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CHAPTER 2

Common Intellectual Experiences and Academic Libraries

Susan E. Montgomery and Jonathan H. Harwell

As discussed throughout this volume, colleges and universities have explored ways to integrate high-impact practices into their campus learning. At Rollins College, a small liberal arts college with a graduate business school in Winter Park, Florida, faculty members have been essential in fostering initiatives that center on creating a common learning experience for their students. As library faculty members at Rollins, we have been heavily involved with the rFLA (Rollins Foundations in the Liberal Arts) curriculum for undergraduates.

Common Intellectual Experiences as a HIP

With regard to common intellectual experiences, as George D. Kuh stated in his 2008 Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) report, according to the excerpt "High-Impact Educational Practices: A Brief Overview,"

> The older idea of a "core" curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community. These programs often combine

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> broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.[1]

The common intellectual experience as a high-impact practice has not been treated extensively in the library literature. Library involvement with common readings, which constitute one possible manifestation of this practice, has received a bit of attention in the field. For example, in a 2007 piece, Andi Twiton briefly described the results of an online survey about common reads at various colleges and universities, with 130 respondents.[2] Pamela Hayes-Bohanan explained a community common reading program that began with involvement from an academic library and a public library in the town of Bridgewater, Massachusetts. Due to budget cuts, the public library withdrew from the initiative, and the academic library has continued it with other community partners.[3] Anamika Megwalu and colleagues described best practices as learned from York College at CUNY's collaborative approach on a common reader, in which the library is a strategic partner.[4] The University of Texas at Austin's Life Science Library has given up its lobby alcoves to create a series of six seminar classrooms for first-year experience courses.[5] Other libraries have been involved with common reads in various ways. However, analysis of library involvement with the common intellectual experience as a high-impact practice appears to be a gap in the literature that this book will help to address and that could also be filled by future researchers.

Case Study: The rFLA Curriculum at Rollins College

In 2014, Rollins College adopted a revised general education program, called rFLA or Rollins Foundations in the Liberal Arts, for undergraduate students. The previous curriculum was not meeting the needs of a twenty-first-century liberal arts education. The prior program, established in 2004, was affectionately known as "Alphabet Soup" because students had to take courses from various general education areas labeled by letters. For example, a course with an *A* designation satisfied the expressive arts requirement; a *D* course satisfied the Western society and culture requisite. Courses could be taken at any time during the student's undergraduate career and could be taken in any order.

The purpose of the rFLA program is to have a general education program that is developmental and interdisciplinary. Rather than having students from different academic years enrolled in the same class, courses must be taken in sequence and are thematically focused. Under the new program, students take one 100-level course, three 200-level courses, and one 300-level capstone course. Students must also achieve competencies in math, foreign language, writing, and health and wellness.

For the first few years, the rFLA program was comprised of students in four "neighborhoods," an homage to alumnus Rev. Fred "Mister" Rogers. Each neighborhood had an interdisciplinary theme and had courses designed accordingly. The courses are tied to specific LEAP learning outcomes according to the developmental level within the curriculum.[6] Rollins faculty chose to incorporate information literacy as a student learning outcome in rFLA—an outcome that is assessed in courses at different levels. In the

age of information overload, students need to be "effective and responsible users and creators of information"[7] while in college and after graduation.

Rollins faculty members, including librarians, have been highly involved in the implementation and assessment of rFLA. During the redesign of the general education curriculum, faculty members debated which outcomes should be integrated into courses. Initially, faculty chose five outcomes to assess in the new program. These were written communication, information literacy, ethical reasoning, critical thinking, and integrative learning. A sixth outcome, civic engagement, will be assessed by the Office of Community Engagement. The inclusion of information literacy as part of a comprehensive general education program demonstrates its importance throughout the program. Furthermore, faculty members recognized that information literacy cannot be limited to a single course, nor can students develop the needed skills at only one point during their general education. In rFLA, information literacy is integrated horizontally across courses at the same level as well as formatively throughout the curriculum. The rFLA curriculum is being supported by an $800,000 Mellon Foundation grant covering January 2016–December 2020. The grant provides the opportunity for the college to implement and assess the rFLA initiative as a national model of liberal education. Grant funding has been used to compensate faculty for course development and programmatic assessment. As the rFLA has developed, readjustments have been made. As of this writing, faculty members have been revising how to better integrate the ethical reasoning outcome in the curriculum and have temporarily removed integrative learning. Information literacy continues to be supported as a core skill in rFLA, in part because of the involvement and dedication of the librarians in promoting it to our faculty colleagues.

General education courses are assessed by teams of faculty members, including librarians, according to the appropriate VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) rubric. The VALUE rubrics, developed by AAC&U, provide colleges and universities with a useful tool to assess student work. These rubrics were developed by faculty from across the country and give campus assessment teams a cohesive method for evaluating students' artifacts.[8] The systematic form of assessment adopted at Rollins is an annual review of anonymized student artifacts that are uploaded into an online portfolio. The embedded assessment, where student work is reviewed within a course rather than in a stand-alone learning experience, allows for more comprehensive review of the program and helps determine whether students are meeting the program goals.[9] Although faculty who taught rFLA courses understood the purpose for creating an embedded assessment system, there were initial challenges in helping students become information-literate. Librarians worked with faculty to develop assignments that could be included in the annual assessment for information literacy. Conversations centered on how information literacy was a process-oriented outcome, and creating an assignment that addressed the process was difficult. No standardized assignment was used, which led to challenges in the first year of assessment.

During the assessment process, challenges surfaced with the types of artifacts that were submitted by students. Since no specific type of assignment was proposed, a wide array of assignment formats had to be assessed. These included research papers, PowerPoint presentations, and annotated bibliographies. Some artifacts included references, while others did not. Thus, assessing the artifact for the outcome "Access and Use

Information Ethically and Legally"[10] as stated in the VALUE rubric proved difficult. Following each assessment round, faculty reviewers shared results with the entire faculty, giving colleagues the opportunity to discuss the assessment process and ways to improve the general education program.

The rFLA assessment calendar proposed assessing information literacy at 100-level and 300-level courses every two years. A group of faculty members would assess 100 student artifacts according to the VALUE rubrics. Unfortunately, in the first year of assessment, no librarian was involved in the review, even though information literacy was scheduled to be assessed. Subsequent assessment teams have each included a librarian. As a member of the assessment team, the librarian became more aware of how students demonstrated their information literacy knowledge and reported to her colleagues in the library about the gaps in student learning in the rFLA program. The librarians discussed and devised teaching strategies to help students meet the outcomes.

In the summer of 2017, a group of faculty members assessed the 100 student artifacts. They were divided into three teams, each team with three members, and assigned to assess either information literacy or written communication using the appropriate VALUE rubric. The information literacy rubric includes five dimensions for assessment: determine the extent of information needed, access the needed information, evaluate information and its sources critically, use information effectively, and use information ethically and legally.[11] The assessors scored each artifact on a scale of 1—benchmark performance level to 4—capstone performance level for each dimension on the VALUE rubric. Student artifacts submitted for 100-level courses were assessed for information literacy, while 300-level courses were assessed for both information literacy and written communication. A librarian participated on the 100-level team.

The expected learning outcome at both the 100 and 300 levels was for 50 to 70 percent of students to score a total of 10 out of 20 points according to the information literacy rubric. The director of the general education program, in consultation with the Assistant Provost for Institutional Effectiveness, established that goal. When the assessment was completed, the results revealed that at the 100 level, 51 percent of students scored higher than 10, and at the 300 level, 74 percent scored higher than 10 in information literacy. The results indicated that at the 100 level, only a slight majority of artifacts submitted by students achieved the outcome. At the 300 level, student artifacts surpassed the expected learning outcome. These results confirmed our expectation that information literacy is a developmental process that students need to practice repeatedly throughout their college education in order to become skilled in finding, evaluating, and using information.

In spring 2018, Rollins College hosted Dr. Carol Geary Schneider, President Emerita of AAC&U, for a series of workshops and discussions. Librarians were involved in two of the sessions. One workshop included members of the Curriculum Committee, and Dr. Schneider mentioned to this group that the VALUE rubrics were never intended to be used to assess individual courses, but rather to assess entire programs. One of the authors corresponded with her after the fact to clarify the details, and Dr. Schneider replied by email that "the rubrics were developed to track students' progress on the Essential Learning Outcomes from first to final year, rather than to assess a specific course. AAC&U's position has been that NO complex outcome can be developed in a single course: not writing, not quantitative reasoning, not critical thinking, etc., etc. It

takes a CURRICULUM—preferably a curriculum focused on students' frequent practice of essential learning outcomes from first to final year" (emphasis in original).[12] The assessment plan adopted to evaluate the new general education curriculum at Rollins recognizes these limitations of using the rubrics. Therefore, as will be discussed, the assessment is not performed on a single course. Rather, a selection of student artifacts submitted for courses at a particular level are reviewed according to the designated rubric.

A recent article by George D. Kuh and Jillian Kinzie noted that the mere presence of high-impact practices is not a guarantee of student success. The quality of the implementation of the HIPs is crucial, they said. They also stressed the importance of providing access to HIPs for underrepresented students. "Requiring student participation in one or more HIPs should be an intentional, evidence-based decision and tailored to the institutional context and its students. Simply increasing the number of available HIPs is not an effective approach to scaling."[13]

A common learning experience for students has been integral to the curriculum established at Rollins College. The faculty have created a diverse set of programs based on high-impact practices. For first-year students, Rollins designed the Rollins College Conference (RCC). This seminar program, begun in 1994, gives incoming first-year students the opportunity to enroll in a unique topic course with a faculty member who also serves as the students' academic advisor. Class enrollment is limited to sixteen students, and the course focuses on the faculty member's area of expertise. Every year, a new catalog of RCC courses are offered, with topics varying according to the interests of the faculty members teaching in the program. The RCC course introduces the first-year student to the Rollins pedagogy by emphasizing reading and writing as well as student discussion on diverse issues related to the course topic.

RCC also includes a broader learning experience in which students are introduced to the various offerings of the campus community. Integrated into the RCC course is a common-read program for first-year students. Faculty members teaching RCC are expected to incorporate the text into their course readings. The common read, assigned during the summer before the incoming students begin classes, varies in genre and topic. Recent titles have included *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates in 2017 and Donald O. Clifton and Edward "Chip" Anderson's *StrengthsQuest* in 2015. For 2018, there will be a set of online readings on the topic of global citizenship, which is one of four pillars of the Rollins mission (alongside responsible leadership, meaningful lives, and productive careers). One of the librarians has worked with the Associate Dean of Curriculum to secure copyright clearance for these readings. During the RCC course, Rollins librarians arrange with professors to instruct first-year students about the library with an introduction to threshold concepts from the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*.[14] Although the professor might not include a research assignment in the RCC, the library session is an opportunity for students to become familiar with the library's resources and services.

Rollins also has created living-learning communities on campus for all first-year students. The LLC houses students based on their RCC course. The goal is for students to have the opportunity to develop strong ties among themselves outside the classroom, which complement student learning inside the classroom. In fact, a recent research study

reported a positive relationship between students who lived in LLCs during their first year and developing a sense of belonging at the institution.[15] The LLCs and the RCC establish a peer group and contribute to development of a common learning experience for first-year students at Rollins.

Students who transfer to Rollins with an associate's degree are also enrolled in an RCC course. RCC 200 is a required course for transfer students and, similarly to the first-year program, provides students with a common intellectual experience, informing them about the pedagogy and expectations of the college. The course also familiarizes students with the resources available to them, including the library. Transfer students are typically older than first-year students and have already completed their general education requirements. Because they intend to study at the college for a shorter period of time, it is important for these students to quickly gain a sense of belonging at Rollins.

In 2013, members of the Student Life Committee—an all-college committee that includes elected representation of faculty, staff, and students—began awarding Scholarship for High-Impact Practices (SHIP) grants to undergraduate students. The grants are small monetary awards designed to help support student learning opportunities in an area recognized as a high-impact practice. This past year a librarian served on the Student Life Committee that is responsible for reviewing applications and awarding grants. Students can request funding to secure an internship, to participate in a professional conference to present research, or to engage in service learning. During the 2017–2018 academic year, students received grants to fund realizations of high-impact practices such as conducting research on attitudes about the environment among college students; presenting research at the European Geosciences Union General Assembly in Vienna, Austria; and creating original films such as *Faces of Florida DREAMers: A DACAmentary*. The committee awarded $24,563 in SHIP grants in 2019. The grants helped defray the costs students incur when participating in a high-impact practice. Students are expected to contribute a post to a student blog about their experience and how it contributes to their Rollins learning experience. Student blog posts can be found at: http://blogs.rollins.edu/ship/.

The Rollins library faculty participate as liaisons to each neighborhood and collaborate with faculty colleagues to design courses and assignments. Each information literacy session is evaluated by the students, and librarians are evaluated by their peers during these instruction sessions. Rollins librarians contribute ideas for creative approaches to teaching and assessing information literacy and meet with students to prepare them for finding, evaluating, and using authoritative information sources according to the *Framework for Information Literacy*. In 2018 the authors were invited to meet with faculty members in each neighborhood to provide workshops on effective assignment design for information literacy assessment at the 100 and 300 (capstone) levels. The librarians reviewed selected findings from Project Information Literacy, which revealed how college students do research. Among the research highlights we shared were students using the same database for their research regardless of the subject matter, how college students evaluate sources, and whom they contact for assistance.[16] The workshops gave the librarians the opportunity to discuss information literacy and also to explain the usefulness of the six frames from the ACRL *Framework*, which guide the librarians in creating instruction sessions that meet course learning goals.

Faculty colleagues have been inspired to create their own ideas for assignments as well. Groups of sociology students have authored public syllabi in lieu of traditional annotated bibliographies (example at http://social.rollins.edu/wpsites/soc355-immigration/). In another class, students were assigned essays for the final exam, in which they related elements of the *Framework* to their readings in the classics and to their own lives. Students have also been challenged to find untrustworthy sources and to explain how they found and evaluated them. As stated earlier, there was no assignment prescribed for faculty to include in their courses as a way for students to develop information literacy. However, as the 100-level courses have evolved, professors have overwhelmingly adopted an annotated bibliography as the favored assignment, accompanied by a written reflection describing the process.

The annotated bibliography assignment educates students early in their college career about the academic research process. Students select a topic and redefine it as they find sources. They learn about creating a specific citation in the correct format and about how the format changes depending on the type of source they use. Professors require students to find scholarly and popular sources for their bibliography, thus enabling them to better understand the differences between the types of sources and the overlaps, as well as the benefits and limitations of the various sources they review. In the annotation, students take those differences into account and provide a critical evaluation of the source, explaining its relevance and importance to their topic. In the reflection portion of the assignment, students discuss their research process and the steps they took to find information. For the librarians, the annotated bibliography assignment helps us design an instruction session that informs students about the components of the annotated bibliography, as well as introducing them to higher-level research. In the next round of assessment of information literacy in rFLA, scheduled for summer 2019, we anticipate the evaluation of student artifacts to exemplify the dimensions of the Information Literacy VALUE rubric better than previously.

Although librarians are not involved in grading this assignment, a librarian has been involved in the programmatic assessment at the 100 level. As a member of this team, the librarian gets a glimpse of the annotated bibliographies students submit for these courses. One gap many librarians face is not seeing the outcome of our instruction sessions and research consultations. We do have students complete evaluations that focus on our teaching at the conclusion of every session. However, we rarely receive any feedback on how well students completed the assignment or how well they were able to find the sources they needed, or any other indicator that our instruction helped them to complete the assignment. Thus, the programmatic assessment informs the librarian about a select group of 100-level assignments and how well the students met the rubric outcomes. The librarian can provide feedback to her colleagues on how students completed the assignment and on the successes and weaknesses in the artifacts demonstrating students' information literacy skills.

Students have completed a typical research paper at the 300 level to demonstrate their information literacy development through rFLA. Librarian instruction has increased for 300-level rFLA courses. During the 2016–2017 academic year, librarians taught three courses at the 300 level, and in the following year, librarians taught eight courses. As students progress through the program and more 300-level courses are offered, we

anticipate more requests for instruction to help students meet the capstone dimension for information literacy. Librarians will be expected to teach more advanced sessions to help students develop their information literacy knowledge and to collaborate with faculty colleagues to create assignments that can demonstrate that knowledge. For these courses students are expected to complete a visual representation of their written work. That representation can be a video, a poster, an artwork, a performance, or something similar. The visual display is featured in an annual campus-wide celebration of students' work called the Foundations Summit. The event has students present their research, as well as explain it to the faculty and their peers at the college. The library serves as a popular space for students to display their work during the summit. In addition, faculty members, including librarians, volunteer to serve as interviewers. These individual interviews are opportunities for students to articulate the connections they formed from completing an integrated, developmental, and thematic general education curriculum. These qualitative results will also be part of the program's assessment moving forward.

During the 2017–2018 academic year, faculty members engaged in open discussion on how to improve the rFLA program and seek ways to adapt the program to faculty teaching and student learning. One of the authors served for the past two years on the Curriculum Committee that studied these issues and potential revisions, and as a member of a subcommittee that reviewed each new course proposal for approval. Membership on this committee is not a standing appointment for a librarian to fill. The faculty of Rollins's College of Liberal Arts (CLA) are divided among six divisions. (The graduate business school has a separate governance structure.) Library faculty are members of the Social Sciences Applied Division, along with other departments. Each division elects a two-year representative to the Curriculum Committee. As one librarian has now rotated off, another librarian has been elected to serve. A third librarian has been elected to chair the division and thereby also to serve on the CLA Executive Committee. Thus, although there is no formal role reserved specifically for librarians in faculty governance at Rollins, library faculty have been elected to seats at the table for major curriculum decisions, and we all participate in faculty governance as members of the body of the whole.

At the end of the spring semester, following a series of CLA faculty meetings (governing as a body of the whole rather than a senate), colloquia, and surveys, faculty members voted to create an Open Borders model, which allows students to enroll in courses thematically without the limitation of taking courses within a single neighborhood. While the "neighborhoods" terminology is being retired because students will no longer be in static cohorts, the learning outcomes will remain as they are currently. Information literacy will continue to be assessed at the 100- and 300-level courses. Thus, Rollins faculty members support the outcomes of the program and the need for assessing those outcomes. However, they want the program itself to provide a bit more flexibility for the students than originally planned. The revised model will provide more options for students registering for classes, while preserving the core of the rFLA plan with a similar set of themes and outcomes. The themes are being reworded, with a fifth theme added. It is expected that these themes will evolve over time.

The rFLA curriculum has elevated librarians to a new level of expectation in our relationships with classroom teaching faculty. Rollins librarians have always had a

role in student learning on our campus. However, under the previous curriculum, it was unpredictable and irregular. Now that information literacy is integrated into the general education student learning outcomes, librarians are in closer contact with the professors teaching those courses to discuss assignments, schedule instruction sessions, encourage students to meet individually with a librarian, and, in some cases, make the meeting a requirement for students as part of the grade. The fact that information literacy is part of the assessment cycle enables librarians to focus their conversations with faculty colleagues concerning students meeting the expectations of the VALUE rubric. Furthermore, librarians have an expectation of the level of students' information literacy knowledge when creating an information literacy session. For the 300-level courses, the librarians can confidently develop instruction sessions that challenge students, encouraging them to be more critical of the resources they use and to expand their awareness of where to find new sources of information. Librarians have been inspired to create more thought-provoking, engaging instruction sessions, thereby demonstrating our role in Rollins students becoming information-literate.

As the rFLA program continues to evolve, we are confident that librarians will be involved in future curricular discussions regarding the general education program. As described above, information literacy, along with other LEAP learning outcomes, is embedded in the rFLA curriculum. However, there continues to be a lack of formal integration of information literacy in the college's majors. As majors are designed at the departmental level and submitted to the Curriculum Committee for approval, librarians must continue to engage with faculty colleagues who are teaching courses in which students need to demonstrate their information literacy skills. Our hope is that students can transfer the skills learned in their rFLA courses to their majors, although we have not implemented any means of assessment to demonstrate this transfer. Thus, the liaison librarian for each department needs to collaborate with faculty colleagues toward realizing that outcome. The *Framework for Information Literacy* is already proving useful in this regard, as librarians refer to it when collaborating with faculty colleagues to frame assignment design and as we increasingly use it as a basis for crafting library instruction sessions.

Notes

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