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University of New Hampshire: Renaissance in Action

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Chapter 19

University of New Hampshire

Renaissance in Action

Kathrine C. Aydelott

Population Served

The University of New Hampshire (UNH) is a public flagship, land sea and space grant, Carnegie-classed “Research High” institution of about 13,000 undergraduates and 2,400 graduate students in Durham, on the New Hampshire seacoast.¹ UNH students come from all fifty states and seventy countries. About 44 percent are from New Hampshire,² and many are first-generation students.³ Nearly all first-year students and 56 percent of undergraduates live on campus, but much off-campus housing is in Durham, and students walk, skateboard, or moped to class; others take transportation from nearby communities. UNH has fewer than 1,000 international students, and fewer than 2,300 who list an ethnicity other than “White non-Hispanic.”⁴ In this regard, UNH’s population resembles that of many other public institutions in northern New England.

Besides eleven of UNH’s thirteen colleges and schools, the Durham campus houses the main Dimond Library and three branch libraries supporting STEM fields. In this chapter, *the library* means the Durham campus libraries collectively.⁵ While the library’s information literacy (IL) program aspires to address the lifelong learning needs of the community broadly, in practice more emphasis is placed on undergraduate support, specifically for first-year students, and secondarily on those involved in research at all levels.⁶

Program Scope

The history of information literacy at UNH is one of New England self-sufficiency and tradition, best summarized by New Hampshire’s state motto, “Live Free or Die.” There is no single authority responsible for IL at UNH; the decentralized and independent nature

of campus means that IL may be taught in scattered pockets, but it is not codified, directed, or managed. Even the term *information literacy* is to some degree new: departmental faculty may incorporate elements of IL into their courses, but they might call it *research skills* or *critical thinking*; others may not have a specific term for it at all. The university's graduation requirements do not reference information literacy, and the general education curriculum does not have a stated IL outcome.

Although the library has a long history of providing instruction, as late as 2015, teaching was a concern secondary to reference service, with a traditional desk staffed only by librarians and workflows that supported this model. Four reference librarians taught "BI"—bibliographic instruction—which at its foundation consisted of providing support to approximately 120 face-to-face sessions per year in first-year English composition classes. As one-shots, these generally involved lecture-based database, library website, and catalog demonstrations. The rapid-fire pace of moving from interface to interface left each class of twenty-four students more shell-shocked than inspired. Because there was no attempt to catch classes throughout any department's curriculum, there was no scaffolding of skills for upper-level undergraduate or graduate courses; therefore, IL sessions for these students were more or less identical to first-year sessions. Nevertheless, the team taught in approximately 280 classes per year. The library's dedicated instruction room was arranged in fixed traditional rows with laptops tethered to the tables. The librarians had never incorporated the ACRL *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*.⁷ There was no assessment.

In 2014, I was hired to look at library instruction more programmatically. I quickly learned that change would be incremental as the professional identities of my colleagues were broadly built upon a vision of libraries the way they used to be. Evolution would be difficult without a dramatic cultural shift.

This occurred in 2016, when three of the librarians retired. The library mourned the loss of decades of collections and institutional knowledge, but we found ourselves in the enviable position to look across the IL landscape to collectively observe what others had been doing. I knew we had a lot of ground to make up. We needed a renaissance.

That effort began by hiring subject librarians rather than reference generalists. By adding librarians to specifically support the College of Health and Human Services (CHHS) and the Paul College of Business and Economics (PCBE), for example, we brought in disciplinary expertise and leveraged our new colleagues' teaching and technology skills. We hired a First-Year Instruction (FYI) Librarian dedicated to foundational-level support, including IL for the first-year English classes. And we built instruction capacity internally by breaking down silos that divided departments. Librarians outside of reference, such as the Scholarly Communications Librarian and the Collections Management Librarian, had been shut out from instruction even as they exercised other liaison responsibilities for specific disciplines. We empowered these librarians to expand their liaison work to include reference and IL instruction and supported them in their early teaching. From a team of four, we became a new team of fifteen. We began a phase-out of librarians on the quiet reference desk and moved to a triaged service model with staff and students. Finally, we broke up the traditional rows in the instruction room, untethered the laptops, and moved the tables into pods to create a flexible, adaptable teaching space where group work and hands-on learning could occur. We were now positioned to shift from an inward-facing service institution to an outward-facing campus partner.

In 2019, from my position as Information Literacy Librarian, I can say that our IL program has been reborn. It still largely serves the undergraduate population, and first-year students in particular, but we have expanded our foundational reach beyond English. We have piloted an embedded librarian initiative with CHHS, and librarians have signature roles in PCBE's First-Year Innovation and Research Experience (FIRE) program. The Head of Special Collections teaches hands-on primary source activities to introductory history classes. We have pioneered gamified IL and badging programs.

Beyond our first-year efforts, librarians have begun building partnerships to support more upper-level undergraduate and graduate-level classes. We have incorporated more active learning and developed more online modules and self-paced tools. Our sessions now feature interactive survey games using the online tool Mentimeter, and "jigsaw" small-group work and student presentations. We teach at a distance with the web conferencing tool Zoom, and we partner with library colleagues to teach face-to-face in the disciplines.

Further, we have expanded our IL offerings to include a series of workshops and brown-bag lunchtime discussions each semester that are aimed variously at faculty, staff, and students. Topics have addressed citation management programs, GIS software, financial literacy, data management, open access, OER (open educational resources), and understanding ACRL's *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*.⁸ Attendance at these events has been uneven and often low, but feedback from attendees has been positive, and we have a growth mind-set.

Today, the library's IL program remains the only concerted effort on campus, but it is now better positioned than ever to partner with and expand upon the distributed efforts of others at UNH who incorporate information literacy into their teaching and learning initiatives.

Operations

Lean for UNH's size, the library has a dean, associate dean, assistant dean, fifteen librarians, and a staff of about forty-two. The library also relies heavily on student workers to supplement its staffing, and employs nearly eighty per year.

Operating staff report to PAT-level (professional, administrative, technical) staff, but with the exception of Dean's Office staff reporting to the assistant dean, all other staff in what had been nine units ultimately report to five librarians. A 2017 reorganization brought these units under the umbrella of five divisions: Special Collections and Archives; Academic and Community Engagement; Research and Learning Services; Resource Acquisition and Discovery; and Technology, Scholarship and Publishing. The five librarians who supervise were further appointed as division heads, creating a de facto middle-management layer serving as a link among divisions to promote communication, collaboration, and coordination between what had been very siloed units. Division heads also act as links between the divisions and the Dean's Office, "translating strategy and vision into daily operations."⁹

Fourteen of the librarians have full tenure-track faculty status and are unionized with the broader UNH faculty; the FYI Librarian is non-tenure-track and on an extended three-year term position. Currently, seven librarians (50%) are on the tenure track and must master the duties outlined in their position descriptions as well as participating in

scholarship and service, including regular project and committee work both internal and external to the library. If they don't already come in with one, a second master's degree is also required before the sixth year in order to qualify for tenure.¹⁰ Librarians report to the dean through an elected faculty chair. Faculty members do not supervise other faculty members; therefore, librarians have broad autonomy over their work to exercise academic freedom and teach as they see fit, based on their knowledge and in collaboration with faculty in academic departments. Several librarians are shouldering responsibilities that normally would be divided into separate positions.

All of the tenure-track librarians have liaison assignments, consisting of reference and IL instruction support, communications, and collection development. As in the case of the Business Librarian, some assignments directly align with the position and expertise for which a librarian was hired. Some librarians have liaison assignments in addition to the more operational or functional work for which they were hired, as is the case of the Head of Cataloging, who must support one or more departments in the midst of her other work. Because the library strives to assign at least one librarian to every college and increasingly to various populations, offices, and schools, we struggle to align departments with librarian expertise and to support all programs equitably. We all wear many hats. In my case, I am Information Literacy Librarian with a broad functional role to oversee instruction and IL initiatives; I am liaison to the English department with all intended communication, collections, and discipline-specific IL instruction responsibilities; I supervise a staff member and oversee reference service; and I am Division Head for Research and Learning Services; I am also in my fifth year on the tenure track.

Given that all librarians are expected to perform instruction, the IL program is distributed throughout the library, but it is concentrated in the division of Research and Learning Services, to which eight librarians and one staff member are assigned. The staff position, the Research and Instructional Services Coordinator (RISC), was created in 2016 to begin to shift legacy workloads in reference and instruction away from faculty. The RISC manages reference service, supervises and trains students, works with the FYI Librarian to coordinate IL support for the English Composition classes, and implements and maintains reference and instruction-related tools, such as those in the Springshare suite.¹¹ In 2018, I expanded the RISC's position responsibilities to include assisting the FYI Librarian in foundational-level IL instruction.

Within this complex and high-workload environment, IL instruction is broadly unstructured and practice varies among librarians to a large degree. Some of the dedicated liaisons have been extraordinarily successful in building relationships in the short time they have been here; others, particularly those with more functional roles and operational responsibilities, struggle to prioritize liaison and IL work or have yet to find recurring IL partners. Depending upon the success of their individual initiatives, some may teach dozens of classes per semester, and others may not teach all year.

The IL program has no budget, and library funding at UNH generally is tightening. Library administration supports the IL program by urging all librarians, not just subject specialists, to actively seek out suitable partners for embedded instruction and IL assessment. Combine primary professional responsibilities with the tenure-track responsibilities for active engagement in the profession, including publishing, presenting, and service work, and it's understandable that tensions arise between the administration and the library faculty in balancing all of these activities.

Marketing

The face-to-face one-shot support for first-year English classes is a long-standing legacy program that largely runs itself without having to solicit participation; PCBE's FIRE program has its own marketing initiatives. Beyond these two programs, we continue to search for instruction opportunities across the curriculum through our liaison channels. In most cases, an IL opportunity with a new faculty partner is likely to be a one-shot.

Collaboration

Collaboration is essential for furthering our revitalized efforts. I have partnered variously with Academic Technology and the University Writing Program to include IL opportunities in programs sponsored by these offices. UNH's Center for Excellence and Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CEITL) has also been a supportive partner. Last year CEITL formed a steering committee with membership from these aforementioned partners, along with the library, the Graduate School, and the Center for Academic Resources. Together we meet monthly to share information about our initiatives and to better understand the teaching and learning environment across campus. CEITL also began a Certificate of Participation program that has already enrolled more than 140 faculty and graduate students from across campus: participants accrue points toward a certificate that demonstrates "a commitment to promote the highest quality of student learning through implementation of best practices in college teaching."¹² The library's eligible offerings, including brown-bag discussions introducing the ACRL *Framework*, award points in this program. When enrolled in the program, librarians can also earn points for teaching eligible sessions.

The relationship with CEITL not only facilitates increased communication and collaboration, but also allows the library to share in CEITL's extensive and well-established email lists for marketing our events linked to IL, teaching, and learning. We see this partnership as essential for highlighting our IL work, increasing participation in our extracurricular instruction offerings, and elevating our position on campus as a partner in providing educational opportunities. As a result, CEITL is helping to bestow legitimacy on the library's IL efforts after a long period of relative invisibility.

Assessment

Assessment has been one of our biggest challenges, in part because UNH does not yet have a campus-wide culture of assessment. The university is accredited under the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE), and most colleges also have their own assessment bodies that dictate standards and practices.¹³ As two NECHE standards do reference information literacy,¹⁴ the library did participate on the committee advising UNH on its five-year self-study in 2017, and UNH included the library's instruction numbers as one of the only data points available for demonstrating attention to this area.

Comprehensively assessing our one-shots, particularly at the foundational level, has been challenging. In 2014, an early project to assess English composition students' retention of our IL instruction was derailed: I was told by the program coordinator that library

faculty could neither assign “[the English Department] students” homework before our IL sessions nor assess them afterwards. Since that time, efforts have been sporadic. On a campus without broader directives, the librarians’ academic freedom has meant having the ability to assess or not based on their own reflective practices. As many of the librarians are still new to their liaison assignments, and no assessment had been done earlier, most have been working to build relationships with departmental faculty with the expectation that further assessment efforts will be initiated as partnerships develop.

I am currently in discussion with CEITL to collaborate under a grant from the Davis Educational Foundation to create an information literacy module in UNH’s learning management system, Canvas, that will teach and assess information literacy skills as a way to demonstrate the library’s impact on student learning. The grant was awarded funding in December 2018.

Role of the One-Shot

One-shots are still our bread and butter. Today, they are much more geared toward active, participatory learning, but many are still tool-based to some degree, as tool-based demo is still what many UNH faculty think of when they think of the library—a legacy perspective we are eager to amend. We actively negotiate with our departmental colleagues to look for new ways to move beyond the one-shot to more integrated IL instruction. We have one strong, embedded relationship with PCBE’s FIRE program; others have been piloted but may or may not continue based on departmental initiatives and faculty interest.

Pedagogical Highlights

UNH’s IL program has changed so dramatically in three years that many elements have already been mentioned in this chapter, but two pedagogical highlights stand out. In 2017, and based on the Writing Center model of helping walk-in students with their writing, we began a program of First-Year Research Drop-In Sessions. Scheduled in the instruction room for two hours a day, twice a week, these are sessions where first-year students—and anyone who walks in—can get one-on-one help from a librarian without an appointment. We advertise these sessions widely and specifically to the first-year programs we already work with. Students come as individuals or in groups, stay for a few minutes or hang out for forty-five. The service provides students with agency to get point-of-need assistance, and the open invitation allays some of the anxiety that can come from having to ask for help at a service desk. The program is already successful and is growing in popularity with both students and faculty. The service also has allowed us to begin shifting our face-to-face instruction for English to a less labor-intensive, more sustainable model that will incorporate a variety of modes for this introductory instruction.

The library has also pioneered gamified IL instruction and badging on UNH’s campus. Beginning in 2015, librarians were given opportunities to create information-literacy-themed mini-games that were awarded points as part of PCBE’s FIRE program. Games have evolved from a web-based “unlock the door”-style IL game designed around finding journal articles and discovering a secret “key” to a game where a badge is awarded automatically to students who complete a series of short information-literacy-themed

modules. The FYI Librarian and the Business Librarian investigated badging platforms, designed the games and badges, and worked to incorporate them into the Canvas system. The FIRE badging modules have issued over 500 badges in two years and were broadened in 2018–19 with an additional business-focused module and badge. A first-year English badging module premiered this year and has already issued 150 badges. We believe it's possible to expand this delivery method for IL instruction to other departments and colleges as well.

Information Literacy Coordinator Profile

My position doesn't place me at the top of a hierarchy with direct authority over IL instruction; instead, my role is best described as first among peers. I look at my management style as something akin to what Vineet Nayar described as “more like a racetrack where each [individual] can compete successfully” based on four fundamental ideas:

- 1. Overlapping goals.** Goals will have significant overlaps; each individual and each team understands that they are pursuing one collective organizational goal.
- 2. Role linkages.** Each individual, team, and function will play a distinct role in the race while also supporting each other's roles. Every individual has to be clear about how the individual, team, and organizational roles are linked.
- 3. Constant collaboration.** At the foundation of this model is the fact that no one individual or team can win the race alone. They will win only if they play their roles to perfection and help others that they're linked to.
- 4. Continuous reinvention.** Teams will continuously process new data, creating a landscape of learning and realignment across levels.¹⁵

My colleagues and I work together to identify overlapping goals, many of which have thus far formed around foundational first-year instruction. I work to leverage role linkages, the best example of which is the role the FYI Librarian plays with the Business Librarian to form a bridge between foundational first-year support in FIRE and upper-level IL in the college. We constantly collaborate, with other librarians taking the lead to build tutorials or to share new active-learning approaches. And the program is under continuous reinvention as the library landscape and the campus climate continue to change.

Three years out from the 2016 retirements that relaunched the IL program, the new librarians have found their footing individually, and we are now coming together as a whole to begin developing a community of practice around teaching. We have begun recasting our IL program as less a series of “liaison activities, including instruction” to a curriculum-based program using the ACRL *Framework* to develop learning outcomes for

each of our areas, allowing us to rethink what we do as librarians. This work has just begun, but is generating excitement as we work together toward a more holistic approach to IL instruction and contemporary librarianship. Further, I currently hold the role of vice chair of the university committee that oversees and manages UNH's general education program. As the ten-year review of that curriculum nears in 2020, I am advocating through this faculty body for the inclusion of information literacy as a critical element of that program.

What I Wish People Knew

Challenges to our program remain legion. Working outside of a top-down, delta-shaped, hierarchical model, my energies are more outward-facing, toward campus, than inward-facing toward my librarian colleagues. The labor, then, is sometimes seen more by faculty on campus than by my dean. It is difficult to bring about cultural change, and I often wish we in the library were more integrated as an IL body. And yet, we have moved the program significantly forward in a short three years, and in that time, we have already raised IL awareness both in the library and on campus. I am confident that as our renaissance continues we will forge new partnerships that will lead to richer, more robust IL opportunities.

Notes

1. In January 2019, UNH was granted Carnegie Classification R1, "Doctoral Universities—Very high research activity," for the first time.
2. "Facts and Figures," University of New Hampshire, accessed September 28, 2018, <https://www.unh.edu/main/facts-figures>.
3. UNH doesn't currently track first-generation students specifically.
4. "Common Data Set," Office of Institutional Research, University of New Hampshire, accessed January 15, 2019, <https://www.unh.edu/institutional-research/common-data-set>.
5. In this chapter, references to UNH and the IL program reflect the Durham campus only. The libraries at UNH-Manchester and UNH Law have their own information literacy programs and initiatives.
6. Besides teaching, research, and clinical faculty, UNH has one of the largest undergraduate research conferences in the US. See "Undergraduate Research Conference," University of New Hampshire, accessed November 25, 2019, <https://www.unh.edu/urc>.
7. Association of College and Research Libraries, *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2000), <https://alair.ala.org/handle/11213/7668>.
8. Association of College and Research Libraries, *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2016), <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.
9. Kimberly Sweetman, "Our Charge," Division Heads Group, University of New Hampshire Libraries, Durham, NH, 2017. Division heads were appointed to an initial three-year term, and this work is estimated to amount to 20 percent of their workload.
10. Librarian promotion and tenure documents differ only slightly from those for UNH's departmental faculty and are available here: Library Promotion and Tenure Committee, *Criteria and Procedures for the Promotion and Tenure of Library Faculty*, report (Durham: University of New Hampshire, 2017), https://scholars.unh.edu/library_docs/1.
11. The library has had LibGuides since 2009, but since 2016 has implemented LibCal and LibAnswers, including LibChat, and has relaunched use of RefAnalytics.

12. Center for Excellence and Innovation in Teaching and Learning, “CEITL Participation Certificate Program,” University of New Hampshire, 2017, <https://www.unh.edu/cetl/ceitl-participation-certificate-program>.
13. For example, PCBE is accredited independently under the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business.
14. New England Commission of Higher Education, “Standards for Accreditation,” July 1, 2016, <https://cihe.neasc.org/standards-policies/standards-accreditation/standards-effective-july-1-2016>. See specifically 4.12: Assuring Academic Quality and 4.15: Undergraduate Degree Programs.
15. Vineet Nayar, “Don’t Let Outdated Management Structures Kill Your Company,” *Harvard Business Review*, February 10, 2016, <https://hbr.org/2016/02/dont-let-outdated-management-structures-kill-your-company>.

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