

# INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAM: AN OVERVIEW

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## ABSTRACT

At Heritage College there is a felt need to provide students with an understanding of the process of doing library research contextualized within the existing curriculum. The Information Literacy Program (I. L. P.) is a pilot project currently in progress designed to meet this need. "Generic" in nature, these self-directed student activities are incorporated by teachers into existing courses where library research is required. Success is evident based on student and teacher evaluations of the I. L. P. Students are asking more sophisticated questions in the library, and teachers are pleased at how little time these activities take to assign and evaluate..

The Information Literacy Program (I.L.P.) at Heritage College stems from a Discussion Paper<sup>1</sup> deposited with the College's Library Committee in April 1996. This paper discussed a "process approach" to teaching transferable library skills, based primarily on the work of Carol C. Kuhlthau<sup>2</sup>. The emphasis on self-directed, resource based learning, that characterizes Kuhlthau's work has its impetus in a general movement in education towards acquiring skills for 'lifelong learning'. In addition to meeting educational needs, Information Literacy programs teach individuals how to access information for recreational, personal, and business purposes.

According to the American Library Association's Committee on Information Literacy:

"To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed informa-

tion. Ultimately, information literate people are those who have learned how to learn. They know how knowledge is organized, how to find information, and how to use it in such a way that others can learn from it"<sup>3</sup>

With respect to educational needs, a fundamental premise of Kuhlthau's work is that students need to do a significant amount of browsing, thinking and reading *before* they form a focus in their library research assignments. Furthermore, she stresses that forming a focus is a stage in the process that requires completion prior to the systematic collection of library materials pertinent to that focus. Students must learn that *several* visits to the library are conducive to successful library research.

Teaching effective library research skills is not a simple task and with the emergence of 'electronic information' an even greater degree of complexity has been introduced. The traditional 'library orientation' tour no longer does justice to the vast array of information available to students in a college library. For this reason, library instruction has had to become more efficient. The Information Literacy Program is designed to complement the new direction in library instruction offered by librarians. Ideally, a blend of self-directed activities and librarian-conducted instruction provides the college-level student with the skills to conduct successful library research.

Essentially, the Information Literacy Program at Heritage College is a bank of self-directed activities that 'walk' students through the various stages of the library research process. Many of the activities are organized by semester and are designed to equip students with the tools of library research in a cumulative manner. Developed to be 'generic', the Information Literacy activities are transferable across the curriculum. Instructors at Heritage Col-

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<sup>1</sup> Kate Hughes, "Heritage College Library: Discussion Paper on Library Instruction" Heritage College, April 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Carol C. Kuhlthau, *Teaching the Library Research Process*. (2nd ed) London: The Scarecrow Press, 1994.

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<sup>3</sup> Cited in Maureen Pastine and Linda Wilson, "Curriculum Reform: The Role of Academic Libraries", *The Evolving Educational Mission of the Library*. Betsy Baker and Mary Ellen Litzinger (eds), 1992.

lege are encouraged to selectively incorporate activities from the 'bank' into those courses in which they already require library research.

Attached is a short summary of the principles, the project and the I.L.P. to date.

#### **INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAM (I.L.P.)**

##### **BASIC PRINCIPLES:**

- Library Research is a process and takes time.
- Student Library Research requires teacher-support in addition to library staff support.
- Library Research is systematic.
- Library Research is cost-effective.

##### **BASIC OBJECTIVES:**

- to familiarize the student with Heritage College Library and its collection
- to demonstrate to the student that different types of information serve different purposes
- to provide a "hands on" approach to library research
- to provide a systematic approach to library research
- to equip the student with basic library research skills for life-long learning
- to engage the teacher in student-centred library research with minimal toil.

##### **DEVELOPING THE INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAM: FALL 1996**

- Consultations with Departments at Heritage to introduce I.L.P. and assess library research requirements.
- Development of eight I.L.P. activities.
- Drafted I.L.P. Instructor's Manual.

- Enlisted seven instructors to participate in Pilot Project.

##### **PILOT PROJECT: WINTER 1997**

- Four Instructors from four different Programs participated in Pilot Project.
- Evaluations from instructors and students participating were collected and analyzed.
- Currently the I.L.P. is being institutionalized at Heritage College.

##### **I.L.P. ACTIVITIES DEVELOPED 1996/97:**

- Self-Directed Library Tour
- Learning to use the Mandarin OPAC
- Questions to help you select a topic
- Using the General Encyclopedia: Identifying Descriptors
- Browsing through Materials on the Shelves
- Finding Articles in Periodicals
- Exploring current sources of information
- The Annotated Bibliography: Learning to Evaluate Information

##### **I.L.P. HANDOUTS DEVELOPED 1996/97:**

- Library of Congress Classification System
- Library Science Glossary of Terms
- General Information Sheet on Subject-Headings
- Forming a Focus

##### **FUTURE I.L.P. ACTIVITIES/HANDOUTS:**

- Surfing the Net: Evaluating Information
- Finding Information in other Libraries
- CD ROM Data Bases: An Overview
- Down loading Information: Cost, etc.