

The Information Literacy Plan for Foundations
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All Foundations Faculty will be following the basic plan outlined below during the 2004-2005 academic year. We invite and encourage other faculty colleagues who are teaching first-year students to join us in this endeavor as much as it is feasible.

As a follow-up to our Spring 2003 Workshop session with the librarians on May 16, 2003, I met with Catherine Crohan on June 13, 2003 to develop a plan for promoting Information Literacy in Foundations. The key question we tried to answer was: *What information literacy skills do we want to focus on during the first and second semesters?*

Catherine and I agreed that most of us have unrealistic expectations of how many skills the students should have developed by the first semester. We believe that it would be best to develop a two-tiered approach to Information Literacy (which includes Library Research skills), spread out over the two semesters.

We propose that the Foundations Faculty focus on the following skills in the Fall Semester:

1. How to find things (This will be stressed during the Library session at September orientation, and reinforced in the Foundations library sessions.)
 - a. How to use Cyril
 - b. How to find books and printed periodicals in the stacks
2. Evaluating the quality of sources (focus of Library Training Session #1)
 - a. Evaluating printed sources (e.g., using book reviews, finding author information)
 - b. Evaluating electronic sources—web sites and online databases
3. Understanding the basics of academic integrity
 - a. What is academic integrity? What is plagiarism?
 - b. When does one need to supply a reference?
4. Constructing a bibliography
 - a. Learning how to find sources on a given topic
 - b. Learning how to put together an annotated bibliography

In the Spring Semester, we propose that the Foundations Faculty focus on the following:

1. Writing a paper that involves significant library research (Focus of Library Training Session #2)
 - a. Learning how to narrow down a topic
 - b. Learning how to construct a thesis and develop an argument based on that thesis
 - c. Learning how to document sources properly
2. Critical review of sources
 - a. Comparing different points of view
 - b. Learning how to use and write critical book reviews

Thus, we propose that each Foundations professor schedule at least *two* library training sessions: one in the fall that emphasizes *evaluating sources*; and one in the spring that emphasizes *constructing a research paper*.

A possible writing exercise for first semester:

Researching authors.

Give each student an index card containing the name of a published author. Then distribute a list of questions to which the students should find answers. For example:

- When and where was this author born? If applicable, when did he/she die?
- What kind of educational background does this author have?
- What can you find out about this author's personal life? (family, environment where he/she grew up and/or worked as an adult)
- What is the author's area or areas of expertise? What topics is he or she qualified to write about?
- What has the author in fact written? What is the genre of his/her writing? Fiction/nonfiction? Scientific writing/humanities? etc.
- Why should I take or NOT take seriously what this author has written?

The authors could represent a variety of print and electronic media, as well as genres: scholars, journalists, poets, scientific writers, authors of essays published on the web, etc. Siena faculty could be included in the list! For example, I was thinking of a list like the following:

Ray Boisvert
Nate Leslie
Margaret Hannay
Salvatore Lombardo
Kurt Vonnegut
Michael Crichton
J. R. Tolkien
Barbara Ehrenreich
Eric Schlosser
Kenneth Woodward
Mary Shelley
Dorothy Day
Jean-Jacques Rousseau
Charles Darwin
Fyodor Dostoevsky
Martin Luther King, Jr.
Edwidge Danticat
Hillary Rodham Clinton

It would be pretty easy—and fun—to come up with as many as fifty or sixty different names.

Another possible exercise:

Have students look at a number of book reviews of a specific book, and analyze the differences and similarities in the reviews. Ask them: on the basis of these reviews, would you read the book? Why or why not?