Reinforcing information and technology literature

The Plattsburg tip sheet

by Holly Heller-Ross

This article describes a Plattsburgh State University Library and Information Services (LIS) faculty workshop on information and technology literacy. The workshop was developed in response to a call for the redrafting and submission for academic curriculum review of all courses intended for General Education approval and credit to meet new college General Education requirements.

The focus of this article is on the information and technology literacy speci cs of the new requirements, the particular style of tip sheet developed for the workshop, and its potential for use by other librarians. The essence of the Plattsburgh Tip Sheet is a practical approach to rethinking lectures, class activities, and assignments to reinforce information and technology literacies.

University requirements

Plattsburgh State University of New York (PSU) is one of the 64 campuses in the State University of New York (SUNY) and is a medium-sized comprehensive college enrolling 5,400 undergraduate students and about 650 graduate students. Since 1997 a series of reports, requirements, and student learning outcomes that mention and de ne information and technology literacy have been written and circulated within the university, in addition to the national standards and guidelines librarians are familiar with.

PSU requirements

A 1997 Strategic Planning Task Force at PSU proposed Information Literacy and Computing Across the Curriculum to ensure that our students are fully prepared for and can take advantage of opportunities in an increasingly technological world. [1] PSU established student learning outcomes in June 2001, including the ability to access, evaluate, and use information and technology effectively and ef ciently. [2] As a follow-up to these proposals, the college Information and Computer Literacy Task Force recommended speci c literacy de nitions for campus use. The task force also recommended that: Information and technology literacy concepts and skills be introduced, reinforced, and expanded on three curricular levels. [3]

General Education requirements

The new General Education program (October 2002) did in fact follow these recommendations and listed the following among other abilities or skills expected of a Plattsburgh graduate: the ability to use technology effectively and the ability to lter, analyze, and critique information and experience. The program also added a

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The Plattsburgh Tip Sheet: Reinforcing Information and Technology Literacy in General Education Courses
Holly Heller-Ross, Plattsburgh State University, 2003

If you currently require students to:	Consider requiring them to:	You'll reinforce the info/tech literacy skill or concept of:	Don't forget these LIS support services:

1) Attend lectures	• Transfer their notes into word-processed document three times a semester
	• Create a concept map of the main lecture ideas
	• Locate and evaluate outside resources on the lecture topics
		• Using a word processing program
		• Information organization
		• Digital representations
		• Summarizing the main ideas
		• Constructing and implementing search strategies
		• Retrieving online and print information
			• IT Department: Microsoft Word workshops
			• Inspiration Software in (FL108)
			• Library: Reference Services
			  · Course-Related Instruction
			  · Research guides online
			  - Research Guides by Subject
			  - Research Guides for Classes

2) Read a text or other course reading	• Use a text publisher's Web site: e.g., www.dushkin.com/ • Get readings from Plattsburgh's Electronic Reserves • E-mail a summary of the readings to you (the instructor) or a classmate	• Using the Internet (browsers, search engines, chat) • Communicating via computer • Summarizing the main ideas • Integration of new knowledge	• Computer labs and smart carts for instruction • E*Res Service: contact person is <e-mail link here> • E-mail Help guide on IT Web site

3) Participate in class discussions	• Use a class electronic list
	• Post a response to a class Web site
	• Locate and cite an outside source as evidence in their response
		• Communicating via computer
		• Validating new understandings through discourse
		• Retrieving online /print information
			• Library: Reference Services
			  · Course-Related Instruction
			  · Research Guides Online (see links above)

4) Take quizzes or exams	• Use e-mail in a small group study recitation
	  · Use review notes on your faculty Web site
	• Answer quiz questions that require information research
		• Collaboration
		• Synthesizing main ideas
		• Constructing new concepts
		• Communicating via computer
		• Using instructional tutorials
			• Library: Reference Services
			  · Course-Related Instruction
			  · Research Guides Online
			• IT Department: Faculty workshops on Web development, including forms

If you currently require students to:	Consider requiring them to:	You'll reinforce the info/tech literacy skill or concept of:	Don't forget these LIS support services:
4) Take quizzes or exams (continued)	• Use an online tutorial or class Web site for studying • Take a test online	• Using the Internet (browsers, search engines, chat)	• Library: Reference librarian assistance in locating resources/tutorials

5) Write response or research papers	• Submit a working thesis and bibliography early on
	• Include a variety of sources as evidence of their research
	• Include source evaluation in their paper's text
	• Save onto a floppy disk and submit a first and a final draft paper
	• Submit papers as:
	  · E-mail attachments
	  · In print (on paper) with an abstract e-mailed to you
		• Defining and articulating the information need
		• Identifying types and formats of sources
		• Articulating and applying evaluative criteria
		• Synthesizing main ideas
		• Constructing new concepts
		• Extracting, recording, and managing information
		• Using a word processing program
		• Communicating via computer
			• Library: handout/Web pages on:
			  · Criteria for evaluation of sources
			  · Citation and documentation
			• IT Department: Microsoft Word workshops/help guides

6) Give a presentation	• Locate and evaluate information sources for their presentations
	• Illustrate their presentations with digital images
	• Create Web pages as their presentations
	• Use presentation software such as PowerPoint
	• Provide a background reading for the class a week before the presentation
		• Identifying types / formats of sources
		• Constructing and implementing search strategies
		• Retrieving online /print information
		• Synthesizing main ideas
		• Constructing new concepts
		• Applying information to planning/creation of a product or performance
		• Using a graphics or art program
		• Communicating to other audiences
		• Using the Internet (browsers, search engines, chat)
			• Library: Reference Services
			  · Course-Related Instruction
			  · Research Guides Online
			• IT Department: Online Help guide for PowerPoint

requirement for technology literacy to the previous program s library skills (or information literacy in current terminology) requirement.[4]

The new Information and Technology Literacy requirement was placed in the Skills Category and assigned one credit in the 39-credit General Education Program. The library faculty are currently planning for the implementation of the new General Education requirements in fall 2004, and will offer courses that include coverage of introductory skills and concepts in technology literacy as well as information literacy.

These signi cant changes to the educational program raised several questions that inspired the workshop and tip sheet. How would the college faculty revise their courses to meet these new requirements? What information did they need in order to be successful? How could LIS and the library faculty assist in this process?

Faculty development workshops

PSU s faculty development workshop program includes basic and advanced technology skill components for electronic communication, word processing, academic uses of spreadsheets and databases, Web page development, and management. These workshops are taught by staff members in the LIS Instructional Technology Unit. In addition, library research strategies, graduate student research, general information literacy, and plagiarism prevention and detection workshops are prepared and taught by library faculty members.

In 2002 2003, the Instructional Technology Unit offered 64 separate workshops reaching 515 participants in total. Participants included faculty, professional, and clerical staff. Each June, a series of weeklong workshops have been offered with speci c attention to the technology needs of teaching faculty. In June 2003, another series was developed speci - cally for faculty in the education departments. This series was motivated in part by education faculty preparation for an upcoming national accreditation review.

When an October deadline was announced for review of new or revised General Education courses, several department chairs and individual faculty began planning for summer course revision work. Instead of offering a general introduction to information literacy, LIS decided to develop a focused workshop to help faculty with their course revisions.

The workshop idea

The concept underpinning the practical workshop was derived from previous faculty brochures for distance-learning services. In 1994 when PSU began its distance-learning program, the library invested materials, staff, and faculty resources in distance-learning support. Brochures describing the available services were developed and distributed, but didn t have much effect until a very practical style was tried.

For example, instead of just listing interlibrary loan as a service that was available to distance students, the brochure was changed to read, if your on-campus students use library books and journals, your off-campus students can request the same materials through our electronic interlibrary loan system. The very explicit connection between what students and faculty were already doing and what they could also do in a distance-learning environment seemed to make the services more relevant. Since we were now hoping to assist faculty in revising their courses to include information and technology literacy in a short amount of time, the same idea of providing clear and practical suggestions for small adjustments made sense.

The course-revision workshop was developed in the late spring and offered in June 2003. Topics included the General Education Program speci cs; tips on designing assignments; information about using existing library and computing resources; tutorials and teaching tools; strategies for reducing plagiarism; and citation styles and guides.

Faculty were asked to bring course descriptions and syllabi with them to work on during the two-hour session, and most participants did. While all the topics were addressed to some extent, the tips on designing assignments were quickly identi ed by the participating faculty as the most valuable.

The Plattsburgh Tip Sheet

Designing assignments for effective research is a well-developed area of librarianship. The Plattsburgh Tip Sheet was designed to focus exclusively on concrete strategies for reinforcing the use of technology and research sources. Several excellent guides from other libraries were included in the workshop, in addition to the Plattsburgh Tip Sheet. These were helpful in more conceptual ways,

covering ideas such as the use of working bibliographies and preparing students with library tours and research sessions.

As with the distance-learning brochure, the goal of the tip sheet was to explicitly link what faculty were currently doing in their classes with what they could now do to incorporate technology and research. The tips covered common classroom activities and assignments, such as lectures, readings, quizzes and exams, presentations, and papers. Each activity or assignment was listed with integration options for faculty to consider, information about the information and technology literacy concept or skill the option reinforced, and resources for faculty to use as they planned the changes or taught the content.

For example, if a faculty member frequently gives lectures, they might consider requiring students to submit word-processed lecture notes several times a semester in order to reinforce the use of academic software and information organization skills. LIS resources and services available to faculty would include word-processing software, software workshops, and use guides. Several options were included for each classroom activity. As another example for faculty using classroom lectures, the tip sheet listed a possible assignment to create an electronic concept map of the main lecture ideas to reinforce the use of graphical digital representations and skill in summarizing main ideas. LIS resources include the concept mapping software and guides for its use.

These were all very simple practical options that allowed instructors to make small revisions in their courses with signi cant support available from LIS faculty and staff. The importance of this practical approach cannot be overstated. Participants expressed enthusiasm at seeing so many options for integrating and reinforcing information and technology literacy. They also expressed great relief as they realized how simple some of the changes might be. The greatest bene t of program-wide reinforcement for faculty is that no single course has to cover all the information and technology literacy learning outcomes.

An important bene t for students is in the consistent reinforcement that allows them to retain and deepen their conceptual understandings and their mastery of the applied skills.

Future uses

PSU will continue to offer the workshop, anticipating other course revisions as General Education proposal reviews continue. The workshop Web page is kept up-to-date with new information and teaching tools as we identify them. We ll also be testing the tip sheet as a library liaison discussion handout at department meetings. It is our hope that departmental faculty will share their ideas and strategies so that the tip sheet evolves into an even more practical and field-tested resource. As initial indicators of the direct positive effect of the workshops, one workshop participant has revised several assignments and another has assigned electronic journaling in his spring classes.

Potential uses of the workshop and the Plattsburgh Tip Sheet by other librarians include use of the workshop as it is, use of the tip sheet as a stand-alone reference, incorporation of the tip sheet into other workshops, or use of the tip sheet as a faculty discussion handout. Institutions with well-integrated information literacy programs may want to use only the technology literacy integration suggestions, while the opposite may be the case at other institutions.

We d like other librarians to review, improve, revise, customize, and use the Plattsburgh Tip Sheet. Just let us know, and share your improvements![5]

References/notes

1. Plattsburgh State University. 1997. *Report of the Strategic Planning Task Force.* Section VII. Strategic Initiative 6. Proposal One.

2. Plattsburgh State University. 2001. *Undergraduate Learning Outcomes.* www2. plattsburgh.edu/acadmicaffairs/assessment/docs/stuoutcomes.doc.

3. Plattsburgh State University. 2001. *Final Report of the Computer and Information Literacy Task Force.* faculty.plattsburgh.edu /holly.hellerross/Infolittaskforce.htm.

4. Plattsburgh State University. 2002. *Plattsburgh State University of New York General Education Program Information and Technology Literacy.* faculty.plattsburgh.edu/ray.guydosh/pfs/GenEdProgramProposal101702b.doc.

5. Workshop URL: faculty.plattsburgh.edu/holly.hellerross/InfoTechLiteracy.htm.Plattsburgh Tip Sheet URL: faculty.plattsburgh.edu/holly.hellerross/InfoTechLitHandout.doc. ∎