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Flipping, Collaborating, Assessing: Adopting New Modes of Library Instruction

Katie Bishop

Abstract

After determining that current assessment techniques were no longer yielding data of practical value, the Research Services Unit at the University of Nebraska Omaha Criss Library changed both their teaching and assessment models for Composition II library sessions. The unit adopted a partially flipped model by combining out-of-class tutorials with in-class active learning exercises. Rather than conduct the multiple choice assessments used in the past, the team worked with Comp II instructors to adapt a rubric for use in analyzing a representative sample of student papers. While many libraries are using rubrics to assess various aspects of information literacy instruction, not many have a strong collaboration with instructors when developing assessment tools. This paper focuses on the collaborative effort of librarians and instructors to adopt new modes of instruction, learning, and assessment. Discussed is the history of the instruction program outlining the need for change, the planning process, the development and refinement of the rubric, and the use of formative assessment as part of the flipped class model.

Background

Through a program developed and implemented more than ten years ago, library instruction is well-integrated into the Comp II classroom. Out of forty-plus sections each semester, roughly 90% of Comp II instructors schedule a week's worth of instruction into their syllabi (one, two, or three sessions depending on class schedules). Each academic year RSU staff reach hundreds of students enrolled in Comp II. The instructors include rotating graduate student TAs, adjunct faculty, and returning fulltime instructors. The library sessions are taught by the Research Services Unit (RSU), comprised of six librarians and three library assistants. Information literacy concepts were designed into the original instruction program via handouts and lectures. However, the instruction model of lectures and database demonstration had not changed much since the program's inception.

Current studies demonstrate that students are less engaged during class sessions that are lecture and demonstration heavy, and that active learning should be incorporated into library instruction.¹ Therefore, RSU staff wanted the Comp II sessions to move toward active learning and away from lectures and demonstrations; however returning adjunct and fulltime Comp II instructors did not want substantial changes to the library sessions. To address this challenge the director of RSU determined that implementing a flipped classroom model would best work to accomplish as much as possible in the allotted class time.

Implementation

First, RSU staff created a list of learning goals for students in Comp II, aligning the list with both ACRL and UNO student learning outcomes (SLOs). Then the RSU Comp II coordinator created a template outline for Comp II sessions, focusing each session on two or three SLOs. Next, tutorials were developed focusing on practical paper writing skills including: deconstructing the research question, finding information to support a thesis statement, evaluating information, and synthesizing the information into an argument. Finally, RSU staff worked together to create an active learning activity bank containing in-class exercises designed to teach information literacy SLOs and to reinforce the concepts covered in the tutorials.

Moving away from a lecture and demonstration model to one with in-class active learning created anxiety as long-term staff members were unsure of their ability to teach the exercises successfully. To alleviate concerns staff members sat in on classes in which librarians were implementing active learning exercises. Having a class outline template and an activity bank helped as well. Weekly RSU staff meetings became a space to share new ideas, discuss activities that worked or didn't, and address concerns.

For the initial pilot the coordinator met with English department instructors at their annual fall meeting. A signup sheet went around for volunteers for the flipped model. Approximately one-third of the instructors volunteered. There was no formal assessment undertaken with the Comp II instructors, but anecdotally there was evidence that the instructors were pleased with the model. After the first semester of the pilot year, Comp II instructors who had not initially volunteer for the flipped model inquired about it and/or about including active learning exercises for the next semester.

Formal Assessment

Prior assessments for the Comp II library instruction program entailed pre- and post-tests delivered through Blackboard. The results demonstrated that students improved on test questions regarding various information literacy skills after receiving IL instruction.² However, with this type of assessment it is difficult, if not impossible, to tell if the students were mastering the university's target SLO for Comp II: to locate, evaluate, and integrate information into a well-developed argument with proper citations. In addition, RSU staff were interested in a more authentic summative assessment tool, one that would give data not only on student performance, but would also help staff improve teaching methods and be adaptable to ACRL's forthcoming Framework for Information Literacy.

The RSU Comp II coordinator determined that a rubric used to assess student ability to access, evaluate, synthesize, and cite information would be the most authentic assessment tool to deliver the best value for improving instruction. In current library literature, there are many case studies of librarians using rubrics as authentic assessment; rubrics are proving to be strong components of library instruction assessment programs.³ To create the rubric, the coordinator looked for sample rubrics in the library literature. Of the rubrics found the one most suited to evaluate local Comp II students' output was one developed by Oakleaf, Millet, and Kraus to assess student information literacy skills.⁴ Even prior to being adapted this rubric closely

dovetailed with UNO and library SLOs. An assessment team of two RSU staff and two Comp II instructors (later this team became three RSU staff, two librarians and one paraprofessional, along with the original Comp II instructors) met to adapt the sample rubric to create the first version.

Along with their strengths for authentic assessment rubrics also present some challenges. One study notes the discrepancies amongst groups of raters and the difficulty in creating an assessment tool that can fit multiple variations of a literature review assignment.⁵ Other studies ended up with unexpected results and could not discern whether this was a problem with the assignment, the rubric, or the raters.⁶

There are strategies, however, to combat these challenges. One crucial strategy is rubric norming, the process of standardizing the raters' assessments. To norm and refine the rubric the RSU staff on the assessment team followed processes outlined by Holmes and Oakleaf.⁷ In total the team received 26 student papers, a small sample, but ultimately enough for refining and norming the rubric. RSU team members assessed the student papers in sets of 5-6, using a Google form to input scores. The first version of the Google form did not allow for comments, but after the first norming session a comment box was added so that raters could enter their reasoning for their scoring choices. After each set of papers was rated the team met to discuss the results, address any discrepancies, and refine the rubric. In all the rubric went through six iterations before the team was satisfied (see Appendix A for version 1 and Appendix B for version 6).

In addition to standardizing the raters' assessments, rubric norming can be an important part of meaningful assessment in its own right. As part of the rubric creation and refinement process RSU staff discussed student learning outcomes in further detail and were able to gain a better understanding of which information literacy concepts RSU instructors should be focusing on in the Comp II sessions. Whereas in previous classes the main focus was on accessing and evaluating information, the committee realized that students needed more meaningful instruction on evaluating, plus guidance on synthesizing and citing. This led to further discussion with the Comp II instructors, as the team debated ways in which instructors and librarians could address these knowledge gaps in the library sessions. Ultimately RSU team members were able to use the rubric to address Comp II instructors' expectations for the library sessions and align those expectations with RSU's strategy for student learning.⁸

Informal Assessment

In recent years more library literature is being published advising librarians on the use of informal or classroom assessment techniques.⁹ Along with formal assessment, this informal or classroom assessment is crucial for a successful flipped model. Library instructors must have an immediate way to tell if a class activity is succeeding or not. Formative assessment is one particular form of informal/classroom assessment that, while not always easy to implement, can be extremely eye-opening regarding the skills students develop in one-shot sessions.¹⁰ However, the librarian must act on the results during class in order to drive student learning.¹¹

For example, in an activity designed to teach students that topic development is a component of the research process, students are given a worksheet for brainstorming keywords. Once they have a short list, students then enter those keywords into an assigned database. The listed results should provide additional keywords through subject headings, article titles, and abstracts. The students add those keywords to the worksheet and repeat the search with the new keywords. While students work, the librarian walks around and checks each individual's progress. As they struggle the librarian can offer assistance. The librarian can determine where more instruction is needed and the students benefit from the immediate feedback.

It is not easy to create active learning activities that: (1) draw on the information presented in the tutorials; (2) are still feasible for students who did not watch the tutorials; and (3) include formative assessment. However, the activities that allow for all three are richer and more rewarding for both student and librarian.

Next Steps

With the rubric in its final version and the pilot year complete, the committee can present the next round of results to campus stakeholders. For future years, Comp II instructors will no longer be asked to volunteer for the flipped model. Rather, all Comp II instructors receive links to the tutorials via email and are asked to indicate whether or not they will be assigning the tutorials upon receiving the links. Because some instructors are opting out of the flipped model the committee should be able to compare assessment results among the flipped and non-flipped models. As the program continues the active learning bank will grow, formative assessment will be more fully integrated into the Comp II library sessions, and RSU staff will further work to collaborate with Comp II instructors. Final results of the assessment project will be published in a future study.

¹ Meggan Houlihan and Amanda Click, "Teaching Literacy: Methods for Studying and Improving Library Instruction," *Evidence Based Library & Information Practice* 7, no. 4 (2012): 35–51; Dianne VanderPol and Emily A. B. Swanson, "Rethinking Roles: Librarians and Faculty Collaborate to Develop Students' Information Literacy," *Journal of Library Innovation* 4, no. 2 (2013): 134–48.

² Nora Hillyer, Marvel Maring, and Dorianne Richards, "Assessment in Small Bytes: Creating an Online Instrument to Measure Information Literacy Skills," in *Using Technology to Teach Information Literacy*, ed. Thomas P Mackey and Trudi Jacobson (New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2008), 179-180.

³ Debra Hoffmann and Kristen LaBonte, "Meeting Information Literacy Outcomes: Partnering with Faculty to Create Effective Information Literacy Assessment," *Journal of Information Literacy* 6, no. 2 (2012): 70–85; Karen R. Diller and Sue F. Phelps, "Learning Outcomes, Portfolios, and Rubrics, Oh My! Authentic Assessment of an Information Literacy Program," *portal: Libraries & the Academy* 8, no. 1 (2008): 75–89; Erin Daniels, "Using a Targeted Rubric to Deepen Direct Assessment of College Students' Abilities to Evaluate the Credibility of Sources," *College & Undergraduate Libraries* 17, no. 1 (2010): 31–43. doi:10.1080/10691310903584767; Lorrie A. Knight, "Using Rubrics to Assess Information Literacy," *Reference Services Review* 34, no. 1 (2006): 43–55. doi:10.1108/00907320610640752; See also the RAILS project at <http://railsontrack.info/>

⁴ Megan Oakleaf, Michelle S. Millet, and Leah Kraus, "All Together Now: Getting Faculty, Administrators, and Staff Engaged in Information Literacy Assessment," *portal: Libraries & the Academy* 11, no. 3 (July 2011): 831–852.

⁵ Rosemary Green and Mary Bowser, "Observations from the Field: Sharing a Literature Review Rubric," *Journal of Library Administration* 45, no. 1/2 (2006): 185–202. doi:10.1300/J111v45n01_10.

⁶ Britt A. Fagerheim and Flora G. Shrode, "Information Literacy Rubrics within the Disciplines," *Communications in Information Literacy* 3, no. 2 (2009): 158–70.

⁷ Claire Holmes and Megan Oakleaf, "The Official (and Unofficial) Rules for Norming Rubrics Successfully," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 39, no. 6 (2013): 599–602. doi:10.1016/j.acalib.2013.09.001.

⁸ Megan Oakleaf, "Using Rubrics to Collect Evidence for Decision-Making: What Do Librarians Need to Learn?" *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice* 2, no. 3 (2007): 246

⁹ Carolyn J. Radcliff, Mary Lee Jensen, Joseph A Salem Jr., Kenneth J. Burhanna, and Julie A. Gedeon, "Classroom Assessment Techniques," in *A Practical Guide to Information Literacy Assessment for Academic Librarians* (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2007), 33-46; Joan R. Kaplowitz, "How Will Learning Be Measured? – Learner-Centered Assessment" in *Transforming Information Literacy Instruction Using Learner-Centered Teaching* (New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2012): 100-126.

¹⁰ Mary Snyder Broussard, Rachel Hickoff-Cresko, and Jessica Urick Oberlin, *Snapshots of Reality: A Practical Guide to Formative Assessment in Library Instruction* (Chicago, IL: ACRL, 2014), 44.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

Appendix A (Rubric Version 1)

| | BEGINNING | DEVELOPING | EXEMPLARY |
|------------------|---|--|---|
| ACCESS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources do not go beyond basic knowledge • Few or no academic sources (if required) • No consultation of experts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some sources provide in-depth exploration of topic • Some academic sources • May demonstrate consultation of experts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most or all sources provide in-depth exploration of topic • Uses academic sources • Obvious consultation of experts |
| USE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses sources incorrectly or superficially • Uses sources not relevant to the topic • Confuses primary, secondary, and tertiary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates some understanding of source integration • Uses some sources not relevant to the topic • May confuse primary, secondary, tertiary sources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully integrates sources into argument • All sources relevant to topic • Understands the difference among a variety of sources—primary, secondary, tertiary sources |
| EVALUATE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses no credible or authoritative sources • Uses only popular sources • Uses outdated information • Fails to recognize bias | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses mix of credible and questionable sources • Uses a disproportionate amount of popular sources • Uses a mix of current and outdated information • Partially recognizes and/or deals with bias | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses only credible and authoritative sources • Distinguishes popular and academic sources • Uses the most current information • Fully recognizes and deals with bias |
| CITATION | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fails to properly identify and cite all sources according to the standards of ethical and fair use of intellectual property • Does not include a complete bibliography • Uses source material as indirect quote without adequate paraphrasing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properly identifies and cites all sources according to the standards of ethical and fair use—may be minor mistakes in formatting • Includes a complete bibliography which may contain formatting errors • Attempts to paraphrase or summarize cited material but poorly worded/rephrased | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properly identifies and cites all sources according to the standards of ethical and fair use of intellectual property with no noticeable mistakes • Includes a complete bibliography • Uses proper format for the subject area • Effectively paraphrases or summarizes ideas/information from the cited source materials using original language |
| SYNTHESIS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not consider a range of sources and perspectives • Demonstrates little or no synthesis of arguments/ideas: unable to integrate sources with each other or with one’s own argument | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates some range with sources and perspectives • Demonstrates some critical engagement with sources tending toward summary, rather than higher-level synthesis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers a variety of sources and perspectives • Demonstrates sophisticated level of engagement with sources • Accurately represents major/leading positions on the topic |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misrepresents other positions on the topic, or fails to identify or acknowledge other views | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents some other positions, with varying degrees of accuracy—may fail to acknowledge some major perspectives | |
|--|---|---|--|

Appendix B (Rubric Version 6)

| | BEGINNING | DEVELOPING | EXEMPLARY |
|--------------|--|--|---|
| ACCESSING | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources do not go beyond basic knowledge • Few or no academic sources (if required) • No consultation of experts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some sources provide in-depth exploration of topic • Some academic sources • May demonstrate consultation of experts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most or all sources provide in-depth exploration of topic • Uses academic sources • Obvious consultation of experts |
| EVALUATING | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses no credible or authoritative sources • Uses only popular sources • Uses outdated information • Uses sources not relevant to the topic • Fails to recognize bias • Does not consider a range of sources and perspectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a mix of credible and questionable sources • Uses a disproportionate amount of popular sources • Uses a mix of current and outdated information • Uses some sources not relevant to the topic • Partially recognizes and/or deals with bias • Demonstrates some range with sources and perspectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses only credible and authoritative sources • Distinguishes popular and academic sources • Uses the most current information • All sources relevant to topic • Fully recognizes and deals with bias • Considers a variety of sources and perspectives |
| SYNTHESIZING | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates little or no synthesis of arguments/ideas: unable to integrate sources with each other or with one's own argument • Misrepresents other positions on the topic, or fails to identify or acknowledge other views • Uses sources incorrectly or superficially • Fails to recognize need for supporting evidence for all claims | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates some critical engagement with sources tending toward summary, rather than higher-level synthesis • Represents some other positions, with varying degrees of accuracy—may fail to acknowledge some major perspectives • Demonstrates some understanding of source integration • Some claims need more supporting evidence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates sophisticated level of engagement with sources • Accurately represents major/leading positions on the topic • Fully integrates sources into argument • All claims fully supported by evidence |

| | | | |
|--------|--|--|---|
| CITING | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fails to properly identify and cite all sources according to the standards of ethical and fair use of intellectual property • Uses source material without proper in-text citations • Uses source material as indirect quote without adequate paraphrasing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properly identifies and cites all sources according to the standards of ethical and fair use—may be minor mistakes in formatting • Attempts to paraphrase or summarize cited material but poorly worded/rephrased | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properly identifies and cites all sources according to the standards of ethical and fair use of intellectual property with no noticeable mistakes • All supporting evidence fully attributed to source material • Effectively paraphrases or summarizes ideas/information from the cited source materials using original language |
|--------|--|--|---|

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