methods
 - c. Recognizes prejudice, deception, or manipulation
 - d. Recognizes the cultural, physical, or other context within which the information was created and understands the impact of context on interpreting the information
3. The information literate student synthesizes main ideas to construct new concepts.

Outcomes Include:

- a. Recognizes interrelationships among concepts and combines them into potentially useful primary statements with supporting evidence
- b. Extends initial synthesis, when possible, at a higher level of abstraction to construct new hypotheses that may require additional information
- c. Utilizes computer and other technologies (e.g. spreadsheets, databases, multimedia, and audio or visual equipment) for studying the interaction of ideas and other phenomena

4. The information literate student compares new knowledge with prior knowledge to determine the value added, contradictions, or other unique characteristics of the information.

← Course Goal

Outcomes Include:

- a. Determines whether information satisfies the research or other information need
 - b. Uses consciously selected criteria to determine whether the information contradicts or verifies information used from other sources
 - c. Draws conclusions based upon information gathered
 - d. Tests theories with discipline-appropriate techniques (e.g., simulators, experiments)
 - e. Determines probable accuracy by questioning the source of the data, the limitations of the information gathering tools or strategies, and the reasonableness of the conclusions
 - f. Integrates new information with previous information or knowledge
 - g. Selects information that provides evidence for the topic
5. The information literate student determines whether the new knowledge has an impact on the individual's value system and takes steps to reconcile differences.

Outcomes Include:

- a. Investigates differing viewpoints encountered in the literature
 - b. Determines whether to incorporate or reject viewpoints encountered
6. The information literate student validates understanding and interpretation of the information through discourse with other individuals, subject-area experts, and/or practitioners.

← FB as site for discourse

Outcomes Include:

- a. Participates in classroom and other discussions
 - b. Participates in class-sponsored electronic communication forums designed to encourage discourse on the topic (e.g., e-mail, bulletin boards, chat rooms)
 - c. Seeks expert opinion through a variety of mechanisms (e.g., interviews, e-mail, listservs)
7. The information literate student determines whether the initial query should be revised.

Outcomes Include:

- a. Determines if original information need has been satisfied or if additional information is needed
- b. Reviews search strategy and incorporates additional concepts as necessary

- c. Reviews information retrieval sources used and expands to include others as needed

Standard Four

The information literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.

RHETORIC

Performance Indicators:

1. The information literate student applies new and prior information to the planning and creation of a particular product or performance.

Outcomes Include:

- a. Organizes the content in a manner that supports the purposes and format of the product or performance (e.g. outlines, drafts, storyboards)
 - b. Articulates knowledge and skills transferred from prior experiences to planning and creating the product or performance
 - c. Integrates the new and prior information, including quotations and paraphrasings, in a manner that supports the purposes of the product or performance
 - d. Manipulates digital text, images, and data, as needed, transferring them from their original locations and formats to a new context
2. The information literate student revises the development process for the product or performance.

Outcomes Include:

- a. Maintains a journal or log of activities related to the information seeking, evaluating, and communicating process
 - b. Reflects on past successes, failures, and alternative strategies
3. The information literate student communicates the product or performance effectively to others.

Outcomes Include:

- a. Chooses a communication medium and format that best supports the purposes of the product or performance and the intended audience
- b. Uses a range of information technology applications in creating the product or performance
- c. Incorporates principles of design and communication
- d. Communicates clearly and with a style that supports the purposes of the intended audience

Standard Five

The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

Performance Indicators:

1. The information literate student understands many of the ethical, legal and socio-economic issues surrounding information and information technology.

Outcomes Include:

- a. Identifies and discusses issues related to privacy and security in both the print and electronic environments
 - b. Identifies and discusses issues related to free vs. fee-based access to information
 - c. Identifies and discusses issues related to censorship and freedom of speech
 - d. Demonstrates an understanding of intellectual property, copyright, and fair use of copyrighted material
2. The information literate student follows laws, regulations, institutional policies, and etiquette related to the access and use of information resources.

Etiquette=disposition toward attribution

Outcomes Include:

- a. Participates in electronic discussions following accepted practices (e.g. "Netiquette")
 - b. Uses approved passwords and other forms of ID for access to information resources
 - c. Complies with institutional policies on access to information resources
 - d. Preserves the integrity of information resources, equipment, systems and facilities
 - e. Legally obtains, stores, and disseminates text, data, images, or sounds
 - f. Demonstrates an understanding of what constitutes plagiarism and does not represent work attributable to others as his/her own
 - g. Demonstrates an understanding of institutional policies related to human subjects research
3. The information literate student acknowledges the use of information sources in communicating the product or performance.

Acknowledgment as attribution

Outcomes Include:

- a. Selects an appropriate documentation style and uses it consistently to cite sources
- b. Posts permission granted notices, as needed, for copyrighted material