Information Literacy at York University Libraries:  
**The 2005 Manifesto**

“The future will only contain what we put into it now.”

What is Information Literacy?
The Prague Declaration from the International Information Literacy Meeting of Experts (2003) suggests information literacy encompasses “knowledge of one’s information concerns and needs, and the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organize and effectively create, use and communicate information to address issues or problems at hand; it is a prerequisite for participating effectively in the Information Society, and is part of the basic right of life long learning.”

Mission Statement
Our overarching purpose in developing an Information Literacy program is to graduate critically-engaged, information literate citizens able to fully participate in the information society across all levels – scholarly, personal, vocational and political. Our program, therefore, will focus on enabling students to develop information-seeking behaviours that transcend specific finding tools, to recognize the societal context of information, to think critically about the information they find and to let that information transform them.

In collaborating with our faculty member colleagues across the institution to enhance and build the research culture, we strive to deliver upon the University’s promise of excellence in research and teaching. Additionally, in bridging the gap between classrooms, library collections and Internet resources, librarians and archivists cultivate the critical intellect and empower our students.

Goals
The following goals will help guide our progress:

- We will promote the Libraries’ Information Literacy program in an effort to attract key academic partners and collaborative opportunities.

- We will work to collaboratively integrate generic and discipline-specific information literacy competencies and instruction into program curricula across campus, accommodating incremental growth in student proficiency and understanding over the course of degrees and programs.

- We will establish measurable outcomes for evaluation of the program. Evaluation will include periodic review of our information literacy manifesto and methods and the development of mechanisms for assessing student learning outcomes and needs.

- We will incorporate a flexible range of instructional modes to meet the needs of a diverse student population with varied abilities, interests and backgrounds, wherever they might be.

- We will foster a public culture of teaching by emphasizing the cross-pollination of ideas in professional development activities designed to foster sound pedagogical practices across the Libraries and to continuously search for innovations that improve teaching and learning in this area at York.
Information Literacy Plan

At the spring 2005 Information Literacy Retreat, YUL librarians and archivists came up with the following objectives and measurable outcomes for our IL program.

1) Outreach and Promotion

By summer 2010 we will have:

- Developed a promotional plan and mechanisms aimed at encouraging new faculty to take advantage of our information literacy services
- Developed a promotional plan and mechanisms aimed at fostering interest in our instructional services amongst the student body. Within this plan integrated attention to data we will have gathered regarding students’ opinions/experiences of the value/success of library instruction initiatives.
- Developed promotional mechanisms for faculty teaching Foundations courses encouraging them to include information literacy in the suite of critical skills covered in their courses
- Included accounts of departmental library instruction activities in our annual reports as liaison librarians and archivists
- Developed a list or database of faculty contacts who regularly use our instructional services in order to better identify our key partners. Having such a database would also help us identify those programs which are under-served or, given our limited resources, relatively over-served by our IL efforts
- Made presentations at the Senate and Deans’ level on information literacy initiatives and curriculum integration, with the goal of building buy-in for our program across the institution’s administration
- Shared learning objects, assessment mechanisms and strategies developed by York librarians and archivists with the library community through submissions to information literacy repositories such as the Canadian Online Repository of Information Literacy Learning Objects (CORIL), presentations at conferences, and publications
- Collaborated with other learning support services on campus to promote information literacy.
- Developed material and mechanisms to help liaison librarians in promoting IL objectives, strategies, and actions.

How will we know we have been successful in this area?
- By the number of increased opportunities for collaboration on information literacy initiatives

2) Curriculum Integration:

By summer 2010 we will have:

- Developed an overarching definition and understanding of curriculum integration that is flexible enough to allow for discipline-specific variation, and advocate the goals of curriculum integration in the University.
• Integrated information literacy instruction strategically within several programs and/or faculties.
• Integrated an attention to information literacy learning objectives into the assessment guidelines for Undergraduate Program Reviews and OCGS reviews
• Developed curriculum maps or plans for these programs and/or faculties
• Developed mechanisms for evaluating curriculum integration projects
• Encouraged new programs to incorporate information literacy learning objectives into plans from the outset, perhaps in conjunction with the Committee on Curriculum and Academic Standards (CCAS)
• Created support mechanisms for librarians integrating IL into program curricula.

How will we know we have been successful in this area?
– When we have planned, implemented, and assessed initiatives to integrate information literacy instruction in programs across the curriculum.
– When we are able to show that students are getting systematic information literacy instruction at strategic junctures of their academic career at York.

3) Evaluation/Assessment

By summer 2010 we will have:
• Developed a plan for assessment and program evaluation
• Developed a toolkit of assessment instruments to be used by librarians and archivists
• Studied the impact of library instruction using WRIT 2300 or other for-credit courses on research and writing taught by librarians and/or archivists
• Conducted research to obtain information about faculty's instructional needs/expectations and their opinions/experiences of the value/success of library instruction initiatives.
• Performed periodic focus groups with students to determine instructional needs/expectations
• Incorporated questions about research and information literacy skill acquisition into the Undergraduate Program Review self-study template
• Evaluated how relevant information gathered from campus-wide surveys (such as the National Survey of Student Engagement) could contribute to information literacy programming at York
• Reviewed the Information Literacy Manifesto in 2007 to determine progress towards goals and to ensure flexibility
• Reviewed assessment/evaluation methods developed in the first 2 or 3 years of the 5-year planning cycle to ensure effectiveness

How will we know we have been successful in this area?
– We can perform research with librarians, archivists and faculty to determine their view on the effectiveness of the instruments as well as the overall plan for assessment and evaluation
4) Flexible Teaching

By summer 2010 we will have:

- Integrated information literacy tools into a number of course websites
- Collaborated with other units (Centre for Academic Writing, Foundations Computer Assistance Program, Centre for Support of Teaching, etc.) to enable teaching of information literacy skills. Identifying groups of students with unique information literacy needs, and identifying what those needs might be, can form one focus in this collaborative endeavour.
- Developed workshops/tutorials to address groups with special needs in alternate formats
- Offered drop-in and course-specific instruction targeted at specific user groups and/or to address issues of relevance to our community
- Experimented with delivering online, real-time instruction
- Developed more asynchronous learning objects and instruction
- Partnered with a department to develop a course encouraging the critical study of information literacy issues
- Developed workshops for faculty and teaching assistants to help empower them to incorporate information literacy concepts and skills into their own teaching
- Developed mechanisms for assessing our various non-traditional offerings with a view to ensuring student learning
- Fostered library engagement in community initiatives with the goal of supporting new or established initiatives that benefit neighbouring communities by teaching members of these communities how to be critically informed, information literate citizens.

How will we know we have been successful in this area?
- By the increased number and range of instruction modes/modules compared against 2005
- By the results of our assessments

5) Professional Development

By summer 2010 we will have:

- Conducted a survey of teaching librarians and archivists to assess professional development needs in relation to information literacy activities
- Developed standards for orientation of new librarians and archivists to information literacy and instruction
- Encouraged more collaboration through providing avenues for team teaching, shadowing, and modeling of instruction (especially across units)
- Developed a teaching mentoring program
- Developed a systematic program of sharing of subject/content expertise among librarians and archivists
- Ensured that the provision of technical support for the development of online teaching and learning tools/systems is on the Library and Computing Services agenda and that LCS is given enough lead time to plan for this support
- Invited speakers from outside the library to help us develop teaching expertise (e.g. CST, Faculty of Education, University teaching award winners)
- Systematically supported conference and/or workshop attendance for information literacy and teaching development
• Hosted relevant professional development workshops and/or conferences for the benefit of the entire librarian community in order to foster the information literacy movement beyond the boundaries of our institution
• Provided incubatory opportunities for graduate students in Canadian library and information studies programs through teaching forums and practice teaching and/or shadowing opportunities
• Explored offering a new librarian a chance to develop teaching skills through creating a post-degree intern/resident position dedicated to information literacy
• Identified and increased the amount of dollars in the library budget dedicated to professional development activities for information literacy

How will we know we have been successful in this area?
  – By the number of collaborations, mentorships, incubatory opportunities created
  – We would also hope to see overall scores on librarian teaching evaluations increasing over the next 5 years

**Future Opportunities and Challenges**

In terms of opportunities for our new program, there are a number of exciting developments galvanizing us to action. The Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents have developed an interesting set of guidelines for undergraduate education which include attention to information literacy concepts and to learning outcomes in general that give us natural tie-ins in departmental curriculum planning processes. In particular, the Undergraduate Program Review process at York provides opportunities for librarians and archivists to advocate for the inclusion of IL learning objectives at the programmatic level. Within the last year alone, a number of academic departments have indicated interest in curriculum integration projects with YUL.

Additionally, we are well-positioned institutionally, having librarian membership on Senate, Senate Committee On Teaching and Learning, Committee on Curriculum and Academic Standards and other relevant committees. The Centre for Support of Teaching continues to be very supportive of our teaching activities and provides us opportunities to work with faculty at nearly every institute offered by the Centre. And perhaps most importantly for advocacy purposes, the latest iteration of the University’s Academic Plan gives the IL program a strong mandate and recognizes the relationship between libraries, information literacy and enhancing the research culture. Inclusion in this document gives us leverage in arguing for more resources for our program as well as in promoting IL projects to faculty.

Structurally speaking, we have an Information Literacy Committee and Program Coordinator positioned to steer the implementation of this plan as well as commitments from Library Computing Services to support librarians and archivists in the development of learning objects for IL.

And finally, looking beyond our local situation, a number of library associations have endorsed information literacy, the Ontario Council of University Libraries is facilitating the sharing of learning objects for information literacy across its member libraries and no less a body than UNESCO has identified information literacy as critical to bridging the digital divide. Clearly the time for the development of systematic programs of library instruction fostering information literacy has come.
Despite these significant gains for information literacy and instruction librarians, the road to a successful Information Literacy Program at York (or indeed anywhere) will not be without its bumps and roadblocks. Our struggle lies in our lack of resources -- YUL has a limited budget which suffers from regular cuts, and we have very few librarians and archivists in relation to the student population we serve. Strategies for dealing with our limited human resources will have to include looking for ways to maximize our reach – such as through online instruction and through working in collaboration with faculty members and teaching assistants interested in fostering information literacy concepts and skills in their classrooms and courses. Our focus will have to emphasize collaboration – and/or to encourage faculty and students to become allies in our efforts to increase the librarian complement at York.

Other challenges include the need to build buy-in amongst faculty, administrators and students who may not know of our program or be skeptical of its value. In the age of the Internet, there are many who believe that libraries are diminishing in importance and that Google may provide all the information one could ever need. Others believe library research has become simple in the age of electronic resources. We will have to work hard to overcome these misconceptions and demonstrate the value of our services and collections.

In looking at the daunting list of tasks and the challenges facing the development of our program, it should be noted that the implementation of our plan is not just the job of the IL committee. While the committee will certainly steer the implementation of the plan, librarians and archivists across YUL will have to shoulder new responsibilities as we forge ahead to 2010. However lest we get lost in the fear of new responsibilities on top of our already heavy workloads, let us not forget that the information literacy movement provides librarians and archivists with a transformative opportunity to become much more central to the overall mission of higher education. We can and will make a significant difference in the lives of our students and therefore in the shape of society.

"The reward of a thing well done, is to have done it."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

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