

A Journey into Information Fluency: Integrating Information Fluency into the Hendrix College Journeys Course

Final Report: Amanda Moore, Library Director

INFORMATION FLUENCY WORKSHOP

The Hendrix College's information fluency grant, "Journey into Information Fluency," called for an information fluency workshop led by an engaging expert. This expert would introduce Hendrix faculty members teaching Journeys, a new freshmen commons course, to IF principles. The project's tangible purpose was to give a significant number of Hendrix faculty a taste of the richness IF can bring to the classroom. The intangible intent was to foster positive relationships and provide opportunities for greater collaboration amongst faculty, librarians, and information technologists.

After carefully considering a variety of IF experts, Dr. Susan Hagen, Associate Dean at Birmingham-Southern College, was the Project Team's top candidate. Dr. Hagen graciously agreed to lead an IF workshop for the Journeys faculty and a general introductory session for all faculty. The general faculty introductory IF workshop was on Tuesday, November 5 followed by a 4.5 hour workshop specifically tailored for Journeys faculty. While the Project Team originally planned to hold the workshop in late spring or early summer 2002, well before the fall 2002 start date of Journeys, scheduling complexities left no options other than November. Clearly, a workshop ten weeks into a new course meant faculty members had grappled with the course's intellectual content in meaningful ways and were better prepared to discuss the integration of IF into this new course.

Project Consultant, Dr. Patricia Breivik (President of the National Forum on Information Literacy and Director of Libraries at San Jose State University) advised on workshop content, and Dr. Hagen prepared for an audience with limited exposure to IF principles. She captured the audience's attention with notable quotes and statistics about student learning. Then she introduced faculty to the stages of IF necessary at each academic level. Taking topics from the Journeys course syllabus, Dr. Hagen provided sample assignments that would integrate information fluency and collaborative learning. She demonstrated a variety of useful web sites, evaluative tools, and Educator course management software. She left participants with access to IF workshop handouts and Powerpoint slides on her Educator IF workshop course, "Information Fluency &

Journeys.” Handouts and Powerpoint slides on her Birmingham-Southern Educator site included

- Information Fluency Defined
- Information Fluency Model
- Stages of Information Fluency
- Library Guides for Research, Website Evaluation, and Disciplinary Standards
- A Quick Introduction to Setting Up a Course in Blackboard
- Engaging Students with Web-Based Assignments

FACULTY RESPONSE

The Journeys workshop was generally well received. Nineteen attended including 14 of the 18 Journeys faculty, the Library Director, the Systems Librarian, Assistant Director of Information Technology/Academic Computing, the Coordinator of Academic Support Services, and the Associate Provost. Twelve of the 14 Journeys faculty assessed the workshop via an evaluation form, “Evaluation of ACS Information Fluency Workshop for Journeys Faculty.” Eight of the 12 respondents reported minimal knowledge of IF before the workshop. Four of 12 claimed to be knowledgeable. Nine out of 12 found the workshop useful, and three reported the workshop did not contribute to their knowledge.

Participants listed what they found particularly useful about the workshop: most appreciated the suggested class assignments, collaborative projects, and CMS software; many enjoyed the specialized web sites (and the ensuing discussion about the evaluation of web sites) as well as other sources of information relevant to classroom instruction; several benefited from discussion about IF proficiencies for each year of college; and one was happy to have “discovered the Bailey Library web page” with links to electronic style guides. Participants commented “The workshop sensitized me to just how much our students are already using Internet-based resources,” and “The workshop pointed me in directions I would not have known existed.”

Participants would like to learn more about the evaluation of websites, subject relevant web sites and sources of electronic information, course management software, encouragement of critical thinking skills, and copyright. Without prompting, two participants reported a specific need to learn more about Bailey Library resources. One suggested his/her faculty colleagues would benefit from relationships with IT and the Library: “I think that some of my faculty colleagues would really benefit by taking some of the computer workshops conducted by

Karen Fraser of Hendrix IT and doing a better job of cooperating with our excellent library professionals.”

In terms of integrating IF into classroom instruction, several faculty members reported they might now implement group work using electronic resources, assign projects involving web site evaluation, and provide exercises giving students the opportunity to help build the teaching tools. With some timidity, one offers, “I might try assigning online journals.” A few participants seemed uncomfortable with IF. One writes, for example, “I just don’t have the background to understand the possibilities. Consider the possibility that there is a person who doesn’t know what Blackboard, Educator, or FrontPage are, what they do, and what their purpose is.” Another asserts, “I would integrate what I’ve learned if I can find the time to feel comfortable with the methods.” One who reports a higher level of prior IF knowledge, responds “I am unlikely to have my students design web pages because I find that they often spend more time searching for images than working on the text.”

FINANCIAL

The ACS awarded Hendrix College a \$3,800 IF grant. The total amount spent was \$3,273, leaving a balance of \$527.

OUTCOMES AND FUTURE

In the IF project proposal, the Project Team listed several desired outcomes of the IF workshop. First was a spirit of greater collaboration among Bailey Library, Information Technology, and the Hendrix faculty. This outcome is hard to quantify, but anecdotally, the Library and IT are communicating much more frequently and more intentionally about many issues of common concern—including IF. A few comments from the IF surveys would suggest some are beginning to think about the role of IT and the Library in their classrooms and the benefits of collaboration. For example, consider the two participants who reported a specific need to learn more about Bailey Library resources, and the one who suggested his/her faculty colleagues would benefit from relationships with IT and the Library.

A second desired outcome was the creation of a web page and a special library collection supporting Journeys students and faculty. Before the beginning of the Fall 2002 semester, librarians created a Journeys special collection prominently located in the Library. This collection, which is still growing, has had a fair amount of use. Meanwhile, we created a Journeys web page

(<http://www.hendrix.edu/baileylibrary/journeys.htm>) with relevant information resources to help students with their class research. The Journeys web page was heavily used, averaging 36 visits per day during the fall 2002 semester.

Anecdotal evidence gleaned from students suggests they found the web page useful. The Journeys curriculum will be evolving as we prepare for Fall 2003, and the Journeys web page will be updated during the summer to reflect these curricular changes before the beginning of the fall semester.

The Project Leaders originally envisioned a web page of IF resources for faculty members. In anticipation, Project Contact Amanda Moore wrote an article entitled "Information Fluency in Liberal Arts Colleges" for the April 2002 issue of *Arkansas Libraries*. The resources detailed in this article were used as the basis for an IF web page. In the meanwhile, at the behest of several faculty members, the Library has started a Faculty Development Collection project, and the current plan is to include the IF web resources within the context of a broader set of pedagogical web pages (and collection resources). This project is underway and resources should be available to all faculty by the fall 2003 semester.

Dr. Hagen presented a compelling introduction to IF, but it is clear a significant number still feel uncomfortable with IF, hold a fairly limited view about what IF can offer, or need additional IF instruction. This is an opportunity to initiate a variety of pedagogical discussions. In the next few years, the Library and IT will plan luncheon meetings with the faculty to discuss IF related topics such as copyright fair use, web site evaluation, library databases, topical web sites, and collaborative learning. Coincidentally, the Library has started a small but growing "Faculty Development Collection," which presently contains a variety materials dealing with IF, college instruction, critical thinking, learning styles in the classroom, writing tests and assignments for higher order thinking, assessment, undergraduate curriculum, and faculty professional development. We believe the collection, once it has grown a bit, coupled with topical luncheon meetings and instructional technologies will provide a basis for greater faculty involvement in pedagogical discussions on issues such as information fluency.