
Submitted by Joe Garity on 7/28/09

My goal on this leave was to read and study on education and information literacy and to create a teacher’s manual for the Forward Program information literacy classes we will be teaching during the weeks of August 10th and August 17th. The classes will meet 5 times in 2 weeks. There will be three different sections of the classes.

I spent the first half of the leave reading syllabi for information literacy classes available on the web and in databases like ERIC. I read several books on teaching and information literacy that both prepared me for this class and also I think will impact me as I do my regular instruction during the semester. Some of the books were general books on teaching; some were specific to the teaching of information literacy skills. Below is a list of some of the books I read and what I learned from them.

Parker Palmer’s The Courage to Teach is a book I have often wanted to read. It is repeatedly cited at instruction conferences and in articles about the craft of teaching. As I read it, I liked his focus on (as he called it) “the inner landscape of a teacher’s life” and how we need to learn less about specific techniques for classroom teaching and understand more about how teachers often model how they are researchers and teachers for their students. I thought this was very applicable with information literacy instruction. Technology and tools change but the process of searching for and evaluating information will persist. I also thought his discussion about how the classroom should not be teacher-centered or student-centered but instead subject-centered was a good way of thinking about teaching. If it is subject-centered, both teachers and students can learn together.

Stephen Brookfield’s Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher got me thinking about how to get feedback from students about the content of the classes, which I think I will use more of in my “regular” library instruction sessions.

Two books that were filled with information literacy exercises were Fiona Hunt’s and Jane Birks’ More Hands-on Information Literacy Activities and Carol Anne Germain and Deborah Bernnard’s Empowering Students II, both of which gave me some ideas for possible assignments and also how to create assignments.
Two books that had excellent sections on the research process were *The Craft of Research* by Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb, and Joseph Williams; and *Research Strategies: Finding Your Way Through the Information Fog*, by William Badke. I will by using a chapter from one of them as an assigned reading on narrowing down a topic. Both of these books really got me thinking about how to present information literacy and the research process.

Carol Kuhlthau’s *Seeking Meaning* and *Guided Inquiry* were both good books that emphasized beginning with the students’ existing knowledge and building on that. She has been influenced by constructivism and that also got me thinking about building on the students’ current knowledge.

I interviewed two librarians who currently teach information literacy classes to get a sense from them of what they would do if they were in our situation. The interviews were fine and I got some good suggestions. Some of the suggestions made were that in the beginning of the class, we explain what librarians do and how librarians can help students in their research and also suggestions on specifics on techniques for searching more effectively.

The last part of the leave was putting together a teacher’s manual for myself and the two other librarians who will be teaching the class (Locke Morrisey and Vicki Rosen). As I worked on this, I realized I would not finish it in June but continue working on it in July, once I returned to work, both to get feedback and suggestions from Locke and Vicki and also to reach out to the other faculty in the Forward Program. Both Locke and Vicki have given me valuable feedback as I shape the teacher’s manual. We have emailed other Forward faculty and some have expressed an interest in collaborating with us. Next week the Forward faculty will be meeting as a group and we can talk more with them then. Rather than us creating a new topic for the students to study, we are going to have the students search for information using the topics they are studying in their other Forward classes.

The general outline of the class will be this:

First class: introductions, discussion of how information is created, how we all use it, how it is organized, what roles libraries and librarians have with information, what information literacy means.

Second class: what are students’ passions and interests about and how to turn those kinds of interests and narrow them down into research questions and topics. We’ll look at the “information cycle” and how they can create different kinds of sources, both popular and scholarly and we’ll begin using some of the library’s databases to find information on these topics.

Third class: we’ll talk about books and their role in the research process, different kinds of books, “traditional” reference books vs. sources like Wikipedia.
Fourth class: we'll look at website evaluation, what are some criteria to determine if a website is credible, how to use search engines like google more effectively.

Fifth class: we'll look at the ethical issues involved with research, look at USF’s policy on plagiarism, talk about how web 2.0 media like Facebook or Twitter fit into the information landscape and we’ll look back on how our research skills have been changed by this class.

I expect to finish the Teacher’s Manual in the next week and I will submit that Manual to both the Dean and the chair of the Professional Development Leave Committee as a follow up to this report.