

TO: Associated Colleges of the South
FROM: Charlotte Ford, Birmingham-Southern College
RE: Activities Report, Integrating Information Fluency into the Curriculum
DATE: December 20, 2001

A forum on Integrating Information Fluency into the Curriculum at Birmingham-Southern was held on two sequential Friday afternoons in October (the 5th and the 12th). Thirty-four individuals from 17 different disciplines (as well as from Academic Computing and the Library) attended the forum. A dozen students were also invited to attend, but only one actually did so; this appeared to be due mainly to scheduling conflicts.

At the start of the forum, each participant was given a folder with general information on the concept of information fluency, as well as area-specific or discipline-specific examples of ways in which other institutions were working at integrating information fluency into their curricula. The general information consisted of the following documents:

- *Toward Information Fluency in the Liberal Arts*. Report from the Information Fluency Guidelines Task Force of the Associated Colleges of the South (Winter, 2001), in which they endorse the information literacy competency standards set forth by the ACRL. Available at http://www.colleges.org/~if/IF_Guidelines.doc
- ACRL *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*, including standards, performance indicators, and outcomes (approved January, 2000). Available at <http://www.ala.org/acrl/ilstandardlo.html>
- ACRL Best Practices Initiative: *Characteristics of Programs of Information Literacy that Illustrate Best Practices* (March, 2001). Available at <http://www.ala.org/acrl/nili/criteria.html>
- Shapiro, Jeremy & Shelley K. Hughes. "Information literacy as a liberal art: Enlightenment proposals for a new curriculum." *Educom Review*, vol. 31 no. 2 (April, 1996). Available at <http://www.educause.edu/pub/er/review/reviewArticles/31231.html>
- Executive Summary of *Being Fluent with Information Technology* (the 1999 publication of the National Research Council in which the term "information fluency" was first used). Available at <http://stills.nap.edu/html/beingfluent/es.html>
- Chapter VI of the 1998 Boyer Commission report on *Reinventing Undergraduate Education*: "Use information technology creatively." Available at <http://notes.cc.sunysb.edu/Pres/boyer.nsf>
- Kirk, Thomas J. *Information Literacy in a Nutshell: Basic Information for Academic Administrators and Faculty* (2001). Available at the Institute for Information Literacy website: <http://www.ala.org/acrl/nili/whatis.html>

The agenda for the forum, including a revised agenda for Day 2, can be found in Appendix A. At the opening session, the concept of information fluency was introduced, and comments on its significance were offered by a librarian, a member of the academic computing support staff, and a member of the teaching faculty. Following this, the group broke out by divisions (with IT staff and librarians dispersed among the divisions), to brainstorm about desired information

competencies among students. The group reconvened to discuss commonalities, and notes from each breakout session were reviewed by the committee. Among the common themes were:

- Much discussion of the level of student computing skills that could, or should, be supported at the College. While it was acknowledged that the level of student computer literacy has risen (and will continue to rise) there was interest expressed in helping students master basic skills.
- Widespread interest in having some kind of information technology lab or center, akin to the centers for writing and speech already in existence on campus. This would be a center that was staffed, perhaps by capable students who could guide their peers in the use of information technology.
- A concern with evaluation of web resources (i.e., how can students be made more critical of the resources they pull from the web? How can they learn to access "the good stuff"?)
- A perceived need for more faculty training in the use of information technology.
- Several people expressed interest in knowing more about Grinnell College's IMTS (instructional media technology specialists in different areas); information on the setup at Grinnell had been distributed in some of the packets.

In each breakout session, members of the faculty also shared excellent examples of ways in which they were integrating information fluency into their classes.

In response to the discussions that took place on Day 1, the agenda for Day 2 was revised (see Appendix A). At the start of the second session, some of the faculty who had spoken about their work with information technology in the classroom were invited to share these examples with the larger group, and graciously agreed to do so. An example of a plan developed by the Education division, which purposefully incorporated both field experiences and technology into the curriculum, was also shared. In addition, a member of the coordinating committee had contacted one of the instructional media technology specialists at Grinnell, and reported back to the group on the setup and funding of the IMTS. Another member of the committee had already taken steps to set up a meeting with the Associate Dean of the College to discuss faculty interest in having an information technology center, and this was reported.

A breakout session followed the opening session. This time, academic divisions, librarians and computing staff all met separately (though computer science faculty chose to meet with the computing staff). An attempt was made to focus the breakout discussions on what basic information competencies all students should have; what information competencies disciplinary majors should have by graduation; and how (specifically) to foster these competencies.

The group then reconvened for a plenary session, with the following being some of the major points of discussion:

- Faculty computer literacy and student computer literacy emerged as two parallel concerns, each of which should be supported by the College. In addition to identifying some remaining infrastructural barriers to the use of information technology, participants clearly expressed the need for more support - not just for facilities and hardware, but for human beings to support information fluency efforts. Discussion of what it would take to provide meaningful support was heated: could the College aspire to a Grinnell model? Would student support be a good way to go, or at least a good beginning? Could the College pay enough to attract talented students to provide technological support? Would students provide enough continuity?
- There was some concern that incorporating a focus on information fluency would mean a shift away from a “content” model – away from lectures, and toward more “generally applicable” skills (research methods, methods of inquiry, process of science). There was debate as to whether or not this was a problem, and whether or not the use of information technology took away from content or created a foundation for further inquiry. The question was raised as to whether there were alternative delivery methods for information fluency that would not cut into class time (such as tutorials, at the introductory level). It was suggested that the laboratory model in the sciences might be more broadly applicable than was currently thought. 1-Y courses (for first-year students) were also mentioned as appropriate courses in which to focus on basic information skills.
- Some debate ensued over the desirability of teaching computing skills vs. computing concepts. Some Computer Science faculty objected to teaching skills without concepts; other faculty expressed disagreement with this (i.e. “I don’t want to know how my car runs, just want to be able to drive it to where I need to go.”).
- There were questions as to how Computer Science faculty, as well as academic computing staff and librarians fit into the process of building information fluency. It was suggested that the library needed to maintain flexibility and openness to change, while taking on more of an educational / collaborative role. Faculty reiterated the need for better support for projects involving intensive use of technology; at the time being, they feel they impose on the good will of already overburdened faculty and staff to help them.

Concrete suggestions that emerged from this discussion included 1) taking a current inventory of what was done with regard to information fluency (similar to what the Education division had done); and 2) creating better means of support for faculty and students, perhaps in the form of an “instructional media lab.”

The forum went beyond the allotted time, and there was general agreement that it was very useful to have a cross-disciplinary discussion of information fluency efforts. Evaluation forms were distributed to participants (results appear in Appendix B).

The following have occurred as a result of the Forum on Integrating Information Fluency Standards into the Curriculum:

- 1) A meeting was held with the Associate Dean in charge of information technology, to discuss the possibility of soliciting funding for an information technology center as discussed in the forum. Two members of the committee (an IT staff member and a librarian), as well as a Computer Science faculty member and the director of the Writing Center, were in attendance. An initial proposal was subsequently written up by the staff member and is currently under consideration by key administrators. This proposal broaches the idea of developing a media center, with an eye toward eventually funding a more holistic “learning resource center” that would incorporate the functions of a writing center, speech center, and information technology center.
- 2) Partly as a result of the forum, the Library has instituted a liaison program, with each librarian focusing on the information needs of a specific division. Requests for several new library sessions in the areas of Education, Business and the Social Sciences came out of the forum.
- 3) Some information has been shared regarding information fluency activities in different disciplines on campus. It seems likely that the ACS information fluency survey will help provide a fuller picture, thus addressing the desire that was expressed in this forum to have an inventory of what was being done by different individuals on campus.
- 4) Due to a shift in format (from a full-day workshop with a meal included, to two afternoons with no meal), and also to a low level of student participation, over \$1000 of grant money remains available. The committee requested permission from the ACS to use this money for follow-up activities by selected faculty and staff, and will probably fund several in-house workshops on information technology skills – specifically, those skills in which faculty expressed interest in the evaluations.
- 5) A member of the Education division has submitted a follow-up grant proposal to the ACS, to further that division’s initiatives in the area of information fluency and to continue the dialog among different areas on campus.

Information Fluency Forum

Agenda

Day 1 (October 5, 2001)	
2:30 - 3:30 PM	Introduction: What is information fluency? Why bother with it? <i>(Susan Hagen, Charlotte Ford, Ben Whorton, Shane Pitts ~ Harbert Auditorium)</i>
3:30 – 3:45 PM	A necessary and refreshing break
3:45 – 4:45 PM	Breakout by divisions for brainstorming about desired info competencies <i>Behavioral & Social Sciences, Business, and Education: HB301 Fine & Performing Arts and Humanities: HB302 Science & Mathematics: HB 126</i>
4:45 – 5:00 PM	Reconvene briefly in Harbert Auditorium

Day 2 (October 12, 2001)	
1:30 - 2:30 PM	Meet in Harbert Auditorium Breakout by division to discuss strategies for achieving info competencies <i>Behavioral & Social Sciences, Business, and Education: HB301 Fine & Performing Arts and Humanities: HB302 Science & Mathematics: HB 126</i>
2:30 - 3:15 PM	Discipline coordinators (or representatives) propose tentative plans of action (activities in specific courses which would lead to desired competencies)
3:15 – 3:30 PM	Break!
3:30 - 4:30 PM	Reconvene in Harbert Auditorium for plenary session and evaluation

Information Fluency Forum
Revised Agenda for Day 2 (Oct. 12)

1:30 - 2:00	<p>Meet in Harbert Auditorium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick recap of Day 1 • What the IMTS at Grinnell College had to say • Some examples of ways in which faculty already incorporate information fluency into the curriculum in their areas
2:00 - 3:15	<p>Breakout by area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Faculty: What info competencies should majors in your discipline have by graduation? How do you already foster these competencies (in specific courses; with specific assignments)? What are some additional ways to foster them? <i>Behavioral & Social Sciences, Business and Education: HB301</i> <i>Fine & Performing Arts and Humanities: HB302</i> <i>Science & Mathematics: HB126</i> • Library & Academic Computing People: What basic info competencies should all students have? How can we better support this? <i>Harbert Auditorium</i>
3:15 - 3:30	BREAK! (we hear there will be coffee this time).
3:30 - 4:30	Reconvene in Harbert Auditorium for plenary session & evaluation
5:00 - ??	Off-campus opportunity for "further dialog" and raising spirits, sponsored by the ACS

Appendix B



Information Fluency Forum
 Summary of Participant Evaluations
 October 18, 2001

Out of 28 participants on the second day, only 12 evaluations were returned. This is a summary of those results. (Majority is in **bold**)

- Q1. Participant understands more about IF and how it can be integrated into the classroom.
42% Strongly Agree - 50% Agree - 8% Indifferent
- Q2. Participant found that breakouts by discipline were beneficial and productive.
 33% SA – **58% Agree** – 8% Indiff.
- Q3. Participant left the forum with concrete ideas for implementing IF into the curriculum.
 17% SA – **58% Agree** – 25% Indiff.
- Q4. Participant gained ideas to build on IF concepts already introduced in their classroom.
 17% SA – **67% Agree** – 8% Indiff. – 8% Not Answered
- Q5. Participant feels that majors in their discipline are well-equipped with regard to IF.
 0% SA – 17% Agree – 25% Indiff. – **42% Disagree** – 17% N.A.
- Q6. Participant plans to encourage and collaborate with others in their discipline to incorporate IF into the curriculum.
 8% SA – **42% Agree** – 33% Indiff. – 8% Disagree – 8 % N.A.
- Q7. Participant was in favor of 2 shorter sessions rather than 1 long one.
58% SA – 8% Agree – 25% Indiff. – 8% Disagree

Here are the responses by the numbers:
 (Legend: R# = Response number 5,4,3,2,or 1 – SA=Strongly Agree SD = Strongly Disagree)

Summary of Comments from Q9 (One thing I did not hear that would have been helpful...).

- Do an inventory

Q#	R5	R4	R3	R2	R1	No Answer	%of SA	%of Agree	%of NoOp	%of DisAg	%of SD	%of NoAns
1	5	6	1	0	0	0	41.67%	50.00%	8.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
2	4	7	1	0	0	0	33.33%	58.33%	8.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
3	2	7	3	0	0	0	16.67%	58.33%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
4	2	8	1	0	0	1	16.67%	66.67%	8.33%	0.00%	0.00%	8.33%
5	0	2	3	5	0	2	0.00%	16.67%	25.00%	41.67%	0.00%	16.67%
6	1	5	4	1	0	1	8.33%	41.67%	33.33%	8.33%	0.00%	8.33%
7	7	1	3	1	0	0	58.33%	8.33%	25.00%	8.33%	0.00%	0.00%

- Where is the money coming from to support the ideas discussed?
- More examples of course development

Other comments, ideas, and suggestions:

- “Thanks for having this!”
- “I think it would have been helpful to have Dr. Berte or Dr. Penfield here for the last hour or so, so they could hear our concerns and realize that we need a tech lab and the money to support it.”
- “Keep this going – Enjoyed it very much”

Part II. Faculty Interest Survey

<u>Office Applications</u>	<u>Level of Proficiency Desired</u>		
	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
Word Processing (ex: Word)	1	3	1
Spreadsheets (ex. Excel)	1	4	0
Database (ex. Access)	2	1	0
Presentation (ex. PowerPoint)	2	5	3
Forms/Brochures (ex. Publisher, Acrobat)	2	4	1
 <u>Web Building</u>			
FrontPage	4	3	3
Dreamweaver	5	0	1
Raw HTML Coding	2	0	3
 <u>Windows</u>			
Understanding Windows	1	1	1
File/Folder/Directory Structure	1	2	1
P.M. (Preventative Maintenance)	1	4	1
 <u>Other:</u>			
Pagemaker	0	1	1
Dynamic HTML	0	0	1
Java	0	0	1
JavaScript	0	0	1
Active Server Pages (asp)	1	1	1