T8 - Grassroots Collaborations and Beyond: Bridging the Gap between High School and Post-Secondary

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Grassroots LibGuide: http://libguides.okanagan.bc.ca/js-bridging
Grassroots Blog: http://grassrootscollaborationbridgingthegap.blogspot.com
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Bridging the Gap: An Overview

• Bridging the Gap
• Our goals
• Our collaborations
• Is outreach beneficial?
• Challenges
• Ongoing goals
• Embarking on your own outreach program
• What’s next?
• Suggested readings
• Questions????

The Gap

The gap refers to a disparity between:

• the skills that graduating high school students have
• the skills they need to be successful in their first year of a post-secondary

The Bridge

• Interest in collaboration between librarians at different levels of education has been escalating.
• Collaborating for a smoother transition is a common concern of librarians.
• A term associated with such collaboration is “transition literacy.”

“Transition literacy is not a new concept but it is gaining momentum as a concept in schools and universities as students need to be ready to enter the next step in their academic life in an information rich environment” (Beaudry, 2010)
The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations Survey

Recent surveys have indicated that there is a widening gap between the information literacy skills of high school students and the information literacy skills expectations post-secondary professors have of first year university students.

The Ontario survey suggests that post-secondary educators are finding that current students have:

- Lower level of maturity
- Lack of required writing, mathematical and critical thinking skills
- Poor research skills as evidenced by an overreliance on Internet tools like Wikipedia as external research sources
- Expectation of success without the requisite effort
- Inability to learn independently
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GOALS

In response to recent surveys and the literature and in concert with teacher-librarian cut-backs in BC...

we have created the following ongoing goals to help ease the transition by:

• identifying perceived gaps in the research skills of students entering first year university
• involving students in the information literacy process in preparation for post-secondary
• creating institutional awareness and commitment to transitions opportunities
• creating sustainable collaborations between our schools and post-secondary institutions
• creating potential lobby groups in support of funding for teacher-librarians locally & beyond
• identifying and working with other groups at our institutions who are focusing on transition
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COLLABORATION:
Pleasant Valley Secondary (PVSS) and Okanagan College ~ Historical snapshot

This fruitful collaboration has:
- brought together various players over the years
- experienced its own gaps
- created many opportunities to explore and address the perceived gap between high school and post-secondary information literacy skills
- helped us identify what research skills are key for first year students

May 2000  Pro-D District 83 Teachers at Okanagan College. Campus Workshop. Salmon Arm Campus
Feb 2001  Tri-Zone Conference, Vernon BC. Information Literacy Workshop for Teacher librarians. Presented by PVSS Teacher-Librarian and two Okanagan College librarians
May 2002  Columbia-Shuswap School District Pro-D Conference: Information Workshop: Plagiarism presented by PVSS Teacher-Librarian and Okanagan College librarian
Fall 2003  PVSS teacher-librarian goes on leave
Fall 2005  Institutional changes: Okanagan University College transitions to Okanagan College.
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COLLABORATION:
Film Project ~ a fruitful collaboration!

The film project *Research Skills: Bridging the Gap between High School and Post-Secondary* renewed the opportunity for Okanagan College and PVSS to collaborate once again.

Film Timeline:
Fall 2008  PVSS teacher-librarian approached Okanagan College Campus librarian and pitched the idea of interviewing professors who teach first year courses for the purpose of *identifying what research skills they expect first year students to have.*

Winter 2009  Interviews with college professors were filmed.

Summer/Fall 2009  The film editing underway.

Spring 2010  The film completed.
A streaming video was added to the OC library catalogue. [Library webpage](#).
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COLLABORATION:
Film Project - Aims or goals of the film project

a – Document voices of professors to understand their IL expectations of first year university students
b – Create awareness of IL expectations amongst the K-12 educational community via filmed interviews
c – Create a sustainable and united peer community for the purpose of:
   - sharing best practices and next steps
   - creating a forum for the convergence of ideas in support of the teaching of IL strategies from K-20
   locally and beyond.

Who was involved in this collaboration?

a - one teacher-librarian from Pleasant Valley Secondary School
b - one academic librarian from Okanagan College, Kalamalka Campus
c - one film specialist from Okanagan College Educational Technology
d - six professors from the following disciplines at Okanagan College
   ► Anthropology
   ► Biology
   ► English
   ► History
   ► Psychology
   ► Sociology
e - AND many high school and college students participated!
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RESEARCH SKILLS Film Project
Guiding questions:

a - **What typical use is made of the college library** by your classes (perhaps example(s) of a research project you might assign)? What is the role of the librarian in the process?

b - **What are your expectations in regards to quality of information sources?** Subtopics could include: peer reviewed material / print resources / online resources / databases (online, CD ROM) / number of sources used / research notes or rough drafts of work / citation of sources.

c - **What is your policy in regarding plagiarized words and ideas?** What is the policy of the college? How do you know when/if something is plagiarized?

d - **Ideally, what research skills would you like 1st year college students** to come equipped with (that they often don’t have)?

*Research Skills: Bridging the Gap Between High School and Post Secondary*
Film produced by Leslie Barton [DVD](#) (16min) and [condensed version](#) - (4:24min)
(We show the first 4 mins of the 16min version – because of the embedded introduction.)
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RESEARCH SKILLS Film Project

Results: Common emerging themes from the filmed interviews

The majority of students in first year university courses are not familiar with:

a – the “research process”

b – where to look for appropriate resources for first year research

c – what a peer-reviewed article is

d – how to evaluate the sources they find

e – how to cite the resources they have used

f – how to use the information gathered
RESEARCH SKILLS Film Project

Outcomes: Film provided a basis for many discussions on information literacy and transition to post-secondary

The original intent of the film was to:
simply share interviews of research skills expectations with SD 83 administrators, teachers, and the School Board

However the film has:
gone beyond the district level and has been viewed by and stimulated discussions amongst teachers, teacher librarians, and public librarians and academic librarians at pro-days, BCTLA, BCLA, IFLA and now WILU

The film has proven to be a useful tool
• has helped stimulate critical and lively discussions
• created and awareness of the research skills expectations
• has helped prompt further investigation (OC Survey)
RESEARCH SKILLS Survey 2011

Building on the Research Skills film’s interview questions and the ACRL Information Literacy Standards, Okanagan College Library embarked on further investigation of the question:

What research skills do college professors expect first-year students to have?

Goal: to identify the expectations instructors have of first-year college students’ research skills

Method of Assessment: multi-campus survey that will be distributed via email

Target Audience: Okanagan College instructional faculty in university transfer and business courses

Aim of the results: assist the Library in continuing to develop and enhance its information literacy (research skills) programs
RESEARCH SKILLS Survey 2011

Do you think first-year students transitioning from high school have the research skills needed to succeed?

- Yes: 10.8%
- No: 73%
- Other: 16.2%
RESEARCH SKILLS Survey 2011

You said “NO”. You do not think first year students have the research skills needed. Please Explain.

Explanations included:

- Students think that a search on the internet using google, google scholar, or wikipedia is adequate research.
- Don’t know where to begin research and feel lost.
- They generally believe that writing papers is about expressing their opinion, not providing researched proof.
- They have no idea how to search databases, understand peer-reviewed articles, or properly cite works.
- Students have no preparation for finding research that is used to support an argument. They can google, but they can't organize, prepare, or evaluate that information.
- That's what we teach in first year college. I don't expect them to already know it.
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RESEARCH SKILLS Survey 2011

Do you contact a librarian to provide in-class research instruction?

- YES 51.4%
- NO 48.6%
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RESEARCH SKILLS Survey 2011

You answered “NO”. You did not contact a librarian to provide in-class research instruction. Why Not?

- NOT ENOUGH TIME 22.2%
- NOT A PRIORITY 11.1%
- DID NOT KNOW ABOUT SERVICE 22.2%
- OTHER 44.4%
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RESEARCH SKILLS Survey 2011

Other Responses:

- Instructor covers it themselves in class
- Other classes cover research skills so the instructor doesn’t bother
- Not enough time in class, need to focus on course content
- Students referred to go to the library on their own time
- Library took up more time than promised in the past

Image by jscreationsz
RESEARCH SKILLS Survey 2011
Top Ten Research Skills Expectations of Okanagan College Professors

1. How to locate and access information
2. How to avoid plagiarism and recognize the importance of citing and referencing sources
3. How to recognize when information is needed
4. How to evaluate the credibility and authority of information
5. How to organize and apply information effectively
6. How to differentiate between popular and scholarly sources
7. How to differentiate between a primary and secondary source
8. How to create a research strategy or keep a research journal
9. How to synthesize and build on existing information
10. Other: expect them to develop these skills
RESEARCH SKILLS Survey 2011

Please propose other ideas on how librarians can provide the research skills you expect students to have?

- hand out sheets for easy reference - ability to access librarian skills in the library to help with research
- quick demos available in the library
- If you have library research skills workshops please tell the professors as we can tell our students that they have to go. In fact we can make it worth something towards their grade. We would need a way to ensure that attendance is kept.
- I'd prefer if students could attend a library research skills seminar on their own time and get a signature - form to return to the instructor noting they participated.
RESEARCH SKILLS Survey 2011

Please propose other ideas on how librarians can provide the research skills you expect students to have?

- Please continue the classroom visitations. They are most useful.
- Presentations tailored to the content of the courses are most useful.
- Mandatory first year library orientation and quiz
- Planning thematically-organized sessions throughout the term
- Walk through of a typical project search.
- I think it is great that the librarians are interested in doing this - but to be honest, I think the problem is greater and we need to begin teaching students these skills in high school. I also strongly believe that there should be required seminars or a course on basic academic skills
- Outreach - librarian on call – able to meet students in study rooms etc.
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**IS COLLABORATION IMPORTANT?**  We think so!

**IS OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS BENEFICIAL?**  YES!

The literature shows that we view instructional outreach to schools beneficial on many levels: (Burhanna, 2006)
- Helps students succeed by increasing information literacy skills
- Helps ease the angst of transitioning to post-secondary
- Can improve community relations
- Can be a great recruitment tool

**A FEW COLLABORATIVE MODELS:**
- ACRL/AASL [Blueprint for Collaboration](#)
- BC Teacher Librarians BCTLA & SFU/UBC Teacher librarians worked with university librarians (SFU and UBC) to devise a list of the top 10 research skills for first year university students called [Points of Inquiry](http://bctf.ca/bctla/pub/documents/Points%20of%20Inquiry/PointsofInquiry.pdf)
- Kent State University [Transitioning To College](#) & [Informed Transitions](#)
- Carleton University and Ottawa [Partnership Program](#).
For more models of collaboration we can look at the Research Skills: Bridging the Gap LibGuide [http://libguides.okanagan.bc.ca/js-bridging](http://libguides.okanagan.bc.ca/js-bridging)
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HAS OUR COLLABORATION BENEFITTED US?

Joining together from two perspectives has increased our awareness of what information literacy gaps exists and ideas on how to bridge those gaps.

- The Research Skills film
  interviews have had an impact
  has created a springboards for many discussion

- The Research Skills Survey
  findings support the anecdotes heard in the filmed interviews
  has created an awareness of info lit skills amongst OC faculty

- The film and survey package
  A package combo will be useful for future presentations as we attempt to create an institutional awareness of the gaps in learning:
  ~ Okanagan College (colleagues & administrators)
  ~ School Districts (teachers and librarians, administrators, School Boards, in-services)
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WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES?
• budgetary/funding issues (school visits, field trips)
• cutbacks in education
• cutbacks in teacher-librarian time & library clerical support
• curriculum demands on subject teachers
• added ‘clerical’ demands on teacher-librarians’ time and resources
• assessment driven curricula
• time, workloads, and resources

WHAT ARE OUR ONGOING GOALS?
To help bridge the gap between high school and post-secondary education by:
• identifying perceived gaps
• involving students in the information literacy process
• creating institutional awareness and commitment
• creating sustainable collaborations
• creating a lobby group
• identifying transition groups within our institutions (eg. Okanagan College Mainline Transtitions Partnership)

http://www.okanagan.bc.ca/futurestudents/School_Counsellors_and_Teachers/transitions/Concurrent_Enrolment.html
EMBARKING ON AN OUTREACH PROGRAM

Key questions we need to ask ourselves

Kenneth Burhanna, Kent State University suggests the following (Burhanna, 2007):

- Should we be doing this?
- Where do we start?
- How do we do this as a smaller institutions?
- Who are the key players?
- Who is our target audience?
- What are we hoping to give them?
- Who is going to do it?
- What are the resource requirements?
- What kind of funding is required?
- When are the best times of the year to do this?

See Burhanna’s list of five imperative tools for outreach programming for high schools Table 3, page 84.

Burhanna, K.J. (2007). Instructional outreach to high schools: Should you be doing It?

*Communications in Information Literacy*, 1(2), 74-88.
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EMBARKING ON AN OUTREACH PROGRAM

Start small! Create a plan of action!

- Title of project
- Action plan leader
- Objectives
- Vision statement
- Identify action points and a timeline (action assigned to/start/finish/completion dates)
- Program outcomes
- List of potential key players (Burkhardt, 2005)
- Learning outcomes
- Development of program
- Assessment of program

Talk it up! Put the bug in everyone’s ear ~ in-services, pro-d days, hallways, elevators! Write and rehearse an 30 second elevator speech (ACRL Immersion, Program Track 2008, San Diego, CA)

Don’t be discouraged!

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WHAT’S NEXT for our collaboration?

Keep the conversation going:
• create opportunities for discussion and awareness of outreach potentials
• communicate with relevant educational communities & colleagues locally, provincially & beyond
• attend relevant conferences, seminars and workshops
• aim to create a sustainable outreach program based in research

Keep the conversation going with:

School Districts
- Pro-D Days (Tri-Zone, In-Service Days)
- Teacher Librarians
- Teachers and Administrators
- Local School Boards
- Parent groups

Post-Secondary
- School Pro-D Days (Tri-Zone, In-Service Days)
- Academic librarians from other universities
- Transitions Mainline (Okanagan College + 7 school districts)
- Open houses/Outreach/Student for a Day/Spotlight on Learning/ Dual Entry Programs
- Institutional awareness
- Formalize and commitment is a goal for the purpose of formalizing instructional outreach programs to high schools.

Create package of research skills film and survey
- Create a package that reflects the findings of the Research Skills film and survey.
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Suggested readings:


Burhanna, K.J. (2010, June 26). Yours, mine, and ours: Moving students through the information literacy ladders from high school through community college to the college/university level. Presented at CJCLS for ALA.


See also Research Skills LibGuide under “Resources” tab at http://libguides.okanagan.bc.ca/js-bridging
Check out our Grassroots Blog http://grassrootscollaborationbridgingthegap.blogspot.com/