

**Title:** Integrating Information Fluency into the First-Year Experience

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**Brief Abstract**

All first-year students enroll in one of the Rollins Conference Courses offered during the fall semester. The courses are seminars chaired by members of the faculty drawn from the full range of academic disciplines in the arts, sciences, humanities, and social sciences. The Conference Course topics—which often reflect the instructors’ areas of expertise—are selected to be interesting, relevant, and challenging. Students participate actively in class and attend co-curricular events and activities, which may include invited speakers on campus, cultural events in Orlando, and field or research trips to various locations in the surrounding area. As part of the Conference Course program, students also participate in a number of on-campus experiences that build a foundation for academic and social success at Rollins. The faculty members teaching the seminar courses serve as academic advisors to their students, and student peer mentors assist in the courses and help first-year students make the transition to college life and work.

We believe that Information Fluency should be a vital part of the students’ first year experience. With ACS support, we will invite RCC faculty to participate in a six-day workshop that will teach them the skills necessary to integrate Information Fluency into their first-year seminars. RCC faculty will implement their re-designed RCC courses during the 2003-2004 academic year.

**Rationale**

The goal of this project is to integrate information fluency into the Rollins College first-year experience. In the three years that ACS has administered the Mellon Information Fluency Grant funds, ACS colleges have had the opportunity to meet with faculty, IT professionals, and librarians to define Information Fluency for our campuses and to share experiences in teaching IF skills to students and faculty. Grant funds have also allowed us to determine the best method for integrating IF into the college curriculum. At Rollins College we have sought the best method for teaching a baseline of IF skills to first-year students. We have explored teaching a one-credit course that is attached to an RCC class or another freshman level course, and we have offered an elective one-credit information fluency course. We have experimented with ways to staff and teach first-year IF

courses, utilizing online components and teaching teams consisting of librarians, IT staff, and faculty. Finally, we have conducted a two-week workshop to teach faculty to infuse IF into one of their courses (though not necessarily a first-year course). Our experience has taught us that our best approach is to teach faculty the skills to incorporate IF into targeted first-year classes, with librarians and IT staff providing additional instruction and support. Our aim is to develop a cadre of faculty who will be committed the concept of information fluency and who will have developed the skills to incorporate information and computer literacy and critical thinking skills into their first-year classes. This approach is most cost-effective for colleges that are not able to add librarians and other professional staff to teach IF courses. It also is pedagogically sound, because it combines skills with content, making the instruction more meaningful.

To this end, we are requesting funds to conduct a 6-day workshop in May 2003 to prepare RCC faculty to incorporate IF skills in their RCC classes in the semester that begins in August 2003.

Our goals for our students are to prepare them to explore a wide range of information technologies as they proceed with their education and, later, as they move beyond college to work and life experiences. Our earlier pilot projects have demonstrated that students come to us with a wide range of IF skills. In November 1999 *Library Journal* published Lorie Roth's article on "Educating the Cut-and-Paste Generation," in which she observes that, unlike their predecessors of a generation ago, students today are "more comfortable with fast-paced change and nonlinear, non-sequential modes of perceiving, thinking and investigating." For the university, she asserts, the response to this "new breed of student" must be to change in "meaningful ways that can preserve and reinforce its traditional expectation that a college graduate will be able to speak and write well, think critically, act professionally and ethically in a career, and appreciate learning and wisdom." But we cannot assume that students bring the necessary information fluency skills to our campuses to meet these expectations. Faculty are concerned about students who cannot evaluate online resources and recognize their authority, their point of view, or even their bias; who cannot distinguish between primary and secondary sources or between scholarly and popular journals; and who cannot correctly document electronic resources. Many of our students want to be able to present information in visual formats (often their preference for gathering information) and would like instruction in developing presentation skills or using emerging software.

Utilizing the ACRL guidelines, faculty teaching Rollins Conference Courses will select information fluency goals for first-year students that will create a basis for the students' subsequent years of study. Faculty will develop pre-tests for entering students to assess their information fluency skills and will use the results to assist students in developing their information fluency goals for the term of the class. A post-test will provide data for determining the success of the project and for planning instruction in future years. Most faculty will use Blackboard as the

framework for student learning experiences and assignments. Thus, they will be prepared with the resources and knowledge necessary to incorporate Information Fluency into their students' first-year experience.

**Preliminary description:**

The six-day workshop will cover the critical, technical, and theoretical aspects of information fluency. Three days will be devoted to formal classroom instruction and three days will be reserved for the development of a syllabus that incorporates a basic set of information fluency skills and a class web site that aggregates a variety of electronic resources to enhance the Conference course.

**Timeline:**

Six days, May 15-22, 2003.

**The Agenda:**

Academic and Theoretical Issues:

- 1) Definition of Information Fluency
- 2) Discussion of the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. Participants will develop curriculum activities that will address the various competencies and desired educational outcomes.
- 3) Overview of ways in which Information Fluency has been incorporated into actual courses, using other ACS projects as examples
- 4) Techniques for using the web for research, including evaluating web sites and their authority, citing online resources appropriately, and determining bias and opinion
- 5) Ethical use of online resources
- 6) Presentation of scholarly compilations of resources, in both traditional and electronic format, specific to particular disciplines or topics of interest
- 7) Designing pre- and post-tests to evaluate student learning

Technical Aspects

- 1) Blackboard
- 2) Front Page
- 3) Power Point
- 4) Excel and Access
- 5) Introduction to new and emerging technologies

**Strategies for recruiting participants**

The workshops will be advertised to RCC faculty early in the spring semester of 2003. Admission to the workshop will be competitive.

**Target audience**

Faculty who will be teaching Rollins Conference Courses in the fall semester of 2003.

**Plans for follow-up and evaluation**

Follow-up will be conducted through the 2003-2004 academic year as the classes are implemented. Students will take a pre- and post-test to assess learning outcomes. Faculty members will be encouraged to develop other techniques for evaluation as components of their syllabi. Students will evaluate the courses.

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

The participants in the workshop will evaluate the sessions. The presenters will report to the ACS on the strengths and weaknesses of the workshop, incorporating the participants' evaluations. The workshop syllabus will be made available. Some faculty may wish to give presentations or write papers about the project. We will contribute all information to an ACS web page.

**Suggestions for replication at other campuses**

Other schools with first-year experiences will be able to replicate the instruction. Rollins faculty will be encouraged to share their syllabi with their colleagues at other ACS schools.

**Preferred time of year for the event**

The faculty workshop will take place immediately after the close of the academic year, in May 2003.