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## **“Slavic Folklore, the Library, and the Web: A Case-study of Subject-Specific Collaborative Information Literacy at the University of Kansas”**

JON GIULLIAN\*

*Watson Library, University of Kansas, Kansas, USA*

*ABSTRACT: This case-study describes the on-going integration of Information Literacy (IL) into a large undergraduate general education course on Slavic folklore at the University of Kansas. The purpose of the case-study is to provide practical examples that Slavic librarians and other colleagues may find useful in the development of their own customized library instruction program.*

*KEYWORDS: library instruction; Information Literacy; IL; Slavic studies; professional development; librarian / faculty collaboration.*

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\* Address correspondence to Jon Giullian, Librarian for Slavic and Eurasian Studies, Watson Library, University of Kansas, 1425 Jayhawk Blvd., Rm. 519, Lawrence, KS 66045, USA. Telephone: 785.864-8854. E-mail: giullian@ku.edu

## **INTRODUCTION**

Although powerful electronic tools have made it easier to navigate the burgeoning sea of published material, research at the college level still requires the acquisition of significant analytical and searching skills. In the past decade librarians and library instruction departments have made significant progress in promoting information literacy at their institutions. Some institutions have even implemented campus-wide IL programs.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the mainstay of library instruction at most colleges and universities continues to be the single, course-related instructional session – despite the fact that such “one-shot”<sup>2</sup> library workshops only scratch the surface in helping students acquire IL competencies.

Research has demonstrated that a more effective way of integrating IL into the curricula of higher education entails setting up an active and collaborative partnership between teaching faculty and librarians.<sup>3</sup> The present case-study describes how a “one-shot” library orientation session evolved into a multi-session program that weaves IL into a general education course in Slavic studies. A team consisting of a professor, graduate instructors, and a librarian designed and implemented the program over a period of three years.<sup>4</sup> Our chief goal was (and is) to help students acquire basic research skills, or IL competencies,<sup>5</sup> that will help them succeed in their university study. This case-study begins with a description of the initial “one-shot” session, followed by a discussion of how the multi-session program emerged and evolved over 5 semesters. Lastly, the narrative concludes with an analysis of feedback received from students over three years and a reflection on lessons learned over the duration of the project.

## **DEMYSTIFYING THE LIBRARY IN ONE SHOT**

In January of 2006, a professor from the Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures requested library orientation for undergraduate students enrolled in SLAV 148/149: Introduction to Slavic Folklore.<sup>6</sup> In her own words, the professor wanted to help “demystify the library” for her undergraduate students; that is, to reduce the level of anxiety or intimidation students feel when it comes to using a large research library. A librarian by training, the professor recognized the value of helping students feel comfortable using the library’s collections and services and working with professional librarians. During the first meeting with the professor and graduate instructor we discussed the desired learning outcomes and the logistics of the sessions. We determined that students must become familiar with the KU Libraries website; learn how to use

the library catalog; be able to find books in the stacks; learn the layout of the library; and know where to go for help. We also decided that the sessions would take place outside of class; attendance would be mandatory and would count as one homework assignment. I recruited three other library instructors to help with instruction, and together we provided four regular sessions and two additional “make-up” sessions.<sup>7</sup> Sessions focused on navigating the library’s home page, using the OPAC to find books on Slavic folklore, as well as a general tour of the library’s collections and services, which included hands-on practice locating specific books on the shelf.

At the end of each session, student feedback was collected to gauge student perceptions. The results showed that nearly half (47 %) of freshmen derived the most benefit from hands on practice finding book in the stacks; whereas sophomores (41 %) and juniors (44%) preferred instruction on the library catalog. Seniors’ perceived benefit was split across all categories (see Appendix 1).<sup>8</sup> I expected that upper division students would prefer instruction on search strategies (a more advanced skill), but results showed that comparatively few students, including juniors and seniors, mentioned search strategies as the most useful part of the instructional session. Although one must be careful not to over-generalize the results of student perceptions, the results suggested that a majority of students in the course, regardless of academic level, still needed to learn the basics. Specific comments indicated that hands-on activities with corresponding worksheets, although more time-consuming than demonstration alone, achieved the desired outcomes. By the end of the session students knew where services and collections were located; how to use the catalog; as well as how to navigate the stacks and locate books on the shelf. In sum, student feedback suggested that the library instruction session did, in fact, achieve its goal of “demystifying” the library. Nevertheless, the one-shot approach could go only so far. A more rigorous program would be needed to facilitate the acquisition of IL competencies.

## **LAUNCHING THE INTEGRATED PROGRAM**

The idea of integrating IL into the course on Slavic folklore began fermenting during a professional development seminar on IL that I attended in April 2006.<sup>9</sup> Led by Patricia Breivik, a nationally-recognized authority on IL, the seminar emphasized the need for librarians to work together with faculty who would consider weaving IL into the fabric of their course(s). I proposed this idea to my colleagues, who greeted it enthusiastically and then contributed their

own ideas. Together we developed a basic framework to guide our work. We determined that our new program would consist of several library instruction sessions, an online IL tutorial, and a course research assignment. At the end of each semester we would convene a *post mortem* meeting to discuss the outcomes of the program and make adjustments for the following semester. In order to achieve a working partnership, so critical to an integrated program, we decided to share responsibilities: the Slavic professor assumed responsibility for the course content and for setting the objectives; course instructors (in consultation with the professor) handled course design and scheduling, as well as the majority of the course lectures, assignments, and grading; the Slavic librarian designed and taught the library sessions, consulted on the design and implementation of the research assignment, and helped grade the research assignment. Although each member of our team was responsible for his or her own components, we felt that frequent consultation was essential in order for the program to be successful.

Soon after the general structure of the program was in place, a second professional development workshop introduced a “problem-solving” methodology that would guide the overall instructional design of the library sessions.<sup>10</sup> The first version of our expanded program was taught in Fall 2006 and consisted of two sessions, or modules.<sup>11</sup> Initially sessions were scheduled outside of class time. However we soon discovered that this model was not ideal: not only was it difficult to find times outside of class that fit students’ and instructors’ schedules, but it was also very time-consuming. At the end of the fall semester, we decided that the project was important and produced enough results to warrant scheduling sessions during class time in subsequent semesters. To make the new schedule work and because of limited space in the instruction room, we divided students into two groups and scheduled library sessions on alternate days. The use of KU’s automated instructional workshop system (Library Management System or LMS) further simplified the process of scheduling and tracking attendance. Session activities incorporated a combination of presentation and hands-on research problems with some variation from one semester to another. Initial sessions typically addressed basic skills, such as orientation of the Library’s website and the library catalog, as well as an introduction to reference sources on folklore, mythology, and Slavic literature; a tour of collections and services; and hands-on practice locating books in the stacks. Subsequent sessions focused on search strategies, finding specific books and scholarly articles relevant to the students’ individual research topic, and the evaluation of resources. Concept maps and online tutorials designed to reinforce and evaluate

students understanding of research tools and the research process were also a regular part of the program.<sup>12</sup>

## **METHODOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENTS**

In subsequent semesters we implemented several methodological enhancements that improved the program as a whole. In the spring of 2007 we revised our design in accordance with the more rigorous principles of a “backwards design” model. Although we had previously verbalized what we wanted students to know, we reduced the number of desired learning outcomes and then articulated them in writing.<sup>13</sup> Next, we determined that completed worksheets, the summary of the Internet Detective on-line IL tutorial, and especially the bibliographic essay would demonstrate to what degree learning outcomes had been achieved. Finally, we reorganized the sessions and activities around the requirements of the bibliographic essay. During the 2007 fall semester we further adjusted session activities in order to help students retain more of what they were learning.<sup>14</sup> In addition to solving research problems, students wrote down the process for solving the research problems.<sup>15</sup> As we graded the worksheets, we observed that students had correctly articulated and, therefore, mentally-processed the steps needed to solve the research problems.

During the 2008 spring and fall semesters, we administered a learner assessment of library research skills to determine needs. At the end of the semester we administered the same assessment to determine the degree to which their needs were met. Results aggregated for the 2008 spring and fall semesters show a significant improvement in skill levels for all categories surveyed (see Appendix 2): location of dictionaries and encyclopedias (147 percent increase); location of books on reserve (48 percent increase); location of current magazines and periodicals (nearly 289 percent increase); layout of the library stacks (percent increase varies); information essential to locate books on the shelf (percent increase varies); resources/databases used to find articles (107 percent increase). The instructors found these results encouraging; and this sign of success allowed us to be more open to new ideas about how to make the learning process more relevant to our students, such as the approach espoused by Keith A. Erikson.<sup>16</sup>

The verification of learning outcomes was an important part of the program. Four measurable outcomes were consistently used to show the degree to which students actually acquired the research skills that they were being taught. First, we analyzed answers to research

problems to determine which specific skills were used during the sessions.<sup>17</sup> Second, we used concept maps to allow students to articulate visually what they had learned. Third, the results from quizzes or written summaries from online tutorials provided us with evidence that students had mentally processed research concepts. Lastly, individual research assignments represented the most polished and most-highly valued measure of student outcomes, showing how well students had applied the skills that they had learned during library sessions.

## **THE EVOLUTION OF THE RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT**

As a teaching tool, the research component of the course provides students with an opportunity to explore a topic in greater depth. As an assessment tool, it demonstrates how well students apply the skills of finding resources and evaluating them for quality and relevance. We wanted the research assignment to be challenging yet appropriate for students in their first year of university study. Over a period of five semesters we implemented four different types of research assignments, most of which are variations of an annotated bibliography. These included: the bibliographic essay (2006 fall, 2007 spring); following bibliographic trails (2007 fall); modular bibliographic assignment (2008 spring); and class dictionary of Slavic folklore (2008 fall).

In the fall of 2006, we asked the students to write a bibliographic essay using four books, three scholarly articles, and three websites about either Slavic folk art or Slavic costume. Students were instructed to describe each item and explain why it is an important source on the topic. They also had to cite the sources correctly.<sup>18</sup> Although results on the bibliographic essay were predictable for a general education course, they fell below our expectations. We identified several possible reasons for this disappointing outcome. First, the large number of students researching similar topics meant that many students needed the same books. This may have been a design flaw in the research assignment. As a result, when books were checked-out (or were in a foreign language) students were forced to select whatever else was available. Procrastination certainly exacerbated the problem. Second, the quality and relevance of selected articles and websites also fell below our expectations. Students either could not find relevant articles or seemed to select whatever articles they found right away. And even after completing the tutorial, most students selected popular and commercial websites,<sup>19</sup> seemingly without much consideration about the quality of the content. Only a few students found sites with trustworthy

content. The poor quality of selections could have been the result of any number of factors, among them the lack of research expertise, failure to engage with the topic, poor time management skills, or a lack of motivation. There was also a problem with students inappropriately sharing their work. Our proposed solutions for the next semester were twofold. First, we decided to expand the number of research topics; and second, we chose to emphasize the main objective of the research assignment, which is to find the *best* available sources on the topic.

The research assignment for the second semester (2007 spring) provided a list of over one-hundred unique research topics organized into eleven categories: famous folklorists, anthropologists, and mythologists; schools of thought; collectors and compilers; concepts and symbols; peoples, national heroes, material culture; holidays and celebrations; places and things; folklore in literature and elite culture; and Christianity. Although the expansion of topics eliminated students' inappropriate sharing of work, we observed some of the same problems as in the previous semester. First, the quality and relevance of books that students found again fell below our expectations. However, this time instead of vying for the same materials, many students complained that they could not find any books whatsoever on their topic. Thinking this over made us realize that this situation offers a perfect illustration of the types of difficulties that many undergraduate students have conceptualizing and verbalizing their needs. Frequently, they are either unable to identify possible or relevant keywords for their searches;<sup>20</sup> or step back and come up with more general terms if their keywords are too specific and yield no results.<sup>21</sup> Part of the problem certainly stems from the fact that much of the English-language content on specific topics in Slavic folklore is embedded within works on broader topics. Learning to think in terms of existing hierarchies of knowledge and information can be a challenge. Yet it is one of the most important conceptual tools that students can develop at the university, and one that librarians can help students to acquire.

The quality of selections on the bibliographic essays also triggered several questions among members of the team: Is the research assignment too difficult or time consuming? Do students get frustrated and give up? Is the design of the research assignment flawed? Do students have difficulty applying the search strategies successfully practiced during the library sessions? Or do they fall victim to poor time management skills? Whatever the cause, there seemed to be a disjuncture between students' performance on research exercises and the quality

of their bibliographic essays. In our next *post mortem* discussion about how to help students find the best sources, we decided to try a new version of an old approach. Once again, the driving force behind our redesign was the consideration of student needs, a component emphasized during Veldof's workshop. Results on the bibliographic essays from previous semesters suggested that students needed to learn how to find trustworthy sources, not just any source. Reflection on the Need to Know Triangle raised the question: "What do students really need to know that they don't get elsewhere?" We knew that the strategy of consulting reference works, bibliographies, works cited pages, and bibliographic footnotes is one that typically falls under the radar of undergraduate students. Because 50-minute sessions typically emphasize search tools and techniques, the "search and scan" method has all but replaced the art of following the "bibliographic trail." In fact, both methods are important.

Following discussion in our *post mortem* meeting, we decided that during the 2007 fall semester instead of producing a bibliographic essay, students would now be asked to follow a series of "bibliographic trails" from source to source and then discuss the research process itself in a descriptive essay. Students were instructed to explore four different types of works: reference works, monographs, scholarly articles, and web sites. For each type they had look at several sources, select one item, and then follow a bibliographic trail from that work to other core works on the topic. Students were to keep a log of their search process and design a concept map (visual model) of all four bibliographic trails with citation information included. Although a sample "search log" and "concept map" on Slavic vampires was provided, students were encouraged to create an original model.<sup>22</sup> The finished product would include the concept map, a 200-word annotation of one item from each type of source; and a one-page essay summarizing their research process.<sup>23</sup> Although not ideal, students' completed research assignments demonstrated some successful learning outcomes. For example, several students reported seeing the names of specific authors and works listed in multiple bibliographies, suggesting greater reliability.

Unfortunately the strategy of "following the bibliographic trail" did not always lead to the best resources. In some cases, students followed whatever references they could find even if they were not the sources most relevant to their topic. In other cases, the strategy of "following the bibliographic trail" led to dead-ends, forcing students to start a new string. Although frustrating, this is the nature of research and an important lesson to be learned. In our *post*

*mortem* discussion, we recognized that the road to every topic is unique and unpredictable, so that one strategy cannot be forced upon every topic. As a result, we determined that the process of “following bibliographic trails” should be presented as one of several important research strategies rather than being the focus of the final research assignment.

In the 2008 spring semester, we decided to eliminate the web site component of the research assignment, since from the start of the program many students had struggled to find web sites with trustworthy content on Slavic folklore.<sup>24</sup> We felt that it would be more critical for students to learn how to use those tools that would lead them to scholarly content than to waste more time to searching the Web, and we did not have the time to do an extra session on how to evaluate online sources. We also decided to divide the research assignment into discrete sections that would be due at regular intervals throughout the semester. For the few students with good time and project management skills, the fact that the research assignment was due at the end of the semester was not a problem. But the reality is that most students do not start early enough on their research assignments; so when there is not enough time to produce high quality work, they tend to select whatever they can find. We hoped that introducing this structural change would help students to manage their time better and ultimately to produce better work. The change would also benefit instructors by spreading out the task of grading throughout the semester.

As mentioned above, the research assignment for the 2008 spring semester consisted of three separate research exercises: (1) Exploring your topic using reference sources; (2) Finding the best books on your topic; and (3) Finding the best scholarly articles on your topic). It also included a concept map: Creating a visual guide to your research findings; and an 800-word final essay: Describing what you learned during the research process. The concept map and the essay were both due at the end of the semester; whereas research exercises were due approximately two weeks following their corresponding library sessions. In this way the strategies and concepts learned in library sessions would be fresh in the students’ minds. Each exercise asked undergraduates to identify the scope and/or slant of the work; credentials of the author, publisher and/or journal; to determine whether the work provided a bibliography; and to provide an analysis of its relevance. As usual, the research assignment guided the structure of the library sessions. Session one provided an overview of the research project; this introduction was followed by a series of research problems intended to guide students to reference sources with

scholarly content on their individual topics. By the end of the session, each student had evaluated and provided information about one reference book. Sessions two and three followed a similar format, but guided students to books and articles respectively.

The final product for Spring 2008 demonstrated improvement in several areas. In most cases, sources were cited correctly and annotations were generally concise and descriptive. Students also noted the significance of bibliographies as finding aids. As they researched the credentials of authors, journals, and publishers, some students began to realize that not all sources are created equal; their essays identified some of the criteria that make a source reliable (i.e. who is writing it and what are their credentials). The day after the first research exercise was due, the reference collection return-truck was stacked high with books on folklore. It was encouraging to see the heavy use of these high-quality reference materials. And even though students did not always select the best reference books for their topic, the process of consulting multiple reference works and comparing the content was an important exercise in content evaluation. The concept maps also looked remarkably better, especially since many students used Cmap Tools,<sup>25</sup> a concept mapping program freely available on the Web for educational purposes. Overall, it seems that shorter segments were easier to handle, especially for those who procrastinated. And the research exercises were also much easier to grade.

In spite of these positive results, a large number of students still had trouble finding sources that were the most pertinent to their topic. This persistence caused me to consider whether we expected too much from students in a 100-level general-education course. In our *post mortem* discussion we reminded ourselves that in addition to being academically challenging, the research project should be enjoyable, a chance to explore an intriguing topic of choice.<sup>26</sup> Part of the reason why we study folklore is because it is interesting, fun, and tells us something about ourselves. We all have a connection to folklore at some level, whether we realize it or not. Reading Erikson's teaching philosophy and experiences encouraged us to think about how we might make the research project and library sessions more relevant to students' experiences, beyond course credit and the grade. In other words, how could we tap into students' individual connection to folklore? What could we do to encourage greater interest and motivation for the project? What kind of project would motivate them? What kind of project would they find useful and personally relevant? I discussed my ideas and questions with the professor in charge of the course and referred her to Erikson's descriptions. Within a few days,

the professor had brainstormed a new idea for the next research assignment: a class dictionary of Slavic folklore.

In the fall of 2008 we introduced the “SLAV 148 Dictionary of Slavic Folklore” project: a collaborative project that would produce a reference work for the entire class to use. We envisioned the project as a valuable exercise in learning how such a work is conceived, created, vetted, revised, and issued. After being assigned a specific topic, students would learn about reference works, their purpose, and how to research their topic during the library sessions. They would then begin drafting entries, followed by a peer-review and editing process. The completed dictionary, to be posted on Blackboard, would be both a creative product and a useful tool for exam review; so we thought.<sup>27</sup> While in theory this new project appeared promising, once again the end result was a bit of a disappointment. The quality of entries varied widely: while a few entries were clear, concise, and accurate, the vast majority did not adequately cover the topics. As a result the dictionary was not a usable tool for reference or exam review. Although a promising project for highly motivated students, such as honors or graduate students, the dictionary project turned out to be something of a white elephant.<sup>28</sup> It remains to be seen if a similar idea, that of keeping a Slavic folklore research blog, will work.<sup>29</sup>

## **FEEDBACK FOR THOUGHT**

As part of this case-study, surveys captured student perceptions of the effectiveness of library instructional sessions.<sup>30</sup> The forms were based on the student evaluation form used by KU Libraries’ Instructional Services department. Like the sessions and research assignments, the forms, questions, and frequency of distribution varied slightly from one semester to the next.<sup>31</sup> The feedback form used for most sessions consisted of two parts: questions with a Likert scale component; followed by a series of open-ended questions. Responses to the open-ended questions typically provided the most useful feedback for instructional design as well as more detail about students’ informational needs.<sup>32</sup> Some of the responses showed that students at all levels of study (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior) needed and acquired basic IL skills though the type of hands-on, task-based instruction that was provided (See Appendix 3, Figure 1).

During the 2008 spring semester, a significant number of students commented that the library sessions, homework, and the research assignment were too much work. These comments caused me to reflect on whether we had overemphasized IL and research to the detriment of

other components of the course. For example, one student expressed dismay that the course included such a large library research component in the first place. He recognized the value of library research education but added that he took the course to learn about Slavic folklore, not about the library. This comment raises two important points. First, library sessions cannot meet all students' needs equally. If undergraduates take the course, they must do the work regardless of what they already know. Second, is the course on Slavic folklore really the best venue for teaching basic IL? Maybe not, but our program has certainly equipped a more than a few number of students with some of the general skills necessary to succeed in university study.

In general, feedback collected over the past five semesters shows a disparate pattern of perceptions which I have dubbed the "goldilocks syndrome." Some students wanted to speed up the presentation of content; others wanted to go slower; while others felt it was just right. Some were bored by the sessions; others found it extremely useful and wanted to know more; while still others felt they got exactly what they needed. This pattern reflects an ongoing problem that is not likely to go away anytime soon, and which became apparent in the first semester of the program: while some students learn how to use the library early in their university studies, others can advance far into their university studies with only rudimentary research skills. If the course on Slavic folklore represents a cross-section of all KU undergraduates, then a significant number of students lack basic IL. The problem will likely persist until the university implements a mandated course on IL for all incoming freshmen.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

Needless to say, it is too early to speculate what effect (if any) a mandatory IL course would have on the teaching of Slavic-specific competencies. There are some issues, however, that are pretty clear, even from this small case study.

**Focus on the target.** The lack of time to cover important material in one 50-minute session is the library instructor's *bête noir*. Whether to provide a brief overview of many tools or explore a few tools in depth, a difficult choice must be made. As such, it is essential to work with course instructors to define the focus of the session and then to let that focus guide the instructional design. For example, SLAV 148: Introduction Slavic folklore is a 100-level course geared to first and second year students who need to fulfill a general education requirement in the humanities. Many students at all levels enroll in this course not to engage the subject matter,

but to “check the box.” Juniors and seniors who take this course may complain that they already have the basic research skills being taught (although many do not). They are not the target audience for this course. The program cannot be customized to each individual but, rather, must be customized to the group for which it was intended. Our target audience continues to be the first and second year students who need basic IL. The unfortunate reality is that in this era of pay-by-credit-hour many students confuse process with content and view general education courses as little more than pesky requirements that have nothing to do with their major. In our current environment, one in which focused professionalization is superseding the notion of a general liberal arts education, it becomes even more important to show students how they will use IL, information management, and problem-solving skills not only in the other courses they take, but throughout their careers. Professors and instructors abstractly realize this, and it is part of our job to convince them to make it part of their course or part of the department’s curriculum.

**Connecting with faculty.** Our experience underscores the importance of connecting with faculty and instructors who welcome collaborative teaching and who understand the importance of IL. Having previously observed that the undergraduates enrolled in this general-education course were weak in basic research skills, the professor noted that this affected their ability to succeed in university-level courses, including hers. She considered that the library modules were effective in three ways: the modules provided the students with the most basic skills on which they could build; they let the students know that there was a lot more material available to them than they knew about; and they gave the students courage to turn to library personnel when they determined they needed assistance. In short, the modules “demystified” the library. And the students eventually would find themselves applying the research skills they learned as they proceeded through their majors.<sup>33</sup> This was worth three class periods to her (on the “teach a man to fish” principle). This project would have never gotten started without a supportive faculty member who recognized the importance of *teaching* IL.

**Time-investment.** An integrated program required an enormous investment of time for all team members, but especially for librarians. This program involved between 8 and 12 instructional sessions per semester, plus time spent designing session activities and assignments, grading, and the processing of feedback data. In reality, few subject librarians have time to devote to such a developed of program without additional support (in labor) from the administration. Fortunately, because KU’s library administration strongly supports the

instruction and research programs of librarians, I felt confident that the results would be worth the investment of time. Additionally, I had the help of the graduate assistant for the course, who was also a student employee in our library unit. Her help with scheduling, copying handouts, grading, data compilation, instruction, and student consultations was invaluable not only to the development of the program but also to this research report.

**Teamwork.** In order to be successful, faculty must be willing to devote class time to IL instruction, and librarians must be responsive to both faculty goals and student needs. Most faculty have definite goals for students in their course. The librarian should make sure that library session goals fit with overall course goals. And when course goals change, as they will, librarians must adapt their instructional design to fit the new goals of the course. In our case, the initial goal was to demystify the library for students. But when in response to student needs, the sessions were redesigned and expanded to incorporate more IL; the team of instructors had to adjust to meet the changing focus of the research assignment.

**Flexibility.** Working in a team also requires flexibility. Librarians must be able to adapt to new personalities and styles. In our case, because instructors change frequently (from year to year, or every two years), the librarian must be flexible enough to adapt to the vision of each instructor. This was particularly important for the Slavic folklore course because the primary instructor is typically a graduate student who is given the flexibility to organize the course with guidance from a professor. Additionally, the course is something of a training ground for doctoral students, who are teaching a content course (rather than a language course) for the first time. Even though everyone will have some ideas that work and some that do not, when team members trust each other, they become more than the sum of their parts. A successful partnership that demonstrates improved student performance will help other faculty to see the value of integrated IL instruction.

**Open communication.** Successful teamwork depends upon the ability of team members to communicate clearly and openly. Our *post mortem* meetings were an important forum for discussing the progress of the program. When instructors and librarians are on the same page, students know what is expected. Conversely, conflicting messages from instructors and librarians cause students to be confused and can lead to other problems. When problems or concerns do arise, open lines of communication facilitate an agreeable solution.

**Professional development.** Training workshops are an important component of scholarly communication. And it is the sharing of expertise that inspires new ideas. Throughout the evolution of our project, professional teaching workshops were a constant source of inspiration. They sprouted new ideas and applications for instruction, which later blossomed into more effective instructional designs. Without them, the project never would have gotten off the ground. And students would not have benefitted.

**Freedom.** Partners must have the freedom to experiment. Had we not tried the “bibliographic string” project, students may not have realized how useful this method can be. And although the way we taught it the first time may not have been the ideal, it certainly was not a failure. The concept of following a string of bibliographic citations, an essential skill in the research process, was a new to many students.

**Feedback.** It is extremely important to get reliable feedback on a regular basis. Without reliable evidence, there is no way to gauge the success (or failure) of the program. Feedback comes in a variety of shapes and sizes, including student work, student perceptions other anecdotal evidence, peer observation, and team discussion. Although student perceptions should be used judiciously and in combination with other evaluative measures, patterns in student feedback may alert instructors to the need for changes to content, structure, and/or delivery.

**Doing is learning.** There is no substitute for active learning (not for students, not for faculty, and not for librarians). Although a task-based or problem-solving approach takes more time to prepare, execute, and evaluate, it produces desired learning outcomes. Student feedback, skill assessments, and anecdotal data from our program demonstrate that students acquired skills by actively working on problems. Although we cannot track every instance of the program’s impact on student outcomes, anecdotal evidence suggests that students, sooner or later, will recognize and appreciate what they have learned.

**Finding a Balance.** In our zeal to help students find relevant resources, there is sometimes a temptation to “spoon-feed” novice researchers; that is, we over-design our assignments to leave out the very kinds of impasses that students must overcome and that are such an integral part of the learning process. But sometimes students need to be frustrated and compelled to move on and try again. Our library instruction sessions tend to give students a false impression that the research process should be smooth and easy. Since our demonstrations show how everything works, students rarely see all the impasses that we encounter in preparation for

the session. So when they encounter impasses in their research they do not know how to proceed. Although our job is to help them overcome those impasses, we must remember that there is also value in letting students learn how to overcome those impasses by themselves. We must find a balance between showing students how to do things without impeding their individual learning process.

**If at first you don't succeed....** Every failure is one step closer to success. Our search for the ideal research assignment is by no means over but remains a work in progress. As with any project, an important part of the process is to determine what works; what does not work; and why? In spite of some failures, we observed positive outcomes. Regardless of the format of the research assignment, many students have learned how to tap into the resources of a major academic research library. Some learned that not all information is equal. Others learned how to cite sources correctly. And others overcame the fear of coming to the library. And whether they recognize it or not, the skills they learned are transferrable to other courses and to their chosen careers. Of course, it is always better if they recognize it.

**APPENDIX 1: Student Perceptions of the Most Useful Segment of One-Shot Library Sessions (2006 Spring): Comparison by Academic Level: Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, and Senior**

What do you think was the most useful segment of the library session?					
	Library tour	Library website	Library catalog	Finding books in stacks	Advanced search strategies
Percent of Freshmen	32%	0	11%	47%	5%
Percent of Sophomores	26%	0	41%	15%	11%
Percent of Juniors	28%	0	44%	17%	0
Percent of Seniors	25%	8%	25%	17%	8%

**APPENDIX 2: Results from Pre- and Post-assessments Aggregated for the 2008 Spring and Fall semesters**

Q2. Have you had a tour of Watson Library before?			
Responses	Yes	No	This class
Pre-program	47	103	0
Post-program	93	32	10

Q3. Where would you find dictionaries or encyclopedias on Slavic folklore and other topics?			
Responses	Correct	Incorrect	No answer
Pre-program	28	33	89
Post-program	104	28	1

Q4. Where can you find books placed on reserve by your instructor?			
Responses	Correct	Incorrect	No answer
Pre-program	66	10	74
Post-program	98	12	25

Q5. Where can you find the latest “hard” copies of magazines and scholarly journals?			
Responses	Correct	Incorrect	No answer
Pre-program	9	31	107
Post-program	35	52	48

Q6. How are the Watson Stacks laid out (floors, sections, etc.) – <i>Multiple answers possible.</i>						
Responses	East, Center, West	½ levels	By call no.	By topic	Floors	Other
Pre-program	14	23	5	5	0	114
Post-program	61	61	21	1	15	17

Q7. What pieces of information are essential for locating books on the shelves in Watson library? <i>Multiple answers possible.</i>							
Responses	Call no.	Stacks map	Title	Catalog	Author	Year	Other
Pre-program	72	20	38	9	48	2	35
Post-program	112	48	24	9	21	3	0

Q8. What resources/databases have you used to find articles? <i>Multiple answers possible.</i>	
Responses	Number of times databases mentioned (specified or unspecified)
Pre-program	56
Post-program	116

### APPENDIX 3: Student Perceptions of Library Sessions in the Integrated Program (2007-2008)

Anecdotal evidence from student feedback not only provided some indication of student needs but also proved useful for gauging learning outcomes. Students’ perceptions of what was

useful implied that they had a need and that the need was met. For example, feedback from the 2006 fall semester (Session 1) shows what students found most useful about the instructional session: The data imply that the introductory instruction session fulfilled students' need to know how to navigate the library. They also confirm an ongoing trend familiar to many librarians: that even advanced undergraduates (juniors and seniors) need basic IL instruction.<sup>34</sup>

What do you think was the most useful segment of the library session?	Level
a. <i>“Learning where to find specific books was very valuable.”</i>	Freshman
b. <i>“The explanation of the stacks. I've had a tour before, but I must've been too overwhelmed to retain any of it. It makes a lot more sense now.”</i>	Sophomore
c. <i>“Finding a book and the tour were both helpful. I previously [knew] nothing about the library and now feel much more confident.”</i>	Junior
d. <i>“Learning how to navigate the library.”</i>	Senior

FIGURE 1 – Sample Responses of Student Perceptions of the Most Useful Segment of Library Sessions (2006 Fall)

Patterns in feedback collected over time can be extremely useful. Responses to the question below provided comparative data over several semesters. Although anecdotal, the data does show a telling pattern over time. According to this table, most students in the course perceived the most benefit from instruction on finding scholarly articles and finding books (navigating the stacks/tour) respectively, suggesting that these two skills should be given most emphasis. Similarly, the spike in results for Worldcat and interlibrary loan during the 2008 fall semester suggests that these services should also be emphasized.

What do you think was the most useful segment of the library session?							
	Navigating the library website	Finding Reference sources	Finding books (navigating stacks / tour)	Finding scholarly articles in databases	Search strategies	Worldcat & ILL	All
2007 Spring	8%	5%	23%	38%	8%	5%	5%
2008 Spring	0	8%	20%	58%	2%	0%	6%
2008 Fall	0	3%	16%	29%	3%	24%	11%

FIGURE 2 – Comparison of Student Perceptions of the Most Useful Segment of Library Sessions (2007 Spring, 2008 Spring, 2008 Fall)<sup>35</sup>

ALL SESSIONS	Long Form	Short form
Total words in all responses	2144	3120
Total number of questions in all forms	321	335
Average length of response (in words) per question	7 (6.7)	9 (9.3)

  

Q1. What did you think was the most useful segment of this session and WHY?
Q2. What would you change about this session and WHY?
Q3. What would you still like to know more about and WHY?

FIGURE 3 – Comparison of Length of Response on Long and Short Student Feedback Forms (2007 Fall)

<sup>1</sup> Among them the California State University’s Information Competence Initiative. See “Information Competence Initiative.” California State University. [Accessed 6/Mar/2009] < <http://www.calstate.edu/LS/infocomp.shtml>>. See also Ilene F. Rockman, “Strengthening Connections Between IL, General Education, and Assessment Efforts,” *Library Trends*, 51/2 (Fall 2002): 185-198.

<sup>2</sup> See Jerilyn Veldof, *Creating the One-Shot Library Workshop: A Step-by-Step Guide*, Chicago: American Library Association, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> See the following: Breivik and Gee, *Higher Education in the Internet Age: Libraries Creating a Strategic Edge* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 2006), p. 41, 75-78, 129-134; Breivik, Patricia, *Student Learning in the Information Age* (Phoenix, Ariz.: American Council on Education Oryx Press, 1998), pp. 30-31, 36-37, 58-59, 66-67, 77-93, 100-102; Breivik and Gordon Gee, IL: *Revolution in the Library* (New York: American Council on Education: Macmillan; London: Collier Macmillan, c1989), pp. 42-43, 47, 50-52; Patricia Breivik, *Planning the Library Instruction Program* (Chicago: ALA, 1982), pp. 11-13, 120-121.

<sup>4</sup> I would like to thank my colleagues in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Kansas for their collaboration on this project. They include: Professor Maria Carlson and instructors Eugenia K. Amditis, Adrienne Harris-Bogges, Natalie Bazan, and Kelly Knickmeier. Special thanks to Natalie Bazan for her help with the compilation of data.

<sup>5</sup> For more details see “IL Competency Standards for Higher Education,” Association of College & Research Libraries, 2000; [Accessed 6/Mar/2009] <<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/informationliteracycompetency.htm>>

<sup>6</sup> “Introduction to Slavic Folklore” is a freshman-level course that fulfills a general education (gen-ed) humanities requirement. It is offered each semester in two sections of approximately 40-45 students per section. Although designed for freshmen and sophomores, the course typically attracts a fair number of juniors and seniors who still need to check off a requirement; some of them do not view the instruction as relevant to their specialization. With such a diverse demographic, there is typically a wide range of skill levels among students, making it impossible to provide all students with instruction targeted to their individual needs. However, the fact is that a majority of the students in the class still need basic library instruction, even if they have already attended a previous library orientation.

<sup>7</sup> It was a challenge to find times that would accommodate students’ class and work schedules and instructor availability. This is why two additional “make-up” sessions were added.

<sup>8</sup> All documents discussed in this paper are available at the following web site: Slavic 148 – Archive [Accessed 6/Mar/2009]. <[http://lib.ku.edu/public/slavic/crspgs/slav148/archive/slav148\\_archv.shtml](http://lib.ku.edu/public/slavic/crspgs/slav148/archive/slav148_archv.shtml)>.

<sup>9</sup> 2006 Wheatshocker Professional Development Seminar on IL. April 10, 2006, 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., RSC Ballroom, Wichita State University.

<sup>10</sup> During his presentation at the 2006 KU Teaching Summit, David Jonassen stated that “problem-solving is the most meaningful intellectual activity in which humans consistently engage.” Arguing that employers value problems solvers, Dr. Jonassen extolled the practice of giving students real problems to solve and praised the use of

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visual models, or concept maps, Presentation by David Jonassen, distinguished professor of education at the University of Missouri (Columbia) and keynote speaker at the 2006 University of Kansas Teaching Summit ("Teaching and Learning in a Changing World"). August 15, 2006, 8:30 a.m., 130 Budig Hall, University of Kansas, Lawrence campus. For more information on concept maps, see IHMC Cmap Tools [Accessed 6/Mar/2009] <<http://cmap.ihmc.us/conceptmap.html>>.

<sup>11</sup> We later expanded the program into three sessions per semester for 2007 spring, 2007 fall, and 2008 spring. In the fall of 2008 we scaled the program back to just two sessions.

<sup>12</sup> Initially, students were allowed to select either the Texas Information Literacy Tutorial (TILT) or Internet Detective. In subsequent semesters we used only Internet Detective because we felt that a written summary of what they learned from the Internet Detective tutorial provided more reliable measures of student learning outcomes than responses to TILT's multiple choice quizzes. "Texas IL Tutorial." The University of Texas System Digital Library. Copyright, 1998-2004. [Accessed 6/Mar/2009] <<http://tilt.lib.utsystem.edu>>. Place, E., Kendall, M., Hiom, D., Booth, H., Ayres, P., Manuel, A., Smith, P. (2006) "Internet Detective: Wise up to the Web", 3rd edition, Intute Virtual Training Suite, Copyright 2006-2008. [Accessed 6/Mar/2009] <<http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/detective>>.

<sup>13</sup> The "backwards design" model suggests three steps to instructional design: (1) identify outcomes; (2) determine what constitutes acceptable evidence of achievement of those outcomes; (3) plan instructional strategies and activities. According to Donham, professors have a tendency to identify more outcomes than can be achieved in one library session. Librarians, thus, have the responsibility to tell the professor what outcomes are possible given the amount of time invested in library instruction. Realistic outcomes that satisfy course goals can only be determined when the professor and librarian work together. Concepts from presentations by Jean Donham (College Librarian and Professor, Cornell College). "From BI to IL," and "Break it Down – Designing Active Learning for Outcomes," during the KU Libraries IL Retreat, January 9, 2007, 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., Kansas Union, University of Kansas, Lawrence Campus.

<sup>14</sup> Several elements from the *Instructional Design Cycle* were relevant to our project. These included: (1) a learners' needs assessment, which guides the process of identifying session content. (2) the "Need to Know Triangle," for prioritizing content to meet learners' most critical needs; the Need-to-Know Triangle is an inverted triangle with four levels: D) Everything that could be known; C) Never need to know; B) Nice to know; A) Need to know. This model is a form of prioritizing content to meet learners' most critical needs; (3) Dale's Cone of Experience, a concept from psychology which describes how much learners will generally remember according to the type of learning activity: 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear; 30% of what they see; 50% of what they see and hear; 70% of what they say and write, and 90% of what they say as they do something. Presentation by Jerilyn Veldof, "Creating the One-shot Library Workshop: Instructional Design for Librarians." May 21-22, 2007, Courtside Rm., Burge available on-line at: Veldof, Jerilyn R. "*Creating the One-Shot Library Workshop*" [Accessed on 6/Mar/2009] <<http://www.tc.umn.edu/~jveldof/WorkshopDesign/worksheets.html>>. Veldof is also the author of a recent manual on instructional design for library instructors. *Creating the One-Shot Library Workshop: A Step-by-Step Guide*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2006, p. 3. A digitized version of this title can also be found on Google Book search <<http://books.google.com>>.

<sup>15</sup> Consider the following sample problem: "You have citations to the following [two] articles and need to examine them for your research project. Describe your strategy for locating and getting copies of the articles" (fall 2007, Session 2, Problem 2). The first article was available electronically; the second article could be obtained only through ILL, and students had to determine this on their own. Following basic instruction, students tried to find the articles. Next, as a class we discussed the process, after which students then wrote down the solution.

<sup>16</sup> Erikson, currently an assistant professor of history at the University of Texas El Paso, sees "the teaching of history as a learner driven, operationally organized, socially structured, personally reflective activity." In particular, he seeks to help students see the relationship between history and the things that they do in their everyday lives. In a description entitled "The First Day of Class," Erikson describes the process of getting students to do history themselves; that is, to analyze historical sources, analyze arguments, and "craft their own arguments that engage historical scholarship in ways that are relevant to their individual and collective experience." For Erikson, the first day of class is an exercise in historical problem-solving (much like detective work). It encourages the acquisition of skills that could be applied beyond the classroom and thus makes the learning process more relevant. These were ideas that would help shape the contour of the Fall 2008 research assignment. Keith Erikson, "The First Day of Class." Keith A. Erikson (personal/professional web site). Copyright 2006-2008, Bloomington, IN. Last updated: April 25, 2008. [Accessed 6/Mar/2009]. <<http://mypage.iu.edu/~kerekson/news.html#firstday>> See also Keith A. Erikson, "Teaching Philosophy," Keith A. Erikson, Ph.D. [faculty web profile], El Paso, TX. 2009. <http://faculty.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=54952>.

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<sup>17</sup> Peer observation also provided some evidence of this: “Students responded well to the chance to be engaged in ‘real’ research problems.... There is an important ‘learn-by-doing’ component--suggesting that what is learned will be more permanent.” Summary of peer evaluation of Jon Giullian conducted by Jennifer Church-Duran on September 26, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Adrienne Harris-Bogges, “Slavic Folklore—SLAV 148: Fall 2006 Syllabus.” Available upon request from the author of this article.

<sup>19</sup> Wikipedia, About.com and other general reference sites, tourist-related websites, and personal home pages made frequent appearances on students’ bibliographic essays.

<sup>20</sup> For example, a keyword search in the KU catalog for “Bald Mountain” returns a variety of sound recordings but no monographs relevant to Slavic folklore. One would need to know to search for more general books on magic in Slavic countries. However, this requires taking a step back in the hierarchical order of information to search for books of a more general nature that might include a section on their specific topic; yet coming up with broader terms or cumulative concepts is also difficult for many undergraduate students.

<sup>21</sup> For example, a search for the term *Veles* (a figure in Slavic mythology) yields no relevant results in the library catalog, but a keyword search for books on the broader subject of Slavic mythology returns many relevant results in English. When search terms are too general, students find it difficult to break the topic down in a way that allows them to identify the few vital resources from among the thousands of general ones. A keyword search for the terms Russian witches (without quotation marks) returns 9,976 entries in the library catalog, while a keyword search for the phrase “Russian witches” (in quotation marks) returns nothing.

<sup>22</sup> All documents posted at: <[http://lib.ku.edu/public/slavic/crspgs/slav148/archive/slav148\\_archv.shtml](http://lib.ku.edu/public/slavic/crspgs/slav148/archive/slav148_archv.shtml)>. [Accessed on 6/Mar/2009]

<sup>23</sup> For the essay, students were given a series of questions to consider, such as: Where did you start the string? How many works did you look at initially? How many citations did you find in each work? How did you determine which source was the best? Why did you decide to follow a certain string? What type of resource was the easiest to use and why do you think it was fruitful? Which sources had the most interesting and/or reliable information? What “pit-falls” or “dead ends” did you run into? What was the most challenging thing about this exercise? What was the most important thing that you learned from this exercise? What would you change about this exercise?

<sup>24</sup> In most cases students selected popular content rather than scholarly or even semi-scholarly content. It would seem that reliable web-content is either lacking, or that students cannot or do not have the patience to find it. They tend to select the first thing that seems relevant, for whatever reason, without adequately evaluating the content; or after searching for a considerable time they give up and just include what they found.

<sup>25</sup> For more information on concept maps, see IHMC Cmap Tools [Accessed 6/Mar/2009] <<http://cmap.ihmc.us/conceptmap.html>>.

<sup>26</sup> Student feedback, mentioned in the next section, indicated that student felt that the modular research assignment was too long and time-consuming for just 10 percent of the course grade.

<sup>27</sup> See the fall 2008 Research Assignment description posted on the “SLAV 148 – Archive” web site/ [Accessed 6/Mar/2009]. <[http://lib.ku.edu/public/slavic/crspgs/slav148/archive/2008zfall/slav148\\_2008fa\\_rschplan\\_draft.pdf](http://lib.ku.edu/public/slavic/crspgs/slav148/archive/2008zfall/slav148_2008fa_rschplan_draft.pdf)>.

<sup>28</sup> An unforeseeable problem that probably contributed to the failure of the project was the fact that the graduate instructor had to take extended medical leave at a critical time in the project.

<sup>29</sup> On their respective blogs students would record progress on their research topic, list useful books and articles as they find them, and post links to relevant folklore sites. When applicable, students could also link to resources on each others’ sites. A technology familiar to many students, the blog format also gives students a chance to be creative in its design. The final product would ultimately be a subject guide or webliography. The blog assignment could be either an individual or a group project. One advantage of the blog is that the instructor would be able to review student progress at any time. And students could receive instant feedback from the instructor rather than wait for papers to be reviewed and returned. Although potentially time-consuming for the instructor, guidelines could be put in place to keep it manageable.

<sup>30</sup> Forms and compilation of feedback available on the webpage “SLAV 148 – Archive” [Accessed on 6/Mar/2009]. <[http://lib.ku.edu/public/slavic/crspgs/slav148/archive/slav148\\_archv.shtml](http://lib.ku.edu/public/slavic/crspgs/slav148/archive/slav148_archv.shtml)>.

<sup>31</sup> For example, during the 2006 and 2007 fall semesters, surveys were administered at the end of each session; whereas during the 2007 spring, 2008 spring, and 2008 fall semesters, a single survey captured feedback from all sessions in a given semester.

<sup>32</sup> This being the case, I decided to try an experiment in the 2007 fall semester. I used two different feedback forms: (1) the standard form described above; and (2) a short form with the open-ended questions only. I hypothesized that students might provide longer, more thoughtful responses to open-ended questions on the shorter survey because

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they didn't have to bother with the Likert scale section. However, this hypothesis was proven wrong. In fact, long and short responses to the open-ended question were found on both types of forms. The results summarized in Appendix 3: Figure 3 suggests that the length of the feedback form had little or no impact on the length of response. However, a slight change to the form for the 2008 fall semester did impact the length and detail of responses. Using the small form, I added the word *WHY* to the three open-ended questions.

<sup>33</sup> Comment by one sophomore student from 2008 spring semester: "I would change the length of the assignments. They were lengthy and time consuming although I know they were a way to teach how to research. The length was not needed to help get the lessons across. The material was still very good and will be helpful in my future classes here at KU." Available from the web page "SLAV 148 – Archive" [Accessed on 6/Mar/2009].

<[http://lib.ku.edu/public/slavic/crspgs/slav148/archive/slav148\\_archv.shtml](http://lib.ku.edu/public/slavic/crspgs/slav148/archive/slav148_archv.shtml)>.

<sup>34</sup> Anecdotal evidence of positive learning outcomes also came from other channels, including letters from library colleagues (letter to Jon Giullian, Slavic Librarian, from Tami Albin, Undergraduate Instruction and Outreach Librarian, January 18, 2007); and even end-of-semester emails from students enrolled in the course, such as this one: "I have said it before and I will again; other classes/courses should require similar activities as those we had to complete in [the] Slavic studies department. I have learned more about using library resources and or searching for materials for research assignments than I have in any other classes while attending this school. This is definitely a model to follow."

<sup>35</sup> Data from the 2007 fall semester was excluded because different feedback forms were used as part of a separate experiment on the length of response (shown in Appendix 3, Figure 3).