York University Libraries
Information Literacy Plan 2010-2015:
Engaging Student Learning Through Partnerships

This plan supports the information literacy (IL) mission of York University Libraries (YUL) over the next five years (2010-2015). The Information Literacy Committee (ILC) at York University Libraries will coordinate and steer strategic priorities in this plan in collaboration with relevant campus units and faculty colleagues.

**Definition and Rationale**
The term information literacy (IL) encompasses the set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze, and use information, and has a particular focus on the development of a critical engagement with information and the information-seeking process. UNESCO declared IL as a basic human right essential for lifelong learning and empowerment of individuals and societies. The White House recognized the issue when President Obama declared October 2009 as National Information Literacy Awareness Month in a proclamation that recognized its fundamental importance and the core role that educators and institutions of learning must play in fostering IL skills.

**Mission Statement**
The purpose of an IL program is to graduate critically-engaged, information-literate citizens able to fully participate in the information society at 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 and disciplinary contexts of information, to think critically about the information they find and to let that information transform them.

**Strategic Priority Areas for Development**

- **Academic Literacies:** We will embrace a holistic approach to teaching IL - an integral element in the context of academic literacies. Academic literacies include a range of 21st century competencies such as information literacy, writing, numeracy and learning skills. Teaching of academic literacies will be achieved in curricular and co-curricular contexts through collaboration with Learning Commons partners and other relevant stakeholders with the goal of fostering lifelong learning and developing students’ critical skills.

- **Curriculum Integration.** We will build on progress achieved to date in integrating discipline-specific IL competencies and instruction within programs in line with the White Paper priority of fostering curricular design that develops fundamental and transferable skills including information literacy. We will recognize a range of models relevant to different disciplinary contexts.

- **E-Learning.** The library will contribute to the development of e-learning by: 1) Collaborating in the design of online courses/distance education programs to ensure that IL skills are embedded, 2) Creating online tutorials/objects which can be used for online learning, 3) Actively participating in online courses/programs to ensure that distance
education students receive IL instruction. 4) Collaborating with other campus partners including Learning Technology Services (LTS), University Information Technology (UIT), eServices Office (eSO) and the Centre for the Support of Teaching (CST).

➢ **Engaged Student Learning.** We will undertake to increase librarians’ and archivists’ adoption of student-centered pedagogies with the goal of actively engaging students with IL concepts and skills. In line with *White Paper* priorities, an important element in this strategy, will involve supporting and strengthening experiential education (EE) initiatives in collaboration with relevant partners in the emerging university EE support infrastructure.

**Principles**
The following principles are concretely integrated within all strategic priority areas identified in this plan:

➢ **Assessment:** The library is committed to engaging in assessment to gauge progress toward stated IL outcomes.

➢ **Advocacy:** The library will engage in ongoing advocacy to communicate the value of the library’s IL program and to build partnerships with relevant stakeholders on campus.

➢ **Professional Development:** The library will facilitate growth in liaison librarians’ and archivists’ knowledge and skills required to advance outcomes identified in this plan.

**Context**
Strategic priority areas in this IL plan support core university goals defined in the *Provostial White Paper*\(^4\) and the *University Academic Plan 2010-2015*\(^5\) where strong emphasis is placed on enhancing the quality of student learning at York. The recently established Learning Commons will play a significant role by facilitating an integrated and holistic approach to the teaching of academic literacies, including information literacy, writing and learning skills. In compiling this plan we have also considered developments at Ontario universities such as the *Ontario Online Institute* and the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) and related guidelines pertaining to cyclical reviews and Degree Level Expectations (DLEs)\(^6\).
Academic Literacies

Outcome: We will embrace a holistic approach to teaching IL - an integral element in the context of academic literacies. Academic literacies include a range of 21st century competencies such as information literacy, writing, numeracy and learning skills. Teaching of academic literacies will be achieved in curricular and co-curricular contexts through collaboration with Learning Commons partners and other relevant stakeholders with the goal of fostering lifelong learning and developing students’ critical skills.

Rationale: IL is most effectively learned and applied when blended with other academic literacies. By consolidating support for academic literacies we acknowledge that academic skills are intertwined rather than separate domains and that collaboration is fundamental in supporting student learning characterized as holistic, recursive and non-linear.

Indicators of Success

Over the next five years we will:

- Contribute and support co-curricular programming, e.g. workshops that facilitate the holistic integration of academic literacies in teaching and learning programs at York.
- Build partnerships designed to integrate academic literacies within several undergraduate programs at York.
- Work with the writing department, learning skills counsellors, the Centre for the Support of Teaching (CST) and other relevant partners to educate faculty about effective models and pedagogical approaches to teaching academic literacies including strategies for assignment design.
- Collaborate with the Faculty of Graduate Studies and other relevant partners to build a solid understanding of core IL and scholarly communication skills among graduate students with the goal of empowering them to advance their academic careers as researchers and scholars.
- Continue to offer teaching development opportunities for teaching assistants designed to equip them with strategies for incorporating IL competencies within their teaching and to model for them successful approaches for teaching academic integrity and plagiarism issues.
- Adopt a proactive stance in partnering with relevant units on campus to identify and teach to the unique academic literacies’ needs of international students.
- Contribute to the accessible design and delivery of instruction at York University by partnering with relevant campus stakeholders to enhance opportunities for students with disabilities to develop academic literacies.

Advocacy

- Advocate for the integration of academic literacies in teaching and learning at York.

Assessment

- Identify and implement tools and methodologies to gather evidence about the impact of this integrated approach on the academic literacies of students.

Professional Development

- Develop professional educational opportunities to foster a holistic approach to teaching academic literacies.
Curriculum Integration

Outcome: We will build on progress achieved to date in integrating discipline-specific information literacy (IL) competencies and instruction within programs in line with the White Paper priority of fostering curricular design that develops fundamental and transferable skills including information literacy.\(^7\) We will recognize a range of models relevant to different disciplinary contexts.

Rationale: The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Best Practices Initiative Institute for Information Literacy outlines characteristics of information literacy programs of excellence.\(^8\) This includes integration of IL across the curriculum since IL knowledge and skills are most effectively developed where learned and applied within the context of the content, assignments/projects and learning experiences of a course or program.

Indicators of Success

Over the next five years we will:

- In partnership with faculty colleagues make progress in integrating IL within additional courses and programs in both undergraduate and graduate programs at York.
- In collaboration with relevant academic support units and faculty colleagues integrate IL within programs with a special focus on critical and academic skills, e.g. General Education programs and the Transition Year Program (TYP).
- Develop tools and strategies to assist faculty with integrating IL within assignment design
- Work with the Centre for the Support of Teaching (CST) and other relevant partners to offer programming for teaching assistants and full- and part-time instructors designed to assist them in designing curricula and developing pedagogical approaches consistent with a curriculum-integrated approach to IL instruction.

Advocacy

- Engage in advocacy to support the White Paper goal of promoting curricular design which enables “the development of fundamental and transferable skills including …information literacy”\(^9\)
- Empower liaison librarians and archivists to advocate for the consideration of IL as a critical skill in the context of the review of existing and newly proposed programs at York, i.e. within the context of Cyclical Program Review and the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF).

Assessment

- Collect feedback and evidence on the impact of instruction on student learning where IL is embedded within curricula.
- Conduct an inventory to assess the reach of IL integration at course and program level.
- Provide tools and support for librarians with established curriculum-integrated IL approaches to assess the impact of their initiatives.

Professional Development

- Assisted librarians and archivists to integrate IL within curricula through support mechanisms, learning opportunities and an infrastructure for sharing methods and materials.
E-Learning

Outcome: The library will contribute to the development of e-learning by: 1) Collaborating in the design of online courses/distance education programs to ensure that IL skills are embedded, 2) Creating online tutorials/objects which can be used for online learning, 3) Actively participating in online courses/programs to ensure that distance education students receive IL instruction. 4) Collaborating with other campus partners including Learning Technology Services (LTS), University Information Technology (UIT), the eServices Office (eSO), and the Centre for the Support of Teaching (CST).

Rationale: As outlined in the White Paper on e-learning and the digital library, where properly designed, can enhance student learning and satisfaction. The benefits of this approach are all the more pertinent on a large commuter campus with a considerable number of part-time students.

Indicators of Success

Over the next five years we will:

✓ Increase the number and range of e-learning initiatives to foster teaching and learning of IL competencies in both curricular and co-curricular contexts.
✓ Create a focused plan around e-learning and a general framework for designing learning objects with attention to accessible design principles.
✓ Experiment with emerging technologies to expand our range of e-learning offerings.
✓ Revise the library web presence to embody context-specific online learning resources, videos and tutorials.
✓ Create a Virtual Learning Commons comprised of online tutorials, portals and interactive tools that address research, writing and learning skills in a holistic manner. The key focus of the site will be to illustrate the recursive process of scholarship.

Assessment

✓ Assess the effectiveness of the library’s online learning objects.

Professional Development

✓ Provide templates, tools and ongoing learning opportunities for librarians and archivists so that they are equipped to participate in e-learning projects and initiatives including integration of IL instruction within Moodle.
✓ Increase the level of participation by librarians and archivists in incorporating e-learning within their teaching and attain a wider recognition of e-learning as a part of instructional librarians’ and archivists’ job responsibilities.

Advocacy

✓ Proactively seek out and work with faculties in the design of international and distance learning programs to ensure that students have access to online learning objects.
**Engaged student learning**

**Outcome:** We will undertake to increase librarians’ and archivists’ adoption of student-centered pedagogies with the goal of actively engaging students with IL concepts and skills. In line with *White Paper* priorities, an important element in this strategy, will involve supporting and strengthening experiential education (EE) initiatives in collaboration with relevant partners in the emerging university EE support infrastructure.

**Rationale:** Student-centered pedagogies to foster engaged student learning provide substantial educational benefits to students including opportunities for deeper learning experiences.\(^\text{11}\) EE, a primary vehicle in York’s strategy to become an engaged university, in blending theory and coursework with practical concrete experience, not only results in deeper and more reflective student learning but additionally has been shown to develop citizenship and civic engagement among students.\(^\text{12}\)

**Indicators of Success**

**Over the next five years we will:**

- Gather and share information about EE initiatives involving librarian/faculty collaboration to strengthen students’ IL skills both within and beyond York University.
- Increase the number of EE initiatives with an IL component by working with partners across campus. This should include fostering opportunities for both librarians and archivists to support EE initiatives through in-course community-based learning (CBL) and within community settings.

**Advocacy**

- Liaise with individuals or committees within faculties that have overarching responsibility for EE to articulate the value of IL.

**Assessment**

- Develop mechanisms to assess the impact of student-centred pedagogies in IL instruction, including initiatives with EE components.

**Professional Development**

- Provide continuing education and other learning opportunities for librarians and archivists to develop and apply their knowledge of student-centred pedagogies, including EE, inquiry learning, and problem-based learning.
References


