Library-Writing Programs Partnerships: Perspectives from the Fields

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“On virtually every college campus librarians and writing teachers can point to each other as classroom colleagues and curricular compatriots. Yet the conversation is often limited to this level—and thus dismissed as a matter of local lore and personal friendship. Our collegial relations tend not to be sustained by a broader, theoretically informed conversation between writing and information literacy as disciplines and fields of endeavor.”

(Norgaard, 2004, p. 124–125)
Frameworks for Information Literacy and Writing

WPA Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing:
“describes the rhetorical and twenty-first-century skills as well as habits of mind and experiences that are critical for college success.” (WPA et al., 2011, p. 1)

ACRL Framework for Information Literacy:
“At the heart of this Framework are conceptual understandings that organize many other concepts and ideas about information, research, and scholarship into a coherent whole.” (ACRL, 2015)
Beyond Standards

WPA Framework:
“Standardized writing curricula or assessment instruments that emphasize formulaic writing for nonauthentic audiences will not reinforce the habits of mind and the experiences necessary for success as students encounter the writing demands of postsecondary education.” (WPA et al., 2011, p. 3)

ACRL Framework:
“The Framework offered here is called a framework intentionally because it is based on a cluster of interconnected core concepts, with flexible options for implementation, rather than on a set of standards or learning outcomes, or any prescriptive enumeration of skills.” (ACRL, 2015)
Obstacles to Librarian-Faculty Collaboration

- “Asymmetrical disconnect” between faculty and librarians (Christiansen, et al., 2006)

- Lack of understanding among faculty of librarians’ instructional roles and perspectives (Christiansen, et al., 2006)

- At-your-service model of librarianship (Julien & Pecoskie, 2009; Meulemans & Carr, 2013)
Obstacles to Librarian-Compositionist Collaboration

• The dreaded research paper (Norgaard, 2004; Brent, 2006)

• Cut-and-paste approaches to source-based writing

• Perceptions of information literacy and IL instruction (Gullikson, 2006; Saunders. 2012)
Interviews: Points of Inquiry

- Conditions the cultivate librarian-compositionist partnerships?

- Forms and qualities of collaborations?

- Librarians’ and compositionists’ perceptions of their unique and shared roles?
4 Collaborations: Overview
Curricular Design
University of Colorado-Boulder (UCB)

- Michelle Albert, Program for Writing and Rhetoric (PWR)
- Caroline Sinkinson, UCB Libraries
  - Recent development of a proposed PWR IL curriculum informed by the ACRL and WPA Frameworks
  - PWR-library collaborations for 10+ years
Co-Teaching and Cross-Professional Dialogue
University of Scranton

- Teresa Grettano, First-Year Writing Program
  - co-teaching a writing course on social media
- Donna Witek, Library
  - articulating connections between documents like the ACRL and WPA Frameworks
Research Toolkit
Hunter College

- Wendy Hayden, First-Year Compositions program
- Stephanie Margolin, Library
  - Research Toolkit, an online resource for faculty teaching writing-/research-intensive courses
WILD Initiative
University of Vermont

- Susanmarie Harrington, Writing in the Disciplines Program
- Dan DeSanto, library
  - Writing and Information Literacy in the Disciplines (WILD) initiative, departments and faculty developing program curricula that integrate writing and IL
Common Characteristics of Partnerships

- Views of writing and information literacy as intertwined
- Shared goals
- Appreciation for one another’s expertise
- A grass-roots approach that is sensitive to the local environment, institutional culture, and community members
Benefits of Collaboration

- What compositionists and librarians accomplish together that they would not be occur if only working within their own professions?

- Complementary qualities of librarians’ and compositionists’ knowledge, experience, or institutional positioning?
Expanding Pedagogical Perspectives
Foregrounding Inquiry

“When we work with students it’s all about the question now.” (Wendy)
Balancing Practicality and Messiness

Offering “some practical, material outcome for them to hang onto as they’re floating through the [] chaos, something to anchor them in the chaos” (Teresa)

A “messy” approach to question development as “sometimes painful for students and [] for instructors” (Wendy)
Expertise & Positioning
Compositionists’ Roles & Expertise

- Depth of experience in the classroom and with curriculum design
- Compositionists working as “ambassadors” and “translators
- Understandings of resistances to IL integration
“It’s still really, really hard for librarians to get into classrooms and for librarians to build tools that are used by anybody. So having this great connection with a giant department and a humongous program that all students go through is huge for the library.”

(Stephanie)
Librarians’ as ‘Interdisciplinary Mediators’

“[Librarians seem to have] more experience with the actual lived experience of the curriculum, with what students do when doing an assignment, as in I’m in the library working on my paper, or assignment. Most faculty imagine what that process is like, but librarians are actually in the middle of it.” (Susanmarie)

“an umbrella view of [] departments” (Dan)
“[I]t seems like by nature library work is interdisciplinary because if you’re a librarian collaborating with a particular discipline you need to be at least somewhat familiar with the other literature. I didn’t have that same need in the other direction until I took on this role.” (Michelle)
Interviewees’ Challenges to Expanding Partnerships

- Views of information literacy as an “add-on”
  - Lack of external incentives
  - Limited time, many responsibilities
- Associations between research papers and library instruction
Experiences of Institutional Marginalization: Cause for Solidarity?

- Perceptions of literacy education as “basic”
- Academic environments of limited resources and competing interests
What Next?:
Reflection on Common Characteristics of Successful Partnerships

- Views of writing and information literacy as intertwined
- Shared goals
- Appreciation for one another’s expertise
- A grass-roots approaches sensitive to the local environment, institutional culture, and community members

(First three qualities also found in Ivey’s (2003) interviews with librarians and faculty.)
ACRL & WPA Frameworks as Catalysts

“[B]eing able to acknowledge that everything is always in flux gives us a power...that we [librarians] didn’t have before because now we can bend and flex and align with the very similar work that colleagues in what I call our sister discipline [composition and rhetoric] are doing.” (Donna)

“we can flex together”
(in response to standards-based assessments) (Teresa)
ACRL Framework Conceptual Understandings

- Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
  - Information Creation as a Process
    - Information Has Value
  - Research as Inquiry
  - Scholarship as Conversation
- Searching as Strategic Exploration
WPA Framework Habits of Mind

“ways of approaching learning that are both intellectual and practical and that will support students’ success in a variety of fields and disciplines”

- Curiosity
- Openness
- Engagement
- Creativity
- Persistence
- Responsibility
- Flexibility
- Metacognition
WPA Framework Learning Experiences

- Rhetorical knowledge
- Critical thinking
- Writing processes
- Knowledge of conventions
- Ability to compose in multiple environments
ACRL & WPA Frameworks: Key Elements

- Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
- Information Creation as a Process
  - Information Has Value
  - Research as Inquiry
- Scholarship as Conversation
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- Curiosity
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References


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