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Curriculum Mapping Project: The D.B. Weldon Library and the Music Library

Project Background & Purpose

The Strategies of Excellence in the Western Libraries Strategy Map: 2015-2020 identified teaching critical literacies and embedding learning outcomes into the curricula as a priority.

In June 2017, the Head of the Research and Instructional Services unit in The D.B. Weldon Library, (Bruce Fyfe), formed a working group comprised of members from the Weldon R&IS unit and the Music Library as well as the Teaching & Learning Librarian, to undertake a project to map our current and ideal information literacy programs to departmental curricula. Undergraduate programs in the Faculty of Social Science and Faculty of Arts & Humanities and Don Wright Faculty of Music at Western University that were scheduled to undergo program review in the next two years were selected. Targeting the mapping at departments going through the review process seemed like a good starting place. Those departments would already be having conversations about learning outcomes in their curriculum. Our mapping process complements the work of the departments by raising awareness of the role that Western Libraries can play in curriculum development and demonstrating an alignment between information literacy instruction and the undergraduate student learning experience.

In addition to discipline-specific curriculum maps, outcomes of this pilot project include discipline-specific proposals for systematic information literacy instruction with a scaffolded and intentional approach outlining the delivery of information literacy instruction to undergraduate students as they progress through their course of studies. Curriculum mapping and the development of these information literacy instruction proposals will allow librarians to be strategic in their teaching and assessment activities. Ultimately, information literacy will be infused logically and equitably across the various academic programs at Western, thereby increasing the likelihood that students will achieve the information literacy learning outcomes envisioned by Western Libraries.

Context

In 2016, the Information Literacy Learning Outcomes Project Team developed undergraduate information literacy learning outcomes (ILLOs) <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/teaching/InformationLiteracyLearningOutcomes-201709.pdf> for use across Western Libraries.

These learning outcomes naturally encourage a strategic approach to the type of teaching that we do and help clarify the learning that we expect from our students. Curriculum mapping is a useful technique for documenting and visualizing student learning (Archambault). In order to see the entire instructional picture, we needed to map the current information literacy instruction occurring in the programs under review, and then map the ideal information literacy instruction by filling in gaps on the map and reconsidering current instruction that we no longer deemed to align with student learning needs. As a group, we designed a curriculum map template and made revisions to it after mapping one of the subject areas together. We then divided up the programs that we had selected for mapping and worked independently, checking in with each other at biweekly meetings.

Mapping Process

We used a number of strategies to develop the “ideal” instruction scenario for each program. In our spreadsheet we included a current snapshot of ongoing instruction and mirrored this with an ideal program of instruction. In order to capture the current instruction on the maps, we examined the documentation of instruction located in the Instruction Database and in the “Instruction” folder that is available on Weldon’s shared drive. We met with the liaison librarians responsible for the areas being mapped to ensure that we had an appreciation of the departments’ focus (priorities) and that we did not miss any key courses where library instruction would make sense.

We also looked at the learning outcomes identified in individual course syllabi available from departmental websites. We identified and targeted required courses for the completion of a degree as ideal places for instruction.

When the course outcomes intersected with any of Western Libraries five ILLOs, we noted the intersection on the map and indicated whether the instruction would be at the Introduced, Reinforced, or Proficiency level. We also classified the instruction using the GeST framework, which refers to whether the content should be offered through the Generic, Situated, or Transformative lens (Lupton & Bruce, 2010). Including levels of learning and the GeST learning framework encouraged a wholistic approach that scaffolds and links the information literacy learning across courses within the curriculum. Ultimately, this approach will help departments graduate information literate students.

Departmental Proposals

Once the maps were established, the team developed a proposal template that could be used as a tool to begin or continue conversations with faculty members and departments about situating information literacy instruction in the places where course outcomes overlapped with the ILLOs. The template is succinct yet adaptable. The proposal gives some high level background on Western Libraries complementary learning outcomes explaining how they overlap with Western Degree Outcomes

(WDOs). In the actual proposal, a chart helps to pinpoint exactly which courses are targeted, and shows the information literacy learning outcomes for the session and how they complement the course outcomes and assignments.

The modularity of many of the programs at Western will necessitate an ongoing, open dialogue with each academic department that involves curriculum planning in order to achieve the appropriate placement of the Western Libraries ILLOs. For programs that have specific required courses, the proposals will be much easier to design. Programs that offer more flexibility to the students will be more difficult to map, as there is greater risk of exposing students more than once to the same content. The curriculum maps should be flexible and dynamic, requiring ongoing revision as course content and course offerings change year to year. Ultimately, the curriculum maps will be a valuable tool when responding to faculty requests for instruction.

Recommendations

1. We recommend implementing the approach that we developed for this pilot project across all Western disciplines. It makes sense to adopt this approach now, just as Western Libraries reorganizes and begins to establish various processes in the new core functions.
2. We recommend that the members of the Teaching and Learning Core User Function take a similar approach to determining where instruction and ILLOs fit best with Western curriculum.
3. We recommend that updates to established curriculum mapping occur annually, due to the frequency of changes that occur in courses and the instructors who teach within Western's programs.
4. During our pilot project, we took advantage of the program review process, by selecting those programs that would have recently gone under review, or would be about to go through the review process because they would already be looking at how to incorporate the WDOs into their curriculum, and so might be amenable to further curriculum suggestions. We recommend that the Teaching and Learning Team continue to strategically align curriculum mapping with program reviews- a process that occurs every 7 years for each program.

References

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