Information Literacy: *More to Learn—and Teach!*

by Robert Phillips

The emphasis on information literacy has moved library instruction to a new level. Before, we focused on the library as the repository of information, on the tools librarians had created to manage that repository, and on the librarians themselves with their accumulated training, experience, and knowledge of both the place and the tools. Yet without formal instruction, students learned that no longer are libraries the only source for information; that computer programmers can also create tools for information retrieval; and that librarians, though knowledgeable, are not always available when needed. Librarians must counter this trend by saying, "Wait, we weren't finished. There is still more to learn."

This "more" has been captured in the 2000 ACRL "Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education."[1] Traditional library instruction is now Standard Two: "The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently." Three of the remaining four standards stress planning a research project, evaluating sources, and presenting information. The last standard links information use with responsible behaviors. Understanding these five parts as one whole requires study and reflection. One good place for librarians to begin this study is to read the work of Booth, Colomb, and Williams in either their emerging classic, *The Craft of Research*,[2] or in their shorter version published as Part 1 of the new edition of Turabian's *Manual for Writers*.[3] Both present research as envisioned in the Standards. The writers approach research not as librarians but as writing instructors; the authors can help librarians better understand our "readers as writers."

The opening chapters present familiar information about planning research and gathering sources. Later chapters show why information literacy instruction programs fail if they do not include training students to engage and use their sources. As explained by *The Craft of Research*, this is more than note taking; it is finding and analyzing points of agreement or disagreement while discovering ideas and facts to be used in the final report.

The heart of *The Craft of Research*, "Making a Claim and Supporting It" and "Planning, Drafting, and Revising," matches the heart of the ACRL standard "Using and Presenting Information." For both, research is not complete until convincingly presented as a possible answer to a question of interest to another reader. Not to do this takes a shallow approach to the topic and does little to hold the reader's attention or interest. In short, it is an ineffective use of the information found. However, when research is understood as contributing to a problem's solution or deepening one's understanding of an issue, writers hold not only their readers' interest but also hold their own as they work to complete their final report. To do this effectively, Booth, Colomb, and Williams advocate the pattern of informal logic developed by Stephen Toulmin in 1958: offer an answer, give reasons that support the answer, provide evidence to support the reasons, consider and answer possible objections, and pay attention to underlying warrants or assumptions.[4] Advice on drafting and revising the report offers both instruction and review of the basic principles of composition, including how to report others' ideas without plagiarizing.

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[1] Association of College & Research Libraries, "Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education," http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency.cfm (accessed 20 April 2009).

[2] Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[3] Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Pr., 2007).

[4] Stephen Edelston Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958).

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L. R. Elliott, a 1940s pioneer in theological librarianship, dreamed that one day seminaries would be known for their library collections and the use students make of them. *The Craft of Research* provides a model for understanding how libraries can be well-used for research. They have also shown us that there is more for us to teach—and learn.