Providing Meaningful Feedback on Students’ Information Literacy Knowledge and Skills

Establish Learning Outcomes for Information Literacy

Bush Memorial Library has set these as our student learning outcomes on IL:

- A Hamline student will be able to develop a research strategy.
- A Hamline student will be able to select the appropriate finding tools (databases/indexes) for their research.
- A Hamline student will be able to effectively search finding tools (databases/indexes).
- A Hamline student will be able to use finding tool (database/index) features.
- A Hamline student will be able to retrieve sources from multiple providers.
- A Hamline student will be able to evaluate the sources they discover.
- A Hamline student will be able to document the sources they cite in their research.
- A Hamline student will understand the economic, legal, and social issues which surround the creation, use, and ownership/creation of information.

These program level learning outcomes feed into our university-wide learning outcome:

“A Hamline graduate will be able to use information and technology competently and responsibly.”

Bush Memorial Library developed our learning outcomes based on the Association of College and Research Libraries Standards for Information Literacy.

Use the Evidence to Improve Teaching & Learning

Getting useful data from assessment is beneficial for both the student and the instructor.

The teaching librarians at Hamline University are reviewing their course-integrated instruction sessions to determine how and when IL concepts are being introduced and emphasized.

We are sharing the data with faculty to make them aware of student IL competencies in various points of their academic lives.

We are sharing test results with students who can track their own progress toward this university learning outcome.

Inform Students about IL Competencies

Incoming first year students are informed about Information Literacy Learning Outcomes when they first arrive on campus and are required to take a pre-test of their IL knowledge and skills.

Program-level learning outcomes are posted on library web pages and are mentioned in instruction sessions.

Assess Students’ Information Literacy Competencies

Bush Memorial Library has used the assessment tool, SAILS (Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills), produced by Kent State University to measure and assess our first year students’ IL competencies.

We have administered both their cohort-based results test, and their individual result scores test versions. Our realization after administering both versions of SAILS was that:

Although cohort-based results gave a tidy picture of how our students did as a group, and how they compared to other institutions who had administered the SAILS cohort-based assessment, it did not provide any data that we could share with students to help them understand their own IL competency.

If we wanted to inform students about their own performance on the assessment we needed the finer results provided in the individual test scores version of SAILS.

Those individual results would also provide data to support our library’s evidence-based Information Literacy learning and teaching cycle. Our assessment plans called for:

1. A pre-test of student information literacy skills, measuring first year student knowledge and skills prior to IL instruction in the first week of classes.
2. Course-integrated Information Literacy instruction in 2 courses during their first year.
3. A post-test of student information literacy skills near the end of their first year, and after course-integrated IL instruction.

Provide Meaningful Feedback to Students

SAILS provides libraries using the individual test scores version, test results showing how each student performed on each test item, and their overall number of items answered correctly and the percent answered correctly. The test items represent 4 of the 5 ACRL Standards on Information Literacy.

We polled a few students who had taken the test and asked them, “What level of detail on your test results would you find interesting, useful and meaningful?”

They responded,

I want to know if I did exceptionally well or badly in broad areas.
I want to know how my score compares to others who took the test.

When they learned they would be taking a similar test (same concepts, different questions) again the following semester, they added:

I want to know if I did exceptionally well or badly in broad areas.

Student Facebook users frequently take quizzes which allow them to compare themselves to others. This comparison score seems to be a motivating number to push some students to strive to do better.

Teaching librarians wanted to make sure students had enough data to understand their strengths and weaknesses and to understand why librarians spend course time covering some concepts more than once.