

Curriculum & Pedagogy Task Force Meeting Report

February 15-16, 2002

The members of the Curriculum and Pedagogy Task Force met in Atlanta on February 15-16, 2002, with the charge of developing sample information fluency (IF) curricula based on the outcomes document we had circulated last fall. We were also asked to define indicators of information fluency.

It was the consensus of the group that the definition of IF indicators belonged more appropriately to another group. We acknowledged the discomfort some members of the group felt with the term "information fluency" itself, and we discussed how challenging the task force's work has been.

Ken Abernethy suggested the development of small curricular IF modules, context-free and versatile, that are packaged in such a way that others can use them. We could then make these modules widely available and adaptable to different contexts. To describe these modules, we adopted the paradigm of Legos.

Examples of these Lego-like IF modules could include:

- Pre- and post-testing for assessment of IF skills
- Intellectual property
- Evaluation of sources
- Critical thinking skills
- Case studies
- IF ethics

The development of these modules could begin with the adoption of ACS modules that already exist, such as some of the materials created at Kenyon and Centenary. We could also incorporate modules we may have created for our own classes, and encourage others to disseminate materials as they are developed. We stressed the concept of building for others and not only for our own use, and of creating modules that correspond to IF objectives. Logistically, we suggested the creation of an ACS-hosted database for these modules, including dynamic links to courses where applicable.

We created the following five categories of modules, based on the ideal of what an information-fluent person should be, with examples of each. The categories remain constant over the course of the four-year undergraduate experience, while the individual modules become more sophisticated each year.

- 1. The information environment; information in context**
An example would be the difference between public libraries and college libraries.
- 2. The recognition of a need for information; the identification of a problem and / or choice of a topic**
An example would be the difference between popular discussion and academic discussion.
- 3. The formulation of a plan for the collection of information**
An example would be the use of online databases and print resources, not Yahoo.
- 4. The critical evaluation / assessment of information**
An example would be the evaluation of websites, particularly in terms of authorial credibility.

Another example would be the determination of the consensus, if one exists, of the more reliable information.

A third example would be the determination of the congruity, or lack of it, between the information and the student's thesis.

5. The use, synthesis, creation, documentation, and presentation of information

An example would be the choice and teaching of a documentation style.

Another example would be the choice of a presentation medium.

A third example would be the study of copyright and intellectual property issues.

After defining this new paradigm for IF in the curriculum, we envisioned two categories of subsequent steps that should be taken. The first category might well be termed political. We agreed that information fluency needs to remain on the deans' agenda and the agenda of each institution's Curriculum Committee, and indeed needs to be part of each institution's strategic plan. Information fluency can be the basis around which curricular reform can be accomplished. We proposed the development of natural alliances, such as with Media Studies faculty, and the creation of a resource packet for campus IF advocates. One basis for the latter might be a collection of suggested political strategies for use at members' home institutions.

The second category is, of course, ideas for the next grant. High on our list of priorities were incentives for teaching faculty and librarians to create IF modules (release time was strongly advocated), structures for promulgating ideas, and, most importantly, the evaluation of grant proposals and control of grant monies by local IF teams instead of on a more centralized level.

Perhaps the best summary of our work was given by an unnamed task force member, who observed, "We have planted a lot of seeds." Now our task is to nurture and grow them.