

**Report to the Associated Colleges of the South  
Integrating Information Fluency into the Senior Honors Research Seminar  
August 2003**

**Overview**

With support from the Associated Colleges of the South, several faculty, librarians, and information technology staff conducted a workshop on September 14, 2002, for seniors in the honors degree program at Rollins College. Our objectives were to assist the students in (1) identifying and accessing information, (2) evaluating their resources, and (3) integrating their research into their senior honors projects.

**Workshop Presenters**

Sandra Bryant, Instructional Technologist, IT  
Edward Cohen, Prof of English  
Michael Gunter, Visiting Asst Prof of Politics  
Susan Libby, Asst Prof of Art History  
Dorothy Mays, Reference Librarian  
Miriam Moore, User Services Consultant, IT  
Judith Schmalstig, Assoc Prof of Biology  
William Svitavsky, Reference Librarian

**Preparation**

To prepare for the workshop, each student completed a "Technology Comfort Level Survey" (Appendix I). The results of these surveys were helpful to our information technology specialists, who discovered that the students were surprisingly uneven in their computer literacy. All of the students, for example, reported that they were "very comfortable" in using Microsoft Word products; but more than half of them were only "somewhat comfortable" with backing up their files, and two reported that they had never done so. Such responses helped us to anticipate points to cover in the workshop.

Moreover, in advance of the workshop, each presenter read all or several of the students' research project proposals. As a result, we were able to anticipate the students' specific needs as we prepared our presentations and to incorporate references to their projects in our sessions. Citing their individual projects signaled our commitment to enhancing the students' information fluency.

## **Workshop**

The workshop convened at 9:00 am on September 14, 2002. Twenty of the twenty-three senior honors students were on hand, and during the introduction they briefly described their research projects and assessed the state of their information fluency skills. Some expressed confidence, but several admitted that they were unable to identify the research resources available to them.

In Session I (90 minutes) two reference librarians conducted presentations on identifying, accessing, and evaluating information to support the students' research projects. Dorothy Mays began by describing the tradition of academic scholarship and then led a discussion on the importance of including primary sources. She showed a student who was studying age-related alcohol laws in two Florida jurisdictions how to gather statistics—by age and by county—on drunk driving arrests. She showed a student who was working on the effects of the French Revolution on England how to access eighteenth-century London newspapers. William Svitavsky then gave a presentation on conducting research on the Web. He first discussed strategies for evaluating internet resources and introduced the students to power searching commands. Then he showed a student who was engaged in a project on the Atlantis theme in literature how to locate and assess a dozen sites on that very topic.

In Session II (90 minutes) two information technologists, Sandra Bryant and Miriam Moore, began by reviewing the students' responses to the "Technology Comfort Level Surveys." They demonstrated how to use Novell to make back-up copies of files and gave brief demonstrations on how to use shortcuts, how to construct tables, and how to insert endnotes in Microsoft Word. Then they took the students to our multimedia area and showed them how to scan images into their projects and how to make audio CDs and video DVDs. This session was especially valuable for students in art and music. For one of our students, a violinist, this session was an awakening: she decided to record her senior honors recital, to burn the recording into a CD, and to bind the CD into her final project.

At the buffet luncheon, the students enjoyed conversations with one another and with the faculty who were to serve as presenters in the afternoon. Two of the three students who had missed the morning sessions returned to campus from a law school admissions forum and joined the workshop in progress.

In Session III (45 minutes) the workshop divided into four groups, and students in the humanities, sciences, social sciences, and expressive arts met, respectively, with faculty members in English, biology, politics, and art history. The focus in these meetings was on strategies for transforming discipline-specific research into appropriate literature reviews. Each presenter had read the students' project proposals, and meeting in small groups gave the students an opportunity to consider how to construct and position their literature reviews into their individual projects.

In Session IV (15 minutes) Donna Cohen, Library Director, briefly described the format required for the completed senior honors projects. She noted that instructions for preparing the projects for deposit in the Rollins College Archives are posted on the library's website.

At the informal closing session (60 minutes) all the student, staff, and faculty participants reviewed the day's activities. Each student spoke briefly on some aspect of the workshop that had assisted him/her in understanding how computer literacy, information literacy, and critical thinking would play a key role in the successful completion of the senior honors research project.

## **Evaluation**

During the closing meeting the students completed evaluations (Appendix II) of the workshop. In assessing the individual sessions, most felt that the level of each presentation was neither "too basic" nor "too advanced" but "on target. In identifying how the workshop had been most beneficial to them, the students conveyed positive responses to every session. In assessing their own research skills and information fluency skills, about seventy-five percent of the students rated their abilities as "average"; twenty-five percent of the students rated their abilities as "good" or "very good." Many expressed their gratitude to the honors degree program for convening the workshop—"even on a Saturday."

At the end of the fall semester the director of the senior honors research seminar asked the students to submit reports on their progress and on the application of their information fluency skills. Nearly all responded. Two reports are included as Appendix III and IV. One is from a chemistry major whose project was presented in summary at the March 2003 meeting of the American Chemical Society. The other, which offers extraordinary insight into the role of information fluency in the learning process, was submitted by a student whose project examined the constitutionality of race as a factor in college and university admissions decisions.

At the conclusion of the academic year, the students in the senior honors research seminar participated in a Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Project on information fluency supported jointly by the Olin Library at Rollins and by our Master of Human Resources Program. (Copies of the assessment instrument and of the assessment report are attached as Appendices V and VI). As one would expect the average score for students in the senior honors seminar was significantly higher than for all seniors and for all students, freshmen through seniors, who participated in the assessment project.

Informal evaluations by the director of the honors degree program and by the faculty sponsors indicate that students who participated in the senior honors research seminar in 2002-03 distinguished themselves from students in previous classes by the greater sophistication of their honors projects and by their higher rate of completion of the honors degree program.

### **Plans for dissemination of results to ACS and beyond**

Descriptions and results of the workshop included in this report are available to the ACS for notice in *Palladian* and for distribution to honors degree programs at other ACS schools. A copy of this report is also being sent to the new director of the honors degree program at Rollins for presentation to the National Collegiate Honors Council. The faculty, librarians, and information technology specialists who participated in the workshop are willing to share the goals, the substance, and the results of the workshop with our counterparts at the other ACS schools.

### **Budget**

Rollins College is grateful to the Associated Colleges of the South for funding this information fluency workshop for students in our senior honors research seminar. An accounting of expenditures is provided as Appendix VII.

Respectfully submitted,

Edward H. Cohen  
Professor of English