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EDITOR'S NOTE:

This article and the next four—written by Arthur Sandeen, Larry D. Roper, Drew Hunter, and Jeanne S. Steffes—spotlight the important educators and powerful learning experiences students are benefiting from beyond the walls of the traditional classroom.

*Librarians
Teaching Outside
the Classroom*

Do They Really Do That?

BY ESTHER GRASSIAN

The 200 students in Travis Longcore's Geography 5 course ("People and the Earth's Ecosystems") at UCLA are assigned to analyze *The Skeptical Environmentalist* by Bjorn Lomborg in two different ways, both of which involve reviewing and thinking critically about references from Lomborg's book and other sources.

Esther Grassian is Information Literacy Outreach Coordinator in the UCLA College Library, where she has worked since 1969. She was formerly Instruction Services Coordinator, Electronic Services Coordinator and Reference/ Instruction Librarian in the same library. She is also a lecturer in the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, as well as the UCLA Writing Programs. The author retains the copyright to this article.

This is an admirable pedagogical goal, but most of the students are completely lost. Late in Winter Quarter 2002, they trickle in to the reference desk at the undergraduate library one by one, stumbling over the words “scholarly journal article.”

They have no knowledge of the peer-review process or any other differences between popular and scholarly publications. They cannot distinguish between essays published in anthologies and articles in periodicals, and they are unable to comprehend—much less complete—their two assignments.

In Fall Quarter 2003, an undergraduate in George Murphy’s Economics 199 course (“Individual Research Paper”) at UCLA submits a draft paper that includes the following words: “...as my colleagues at the *Economist* have written.”

The latter example shows that even when students *do* try to do research, they often use the Web indiscriminately. They copy and paste from all kinds of Web sites. They have little or no knowledge of the scholarly communication process or its significance.

Many think that Google indexes the entire Web and do not know that it is a popularity contest with rankings based on the number of times other Web sites in the Google database link to a particular site. Most know nothing about the “invisible Web” that includes research tools like PsycInfo that index scholarly materials. And they have no concept of, much less regard for, copyright or intellectual property.

Plagiarism is not new, of course, but it is rampant now and is just one aspect of widespread “information illiteracy.” Faculty in many disciplines have even given up on assigning research papers that require students to identify, locate, evaluate, and use research materials on their own. Instead, they simply have their students write papers based on assigned, pre-selected readings.

What does all of this say about the quality of liberal arts education, when students are so unprepared to conduct independent research and to weigh the value of one resource or research tool over another? Are undergraduates preparing for graduate-level research? In fact, what do faculty expect entering graduate students to know and be able to do in terms of information research? How are new graduate students learning their research skills and from whom?

If you really want to find out how students handle research assignments, just ask the librarians who help them at reference desks and through electronic forms of reference. The students who ask for help are the brave and, generally, the desperate ones who have some sense that there may be easier ways to find useful information than wading through hundreds of thousands of Google hits.

They also deserve credit for not just copying and pasting from Web pages without attribution or for not resorting to

online term paper and essay mills like “Thousands of Papers” (<http://www.termpapers-on-file.com/>), “CollegeTermPapers.com” (<http://www.collegetermpapers.com/>), and “Academic Term Papers” (<http://www.academictermpapers.com/>).

REACHING GENERATIONS X AND Y

How do librarians reach technology-focused Generation X and Generation Y students, as well as technophobic or techno-deprived students and those with special needs?

Librarians still teach information-literacy skills *indirectly* by creating both printed and online user guides to information-research tools and materials. They also help students learn *directly* at reference desks, over the phone, by e-mail, and increasingly through “digital reference” mechanisms using live chat and even instant messaging.

Live chat reference allows users to connect with a library staff member through a link on a Web page, type in a question, and get an immediate response sent by that staff member. Instant messaging, akin to e-mail, allows a library staff member to send a response to a question that will pop up on the student’s screen even if he or she is not still online.

Through all of these means librarians help students learn how to identify, locate, evaluate, and use information effectively and ethically. Electronic reference help is, however, just one of the many newer, outside-the-traditional-classroom ways in which librarians reach and teach students who need help navigating the mass of sources they may need to tap to adequately prepare their coursework and research projects. Librarians also are creating many new instructional tools, often directly linked to specific academic courses. These include:

• SYLLABUS REVIEWS

Librarians review course syllabi for individual faculty members upon request, suggest information-literacy enhancements, and discuss them with faculty. This may include adding critical thinking goals related to information research and sample information-literacy assignments to help students achieve expected learning outcomes.

• CREDIT-BEARING COURSES IN INFORMATION LITERACY

Librarians work with teaching faculty to design and offer one-credit or two-credit courses or labs to support the pedagogical goals and curricula of specific full-credit courses. Librarians then teach these courses as adjunct lecturers or as teaching faculty. For example, UCLA’s English Composition 123, “Information Literacy & Research Skills,” directly supports the curricula and assignments of upper-division Writing Programs courses. (http://ecampus.humnet.ucla.edu/classes/engcomp123_lec1_04s/)

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At some institutions, particularly where librarians have faculty status and the library is an academic department, librarians design, develop, and teach similar credit-bearing courses that may or may not be linked to full-credit courses in other disciplines. (See "Library Courses for Credit—SUNY and Beyond" for a list, last updated in March 2003, at <http://library.morrisville.edu/sunyla/lic/credit.html>)

In addition to teaching such courses in person, librarians may teach them as "blended instruction" courses. Such courses meet occasionally in person, but also use various forms of technology in place of many in-person course sessions, as a means of furthering specific pedagogical goals.

• WEB-BASED INFORMATION-LITERACY TUTORIALS

Librarians are creating interactive, self-paced tutorials, designed in segments, to introduce information-research concepts and techniques, and then to provide practice and reinforcement of them. TILT (Texas Information Literacy Tutorial), the University of Texas's open source tutorial (<http://tilt.lib.utsystem.edu>), and RIO (Research Instruction Online), the University of Arizona's tutorial (<http://www.library.arizona.edu/rio/>), are the best known.

• WEB PAGES LISTING INFORMATION RESOURCES FOR SPECIFIC COURSES

Lists of, and links to, print and online information tools (licensed and free), as well as selected Web sites related to the topic of a course, are being designed by librarians. These are often developed in collaboration with teaching faculty, for example Charles Hiroshi Garrett's course, Music History 98T: "Music in 20th Century Los Angeles," at UCLA (<http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/college/classes/music98/index.htm>).

• DISCUSSION BOARDS

Librarians respond directly to students' research-related queries on electronic "discussion boards" set up for individual courses. They may identify appropriate research tools for particular topics and answer questions regarding citation style and other information-research questions. They also may alert students to new or revised research tools and provide other search and evaluation tips.

• DIGITAL LEARNING OBJECTS

Librarians create reusable electronic teaching/learning items, for instance, online, interactive information-literacy exercises. These may be used in various teaching contexts. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Center for International Education lists a number of both general and discipline-specific repositories of such digital learning objects (http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CIE/AOP/LO_collections.html).

One familiar repository is MERLOT, the Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching

(<http://www.merlot.org/Home.po>). A Web tutorial on avoiding plagiarism has just been completed (<http://www.library.ucla.edu/b Bruinsuccess/>) and a general tutorial on information-literacy research also is being developed.

The preceding are just some of the ways that librarians now help students become information literate outside of the traditional classroom. However, librarians have been experimenting with different instructional methods and formats since the mid- to late-1960s.

This work has included one-shot guest lectures, development of bibliographies for courses, self-paced paper workbooks, and guides to using particular research tools effectively (See Chapter 2 of the author's *Information Literacy Instruction: Theory and Practice*, for a detailed history of the library instruction/information literacy movement.).

Today, other, broader efforts also are emerging. In addition to employing new and varied formats or modes of instruction, librarians at many universities and colleges are making concerted, organized efforts to reach faculty and students

through far-reaching information-literacy initiatives or programs.

These draw together the kinds of materials described above and present them in menus of offerings that help faculty and students understand the types and range of resources available across a university or even a college system to promote information literacy.

Organizers of such initiatives then publicize them to faculty, teaching assistants, administrators, and others to raise their consciousness about the need for information literacy and librarians' role in working with them to help various groups achieve it. The goal is to aid people in learning how to learn for a lifetime.

Even when
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they do try to
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often use
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Web sites.

For example, the Minneapolis Community and Technical College offers a wide range of information-literacy materials and instructional formats, and gathers the resources together online (<http://www.mctc.mnscu.edu/library/>). The resources listed include full-credit courses, an interactive Web tutorial, and guides to search strategies for information and research tools useful for specific subject areas.

The California State University System (CSU) has had an information-competency initiative in place since 1995. Its Web site provides a clear illustration of the many creative approaches CSU librarians have used to help students become information literate. They include Web tutorials, full-credit courses teaching information literacy, and collaborative instruction in information literacy woven into other academic courses (<http://www.calstate.edu/LS/infocomp.shtml>).

UCLA's Information Literacy Initiative, led by Eleanor Mitchell, is newer, established in 2001. It is a concerted effort to build on the many instructional efforts and successes that librarians have achieved at UCLA since the early 1970s. This effort pulls together a large menu of printed usage guides, online "help" guides, and criteria and exercises designed to help users evaluate Web-based material. It also involves having librarians make guest presentations in courses and set up group workshops (<http://www.library.ucla.edu/infolit/index.html>).

By the end of 2003, the initiative was already showing impressive results. For instance, thanks to librarians' outreach efforts, a revamped Sociology 1 curriculum for 240 students each quarter now includes two required research papers, required information-literacy tutorials, a required online citation-interpretation exercise, and an in-person group information-literacy session.

Similar components are being developed for other sociology classes. In addition, one-credit information-literacy courses are now offered as adjuncts to courses in the UCLA Writing Programs and via elective freshmen seminars. A Web tutorial on avoiding plagiarism has just been completed (<http://www.library.ucla.edu/b Bruinsuccess/>) and a general tutorial on information-literacy research also is being developed. All of these approaches offer models for other UCLA departments, a number of which have expressed interest in helping their students become information literate.

Many initiatives like UCLA's draw upon standards and objectives designed by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). (For details, see Resources.) To accomplish all of this, librarians are collaborating with many others to develop the information literacy society envisioned in a 1989 report by an American Library Association committee on information literacy. Now there is evidence that increasing numbers of faculty are concerned

about the lack of information literacy among their students, and the need for the kinds of solutions I have discussed.

The University of California's Academic Council (the statewide Academic Senate) last year endorsed a resolution urging the senates and library committees on all nine of the university's campuses to address the problems in a systematic way. It encouraged departments to "establish collaboration among faculty and appropriate librarians to create teaching activities that generate information literacy." (<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/senate/committees/ucol/infoliteracyresolution.pdf>).

All six regional accrediting agencies for higher education institutions now include information literacy skills and abilities among their standards for self-study.

And recently, the Educational Testing Service recognized students' need for improved information literacy, as well as expertise in information technology, by establishing a National Higher Education ICT (Information and Communication Technology) Initiative. It is chaired by Ilene F. Rockman, Information Competence Initiative manager at the California State University System.

The group plans to develop "a suite of assessments that measure not just knowledge of technology, but also the ability to apply technology to solve problems while in college and to help all students learn the ICT literacy skills that they will need to compete for jobs and thrive in the workforce" (<http://www.ets.org/news/03091701.html>).

It is clear that more higher education entities and leaders are coming to understand that librarians can and must play a key role in helping students learn critical thinking skills, as well as aiding them in becoming knowledgeable about general criteria for evaluating information in all formats, especially via the Web.

This is critical because most Web sites that look good seem equally believable and trustworthy, for instance, to many students. Government Web sites (with .gov domain names) may seem particularly trustworthy, yet also have a particular point of view, as do .org sites. Few students are likely to question the point of view of Web sites with these domain names unless they are asked to examine them closely and think about the author or sponsor, as well as the purpose of the site.

A fairly obvious example is the U.S. State Department's point of view regarding the war in Iraq (<http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/nea/iraq/>). A somewhat less obvious example is "Martin Luther King, Jr.: a Historical Examination," at <http://www.martinlutherking.org/>, which in fact is sponsored by Stormfront.org (logo: "White Power World Wide").

These examples and others illustrate that technology is rearranging our world in many ways, some good, some bad. The world of information resources has ballooned for li-

**Librarians often
need to help
students
learn about
intellectual
property and
develop
an understanding
of privacy
and
confidentiality.**

RESOURCES

- American Library Association's Presidential Committee on Information Literacy "Final Report."
<<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubls/whitepapers/presidential.htm>>
- Association of College and Research Libraries(ACRL): "Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education," designed to develop particular learning outcomes.
<http://www.ala.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ACRL/Standards_and_Guidelines/Information_Literacy_Competency_Standards_for_Higher_Education.htm>
- ACRL Instruction Section's "Objectives for Information Literacy Instruction," which provide detailed examples of means to help students meet the Standards.
<http://www.ala.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ACRL/Standards_and_Guidelines/Objectives_for_Information_Literacy_Instruction__A_Model_Statement_for_Academic_Librarians.htm>
- Definitions of "information literacy" and "information competency": See the collection of definitions on the Five Colleges of Ohio Web site <<http://www.denison.edu/collaborations/ohio5/grant/about/definitions.html>>, as well as Chapter 1 of *Information Literacy Instruction: Theory and Practice*, Grassian and Kaplowitz, 2001, for an overview of the topic and a discussion of various definitions. ☺

brarians as well as everyone else, but librarians are used to reviewing information in all formats, scanning for authorship, sponsorship, point of view, date, scope and evidence to support arguments.

The free "Librarians' Index to the Internet" (<http://lii.org/>), funded by the Library of California in partnership with the California Digital Library and the Washington State Library, is a good example of the kind of high-quality filtering service that librarians offer the public. For the index, librarians select, categorize, and write objective, evaluative annotations of freely available Web sites, and then sign and date their reviews. This service is both a reliable filter and a rather subtle teaching tool, because many of the annotations teach by example, by focusing attention on critical criteria for evaluating Web sites.

In their work with students, librarians often need to help them learn about intellectual property and develop an understanding of the issues of privacy and confidentiality. We live in a very invasive electronic world. Our points and clicks, our online reference questions, the books we check out, the personal information we provide, the groceries we buy, even the radio stations we listen to may be monitored, recorded, and analyzed, and perhaps even combined with other data about us to create individual or group profiles for various purposes. Privacy and confidentiality raise First Amendment and civil rights issues, which students may not have experience in evaluating.

The recent public attention to lawsuits filed against students and other Internet users who illegally download copyrighted music has highlighted the fact that many students do not understand that a lot of the research tools and other resources they may find online through college and university libraries are in fact licensed and paid for by the libraries—but remain the intellectual property of others.

Little or nothing may tell students this, partly because libraries are just beginning to "brand" such resources as paid subscriptions with limitations on usage. Even materials available through free databases like PubMed, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health and the National Library of Medicine, seem free for the taking to those who are unfamiliar with copyright and intellectual property laws and standards. So students see no distinction and freely copy whatever they find on the Web—music, images, text, multimedia files, often without citing or acknowledging sources in any way—as one of my introductory examples noted.

In the future, college and university librarians will continue to look for ways to help students learn how to find, evaluate, make effective use of, and cite electronic materials responsibly, and we have a growing arsenal of within- and outside-the-classroom approaches to make this happen. The best approaches we have to offer, though, will not go far unless we can work with more teaching faculty to incorporate information literacy goals and assignments throughout the curriculum.

So, grab that mouse and send your syllabi to librarians to open a dialogue about information literacy. Collaborate with librarians to create Web pages of information resources for your courses. Assign information literacy tutorials and research papers to your students. Work with librarians to create reasonable assignments, designed in stages, to teach students how to conduct research properly and provide them the support they need as they are learning. Librarians await your call or e-mail. But if we don't hear from you, you'll be hearing from us, and now you'll know why. ☐