

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES AND THE CREDIT-BEARING CLASS

A practical approach

Margaret Burke
Hofstra University

ABSTRACT

Academic librarians are expanding their teaching roles and increasing numbers are involved in teaching information literacy by means of the credit-bearing class. Librarians at the Axinn Library at Hofstra University have been teaching credit-bearing classes since 2001. While doing research on the subject, the author found that the literature contained very little practical information concerning this important responsibility for academic librarians. In order to answer some questions that arose from Axinn librarians' experiences with credit-bearing classes, a survey was conducted using the Association of College and Research Libraries' Information Literacy Instruction's Discussion List as the study group. Among some of the topics surveyed were assessment, delivery method, embedded classes and retention.

INTRODUCTION

Fifteen years ago long lines of students formed at the reference desk in the Joan & Donald E. Axinn Library at Hofstra University. At that time, there were always three reference librarians on duty and each was occupied full time answering students' questions. During the reference interview, librarians had the opportunity to guide students to appropriate sources on a one-to-one basis and, at the same time, had the opportunity to explain how to evaluate the material they would find. And then along came Google and fewer and fewer students were lining up at the desk. Librarians were beginning to feel a bit irrelevant and were faced with the new reality that their service to students would require a vastly different approach. It was time for librarians, who had long advocated for the insertion of information literacy (IL) into the university curriculum, to take action to make this happen. Axinn instruction librarians long held that the best method for accomplishing this goal would be the credit-bearing class and it was their goal to have library instruction become part of Hofstra's curriculum.

With a school population of 12,000 students, comprised of part- and full-time undergraduate and graduate students, Hofstra is the largest private university on Long Island. Hofstra's primary constituencies consist of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the School of Business, the School of Education, the School of Law, the School of Communication, and the newly established School of Medicine. The Axinn Library serves as a focal point for research for all of these areas except for the School of Law which has its own library. Since 2001, instruction librarians at Axinn have been engaged in teaching credit-bearing classes,

including classes for first-year students and graduate business students. While the instruction program has been very successful, questions have been raised as to how students in this rapidly-changing information environment can best be served. In order to learn how other institutions were managing this area of instruction, a survey was distributed in November 2008. It was shaped by questions that Axinn librarians have been grappling with over the last few years. (*See Appendix.*) The study looks at schools that are currently offering credit-bearing classes.

HISTORY OF THE CREDIT-BEARING PROGRAM AT AXINN LIBRARY

Similar to most academic libraries, teaching activity at Axinn Library was largely confined to one-shot classes where time constraints precluded any attempt to impart an in-depth understanding of the concepts of information literacy. Early in 2001, Axinn's Coordinator of Library Instruction put together a syllabus for an introductory information literacy class and, along with the Dean of Library Services, met with the Dean of the Hofstra School of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Together they were able to convince him and the School's Curriculum Committee that this course should be added to their curriculum and that it should be open to all undergraduate students who would receive one credit for the class. The first credit-bearing classes began in Fall 2001.

Indeed the course was quite successful in attracting students; nevertheless, librarians were troubled to see that many students were taking the class simply because they needed one credit to round out their schedule. As a result, often these students

were not always so focused on the content of the course as they could be. Frequently, there were as many as 35 enrolled in the class and often some of these students were disruptive. Consequently, in 2003, Axinn librarians sought a different approach and a contact was made with a new program being offered in the School of Liberal Arts called First-Year Connections (FYC). The Library credit-bearing program was completely revamped, making this course available only to incoming freshmen who are involved with the FYC program. The FYC program consists of clusters and seminars. Within the clusters, there are three courses linked by a common theme. The seminar classes consist of only 15 students who concentrate on one subject area. Library subject specialists choose the cluster or seminar closest to their area of expertise and the classes are taught, for the most part, on overload. The library component is worth one credit. Librarians tailor instruction classes to suit the topics of the cluster or seminar and consult regularly with classroom faculty. The library classes are graded independently.

Yet some Axinn librarians feel that this is still not the best student population for this sort of instruction. They believe that the first half of the freshman year is too early in a student's college career for such a course. Students in the first half of the freshman year are generally not involved with in-depth research papers and are only being introduced to the rigors of academic study. The question of where to situate library credit-bearing instruction is one of the problem areas that prompted this study. Some of the other issues with which we were concerned were assessment, delivery format and whether adjuncts should be teaching these classes. The survey looks at other schools and how they are coping with these specific concerns along with other relevant issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature found that, while an enormous amount of theoretical material has been written on information literacy and how it should be advanced, surprisingly little practical material has been written on credit-bearing classes. It was discouraging to discover this gap in the literature since the author feels strongly that the credit-bearing class is an initiative that librarians should be soundly exploring and supporting. To this point, Jane Kemp (2006) writes on the role of librarians as teachers and vigorously asserts that academic librarianship will be immeasurably enhanced when librarians teach credit-bearing classes. Furthermore, William Badke (Nov-Dec 2008), who has taught credit-bearing classes for 22 years, writes that he is passionate that information literacy classes be required. He maintains that in their failure to aggressively advance information literacy classes, information specialists (mainly librarians) have been lax about promoting the case for information literacy classes and that academia as a whole has not been paying attention to this subject. In another article, Badke (Aug 2008) presents the most comprehensive attempt to date to provide a rationale for information literacy as a credit-bearing discipline. Badke claims that librarians understand that information literacy, or rather the lack of it, is the biggest blind spot in higher education today. In this vein, Edward K. Owusu-Ansah (2007) argues against academic libraries' limited classroom engagement by means of one-shot library instruction sessions and makes a case for a more direct and involved credit-bearing role. Owusu-Ansah believes that credit is the currency of recognition and suggests that more effort be directed toward advancing the case for the credit-bearing class than has hitherto been forthcoming

from the profession's leadership and associations.

In light of the fact that this sort of instruction offers such fertile and valuable new ground for academic librarians, the scarcity of literature relating to credit-bearing classes and practical details is perplexing. Nonetheless, some recent major studies are important to note. Joanna Burkhardt (2007) writes in depth of assessment in a three-credit class at the University of Rhode Island. Burkhardt observes that there were very few examples of assessment instruments in the library literature and most of those that existed related to one-shot bibliographic instruction sessions and not credit courses. She urges other schools who are engaged in credit-bearing classes to document their learning outcomes.

Focusing also on assessment, Jon R. Hufford (2010) writes about the absence of literature on outcomes and that this is especially true for library classes that are for credit. Hufford considers this regrettable because librarians who want to improve their information literacy programs through assessment could benefit immensely from the experience of their colleagues at other institutions. Hufford's article details in depth how Texas Tech University has dealt with assessment in their one-hour credit course, emphasizing that the course and its learning outcome goals be reviewed annually.

Paul Hyrcaj (2006) conducted an interesting study of online syllabi for credit-bearing library classes and hoped that his discussion would stimulate some thoughts as to what topics and materials should be covered. Hyrcaj's study highlighted subject matter covered in the various credit-bearing classes, assessment techniques, and how

they are correlated to the Association of College and Research Library (ACRL) information literacy standards (2010). As Hyrcaj reports, his study provides some insight into the current state of library credit-bearing courses in colleges and universities.

Elizabeth Mulherrin, Kimberly Kelley, Diane Fishman, and Gloria Orr (2005) produced a major study detailing the development and implementation of a required, credit-bearing online course at the University of Maryland. Their study lays out in great detail their very successful experience delivering an information literacy distance course to a large number of students and they emphasize how important it is for the course to be required.

Trudi Jacobson's and Lijuan Xu (2002) look at the critical topic of motivating students who are taking library credit-bearing classes. Since librarians have not, by and large, taken coursework on pedagogical techniques, this article looks at the characteristics most highly associated with ideal or best teachers. The authors focus on four aspects of instruction that have an influence on motivation: course design, teaching behaviors, active engagement and student autonomy.

A recent and welcome addition to the literature is a book edited by Christopher V. Hollister (2010). He compiles an interesting collection of articles targeting the credit-bearing class. Outlined in the book are several case studies by librarians who have been involved in creating various new programs, including a course that combines English and Information Literacy, a first-year program, and a credit class for Science students. Furthermore, there is a substantive chapter on assessment. Hollister's book significantly augments the literature on this

topic. He states that the cases in the volume demonstrate best practices for the credit-bearing IL course. This timely book has created a venue for experienced practitioners to share their successful techniques.

The questions in this present study are wide ranging and attempt to determine how credit-bearing classes are being delivered in a cross-section of academic libraries; however, there is no claim that this represents definitive data.

METHODOLOGY

The survey questionnaire was prepared with the particular issues that presented themselves in the Axinn Library. Originally, the plan was to survey the top 50 schools ranked by the Carnegie Foundation as having the highest graduation rate. After emailing each school's coordinator of instruction, it became apparent that many of the schools that were contacted did not offer credit-bearing classes. In fact, most of the librarians at these select schools did not hold faculty status and this might be the reason why these libraries were not offering credit-bearing classes. In a survey conducted by D. F. Bolger and E. T. Smith (2006) wherein they sought to determine a correlation between the personnel status of librarians and overall institutional quality, it was revealed that less than 34 percent of the institutions that responded reported that they afford librarians full faculty rank. This finding might indicate that the number of schools that could actually offer credit-bearing classes is quite limited. The author suggests that this topic proposes fertile ground for further research.

Since it was necessary to change the survey strategy, the author chose to use the Association of College and Research

Libraries' (ACRL) Information Literacy Instruction (ILI-L) listserv as the survey population. All responses were received and tabulated by Hofstra's Faculty Computer Center. Eighty-nine responses were received. However, as the data was analyzed, discrepancies were found and the Computer Center was notified. The Center subsequently discovered that there was a problem with the software program that was used. It could not record multiple-choice questions. In order to rectify this problem, as soon as the Computer Center installed new software, the problem questions were re-sent to the Listserv, asking that only those who took part in the first round of questions respond.

In this second round, 66 responses were received. Twenty-three people, who had responded during the first survey period, did not respond to the second call. Nevertheless the author felt that it was possible to work with the 66 responses to the six multiple-choice questions. In other words, for the six multiple-choice questions there will only be 66 answers. All the other questions will include responses from the original 89 respondents.

SURVEY RESULTS

Delivery Format

The survey began with a question asking about the format for delivering the class. The choices were face to face, online or hybrid. The results were not unexpected. The largest number, 27 (41%), replied that their classes were delivered face to face with the second largest category, 14 (21%), being schools that utilized all three models: face to face, online and hybrid. Twelve schools (18%) reported using both face to face and online models. See Table 1 for the complete results.

TABLE 1 — DELIVERY FORMAT

| Format | Count | Percent |
|-------------------|-------|---------|
| F2F* | 27 | 41 |
| F2F/Online/Hybrid | 14 | 21 |
| F2F/Online | 12 | 18 |
| Online | 8 | 12 |
| F2F/Hybrid | 4 | 6 |
| Online/Hybrid | 1 | 2 |
| *Face-to-face | | |

The evidence from these responses suggests that the format for delivering classes is evolving. Even though the highest number of schools, 27 (41%), responded “face to face,” the data reveals that a combined number of 39 schools (59%) chose to deliver classes either totally online, or using a hybrid model. If we are to draw any conclusions from this small sample of schools, we would assume that the trend is toward online delivery. At the same time, there is debate about the effectiveness of online classes. Although there are no national statistics to compare dropout rates of online courses with their on-campus counterparts, Debbie Steinman (2007) argues that studies by individual institutions suggest that online classes experience higher dropout rates than on-campus courses. In the same study, Steinman avows that some educators hold that online social interactions are a poor substitute for face-to-face interaction. Despite these caveats, academic librarians who want to reach large numbers of students have to consider the online option as viable, especially for one-credit introductory classes. Mulherrin et al.

(2005) suggest that with the proper support, online courses can provide a meaningful learning experience even with 100 students per section. At their school, University of Maryland, the introductory class, LIBS 150, is required for all undergraduate students. The fact that this school delivers their library classes online allows them to reach large numbers of students, thereby, making it possible for the course to be required of all undergraduates. This may be a model that academic libraries might want to follow and this is yet another topic that invites further research.

School Population

The next question concerned the school population to whom these classes are delivered. As it turned out, the largest number of schools, 38 (58%), offer these classes across the undergraduate spectrum from freshmen to seniors. These numbers are illustrated in Table 2.

The findings were not unanticipated. As mentioned earlier, here at Axinn Library we are concerned that our credit-bearing classes

TABLE 2 — STUDENT POPULATION

| Population | Count | Percent |
|----------------------------------|-------|---------|
| Freshman/Sophomore/Junior/Senior | 38 | 58 |
| Freshman/Sophomore | 16 | 24 |
| Freshman | 5 | 8 |
| Sophomore/Junior/Senior | 3 | 4 |
| Junior/Senior | 3 | 4 |
| Freshman/Sophomore/Junior | 1 | 2 |

are being offered only to students who are in the first half of their freshmen year. Obviously these classes produce better results when the students are involved in a research project but this unfortunately is not usually the case during the first half of freshmen year. A research project typically creates a connection between the teaching faculty member and the librarian; thus when there is no research project assigned, there is no real motivation for the classroom faculty member to work with the librarian, creating a divide. A study by L. Christianson, M. Stompler and L. Thaxton (March 2004) describes this as an “asymmetrical disconnection,” a separation that causes much angst and action on the part of the librarian but of which most faculty members are unaware. Consequently, it is not surprising then that only five schools (8%) offer these classes solely to freshmen.

Elective or Required

Almost certainly, it can be assumed that most academic librarians are eager for information literacy credit-bearing classes to become a required part of the core curriculum at every university. In order to see what sort of progress was being made in

this respect, the author next asked if credit-bearing classes were elective or required. Forty (61%) responded that they are elective while only 26 (39%) answered that they are required. The author further asked those schools where the class was not required if they had future plans for a required class. Seventeen (43%) responded yes. Those respondents who answered yes were asked to elaborate on their plans for required future classes. Some of the more interesting responses are listed below:

- In the process of making LIB 101 required for all first-year and transfer students.
- Working on a required 1-credit class for all undergraduates.
- Adding a 1-credit online "research lab" to the required ENGL102 class for all freshman.
- Course slowly becoming required across different majors; first it was just required in Information Studies. Now it's required in English, Liberal Arts, and a few others.
- In the process of creating a strategic plan integrating this

course into the core curriculum.

- Hope to incorporate all or part of 1-credit course into general education classes as we shift from a 3-credit to a 4-credit course structure.
- Course included in our annual strategic plan, with the intention of offering it as a core requirement within five years.

In 2001, Owusu-Ansah asserted that the academic librarian had, up to that time, failed to define clearly, defend intellectually, and articulate forcefully the role of the academic library in the intellectual enterprise of the college and university. The above responses point to the fact that these librarians are clearly marking out a new direction for academic librarianship and are actively seeking to have information literacy credit-bearing classes become part of their universities' curricula. S. Weiner (2009) asserts that for too long libraries have been a largely invisible entity to university administrators, resulting in budget allocations that have decreased from 3.7% to 2.5% in a ten-year period. Moreover, P. S. McMillen, B. Miyagishima, and L. S. Maughan, (2002) state that, in an era of declining resources, when choices must be made about cutting services, it is more important than ever that instruction be a stated goal of the library. They further maintain that by becoming part of the university curriculum, the library can be looked upon as an active learning center rather than simply a repository of books and journals.

Embedded Librarians

There has been much written in the literature about embedded librarians and how partnering with various academic departments can possibly provide a new method of collaboration. Generally, the

type of "partnership" that is being highlighted in the literature does not refer to the credit-bearing model. V. Matthew and A. Schroeder (2006) write about their experiences with the embedded librarian initiative at Vermont Community College (VCC). They state that due to the growing demand for embedded librarians at VCC, the library has developed library support courses that teaching faculty can link to from their online course sites. Indeed this is an excellent initiative; however, it differs from the models described by the surveyed librarians who teach credit-bearing courses. At Axinn, a few librarians have been embedded with four-credit cluster classes. While the connection with other faculty members worked well, the librarians were not pleased that they could not grade their own classes. They felt that this was a real disadvantage and most have chosen not to participate again in that model. The author was curious to see if other schools were engaged in some version of the embedded librarian approach. Twenty-three (26%) responded yes; 66 (74%) responded no. Those librarians who responded yes were linked or embedded with a variety of classes that would seem to be natural candidates for this sort of partnership. The majority were connected to English and Writing courses, while other respondents were coupled with General Education, Communication and Honors classes. Some respondents had successful experiences, whereas others found that being embedded just did not work. Below are some answers to the author's question, "Did the connection with other faculty work?"

Successful Embedded Class Connections:

- Collaboration with two specific ESL faculty members has worked very well for six years.
- Connection with Athletics has

been very successful. The student athletes who have taken the course have fewer problems with plagiarism and better overall grades than those who don't.

- In English 101, it went very well because the faculty made a special effort to have the two classes function in concert.

Unsuccessful Embedded Class Connections:

- Connection with the faculty worked well; however, the class did not attract a very high enrollment. Out of about 60 students in the linked class, only eight elected to take the library class as well.
- Students are not required to take an Information Literacy course, but Writing instructors expect students to have the skills covered in the course. Overall effect is that the Writing faculty tends to think the IL course is ineffective.
- Because there are many instructors teaching both the Writing and the Information Literacy classes, there are many different syllabi and assignment due dates. Consistency is not common; thus what we teach in our IL classes may not apply to writing assignments very well.
- Multiple reasons why it does not work that don't entirely make sense to us. We continue to experiment with ways to make links work more closely.
- The "loose" connection only really offers the opportunity to ask FSP instructors to encourage students to complete the course, or they can ignore me!

From these replies, it appears that most of the surveyed schools that have been involved with the embedded librarian approach feel that it has not been all that successful. While there are a few examples of success, the negative seems to outweigh the positive and the majority of answers signal that teaching faculty who are linked to a library program do not always appreciate its merits, or worse have no interest in the program. Getting the teaching faculty involved with the library class is the key factor to the success of the partnership. Yet efforts to get faculty members engaged often fail. Rachel Owens (2008) states that both faculty and librarians may find that collaborating will require adjustments in attitude and practice; and it is often the case that teaching faculty are not interested in making these adjustments. Moreover, in spite of their positive experiences with embedded librarians at VCC, Matthew and Schroeder emphasize the following:

In spite of the program's growth, popularity and overall success, we have encountered challenges along the way. One challenge concerns defining the librarian's role and deciding how he or she should be involved in the course.

Speaking to this point, Ann Grafstein (2002) contends that librarians and classroom faculty have complementary roles in the delivery of IL within an information literacy program; librarians, in fact, in their capacity as information specialists, are uniquely qualified to teach IL skills. For that reason, it is incumbent upon academic librarians to call attention to this unique ability by vigorously communicating with the campus and claiming equal footing among their university colleagues. Only then will the embedded librarian initiative prove to be a

| TABLE 3 — HIGHER LEVEL INFORMATION LITERACY CLASSES | |
|---|-------|
| Class | Count |
| Computer/Information Literacy | 3 |
| Library and Internet Research Skills | 3 |
| LIB101: Introduction to Information Literacy | 3 |
| Honors Information Literacy | 3 |
| Internet Literacy and Family History | 3 |
| Graduate Information Access in the Digital World | 3 |
| Information Strategies | 3 |
| Advanced Library and Information Skills | 3 |
| Library 1101 | 2 |
| ILIT 1500 | 2 |
| INFS 1000, Information Literacy and Research | 2 |
| Information: Advanced Gender and Technology | 2 |
| Academic Research & Library | 2 |

valuable tool for librarians who teach credit-bearing classes. At the moment, this notion still seems to be a work in progress.

Higher Level Credit-Bearing Classes

The next question addressed higher level information literacy classes. In addition to introductory one-credit classes, the author was interested to learn if schools were offering any higher level credit-bearing classes for two or more credits. Thirty-three (37%) responded yes and the majority, 56 (63%), responded no. Some classes that were mentioned beyond the introductory course are listed in Table 3.

Answers to this question verify that respondents are having some success building an effective library curriculum that will help to convey legitimacy to information literacy instruction. Badke (2005) urges that librarians begin to think of information literacy as a discipline with many possible venues informed by subject matter in existing subject disciplines. The responses to this particular question are still far from the ideal model described by Badke which would consist of a core information literacy course within each major where it could be informed by the discipline involved. Nevertheless, it is encouraging that two of the reported higher level classes,

i.e., the computer class and the gender and technology class, are connected to specific disciplines. Here it can be assumed that the students in these classes will not only benefit from the subject content of those particular disciplines, but will also gain an understanding of the principles of information literacy. Owusu-Ansah (2001) observes that an indicator of a library's success is the extent to which library instruction is integrated in a higher education curriculum. Both Badke and Owusu-Ansah have proposed clear goals for academic librarians and it is promising that some of the above responses suggest that these surveyed librarians are in fact identifying strategies that will broaden their roles in the academic community.

Assessment

Assessment was the next subject surveyed. Seventy-seven (87%) responded that they undertook some form of assessment, while 12 (13%) responded that they undertook no form of assessment. This last number is puzzling since one would expect that some form of assessment would take place in a credit-bearing class. The author asked the respondents who replied yes if assessment was mandatory for their classes. Of the 77 respondents who replied yes, 49 (63%) answered that it was mandatory while 28 (36%) answered that it was not.

Next the author asked about the type of assessment tool that was employed. There were 66 answers to this question. Eighteen (27%) used a pre-/post- test instrument; 16 (24%) used a combination of a pre-/post-test and a graded test; 10 (15%) used a graded test; and 22 (33%) used other methods. See Table 4 for a compilation of all assessment tools that were utilized. As you will note, multiple strategies were employed, ranging from annotated bibliographies to rubrics.

Shortly after the survey was concluded, Axinn Library implemented mandatory assessment for credit-bearing and one-shot classes. A uniform set of questions, which was linked to goals two and three in the ACRL Information Literacy Competency standards (2010), was developed by the Library's Curriculum & Standards Committee. The complete set of ACRL standards is located at <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/standards.pdf>. It was determined that each librarian would choose questions from the group and it was agreed that all credit-bearing classes and 10% of one-shots would be assessed. Axinn librarians are attempting to standardize outcomes to determine where it would be necessary to revise our approach in order that students can best benefit from the classes. As far back as 1992, M. F. Lenox and M. L. Walker pointed out that the dynamic and changing information environment makes the acquisition of information literacy during formal education both a practical necessity and a moral right. Certainly now, more than ever, as librarians have become increasingly involved with teaching credit-bearing classes, reliable assessment methods are needed to demonstrate the impact that libraries have on the successful delivery of information literacy content.

As noted earlier, Joanna Burkhart deals quite extensively with the subject of assessment in her 2007 article. She observes that a review of the recent literature shows a growing interest in analyzing outcomes for information literacy using standardized instruments both at the national and regional levels yet it remains that, for the most part, assessment tools are being created at the local levels. This survey did not ask if librarians had used standardized tests. Nonetheless, it is interesting to see that the tools employed

TABLE 4 — ASSESMENT TOOLS

| Tool | Count | Percent |
|-------------------------------------|-------|---------|
| Pre-/Post-Test | 18 | 27 |
| Pre-/Post-Test and Graded Test | 16 | 24 |
| Graded Test | 10 | 15 |
| Annotated Bibliography | 6 | 9 |
| Student Opinion Surveys/Evaluations | 5 | 8 |
| Electronic Transfer Tool | 4 | 6 |
| Portfolio Project | 3 | 4 |
| In-class assignments/homework | 1 | 2 |
| Observation of their work | 1 | 2 |
| Literature Review | 1 | 2 |
| Rubric | 1 | 2 |

were quite diverse. As Megan Oakleaf (2008) states, no two academic libraries are the same; likewise, no two libraries have identical assessment needs. For many librarians this area is unknown territory and perhaps this can explain why 13% of respondents undertook no form of assessment. Clearly, that approach is not acceptable in view of the fact that libraries offering credit-bearing classes will have to present measurable evidence demonstrating student performance to administrators and accrediting agencies.

Retention

The next fundamental issue addressed was retention. Retention is a significant concern to all universities. For that reason, the author asked if these libraries had any statistics to prove that library credit-bearing

classes contributed to higher retention rates. Only 7 (8%) stated that they had some proof of better retention rates; while 82 (92%) stated that they had no data in this area. The following are some replies from those schools that had statistics proving higher retention rates, or from schools that were planning to track these numbers:

- In the learning community with Psychology and ESL, it has been proven that the retention rate of those ESL students in the Library class is higher than that of the general institution.
- Ran some reports in 2006 that indicate a significant difference in retention of those students who took LIS 1600 as opposed to those who didn't. Preparing to

update those reports.

- Can show data only for student athletes who take the course. There is a significant increase in retention among the athletes who take the course vs. those who do not; so much so that now all student athletes on scholarship must take the course at some time during their first three semesters.
- This is only the second semester for these classes, but there are already improved grades and retention rates.
- Proved that students completing Lib 127 had higher success rates (measured in final grades) in the Writing sequence.
- Campus assessment office is tracking these numbers.

Since credit-bearing classes are still relatively new to library instruction, it is promising to see that some institutions are already tracking the courses to determine potential effects on retention and it is certainly encouraging to see a trend toward higher retention rates in those schools that are keeping records. Hofstra's President, Stuart Rabinowitz, in his State of the University Report for 2009, reported that in 2007, our first-year retention rate had risen to 80.3%, the largest first-year retention rate in Hofstra's history. There are some figures to indicate that the FYC classes that contained a library component had the highest retention rates.

Adjuncts Who Teach

Hiring adjuncts to teach was a question that Axinn librarians had been weighing since 2001. In view of that, the next question had to do with adjuncts' teaching credit-bearing classes. Only 27 (30%) said yes while 62 (70%) said that they do not make use of

adjuncts for teaching.

Those schools that do not use adjuncts to teach were asked to explain why they do not. Several librarians reported that they do not have a need for adjuncts to teach; others expressed quality concerns since adjuncts may not be so familiar as they should be with library resources. One school did use adjuncts for one-shot classes, but not to teach credit-bearing courses. A few schools said that they might have a need for adjuncts to teach credit-bearing classes as their programs expand.

Some of these responses echo the issues that played a role in Axinn's hesitation to use adjunct librarians to teach our credit-bearing classes. Nevertheless, if the credit-bearing initiative is to be successful, adjuncts will have to be brought into the picture where possible. At the University of Maryland, where they run a very successful online program, in order to meet the expected high enrollment, Mulherrin et al. (2005) reported that they hired adjunct faculty to staff the multiple sections that would be available each term. Yet as interesting and practical as this initiative seems, realistically, another important reason why libraries do not hire adjuncts to teach could be that it is not affordable. Regrettably, many libraries simply do not have the resources to carry out such a plan. This leads to the next question which had to do with funding.

Funding

Since budgets are at the source of all successful programs, the author asked which constituency in the university funded the credit-bearing program and thereby granted credit. There were 4 choices: the Library itself, the School of Liberal Arts, the School of Education and Other. Thirty-one (47%) responded that the Library funded and granted credit for these classes. Fourteen

(21%) answered that the School of Liberal Arts funded it; 6 (6%) answered that the School of Education was responsible, while 15 (23%) responded Other. Some of these *other* constituencies included:

- Honors Collegium
- Independent Studies
- Journalism Department
- Social Science Department
- General Studies
- Philosophy
- School of Business

It is not surprising that less than half of the academic libraries surveyed fund these classes. In point of fact, Jeanne Davidson (2001) wrote that libraries are seldom reimbursed for the costs incurred in offering classes (only 13% receive funding). Libraries are not income-producing entities and, as a result, critical library initiatives cannot always be implemented. Regrettably, because of the recent recession, there are fewer student enrollments across the board. This situation is unlikely to change anytime soon.

CONCLUSION

The study was conducted in order to begin a conversation on the practical aspects of credit-bearing library instruction. The author was not surprised by most findings. The study validated the belief that a majority of libraries that offered credit-bearing classes were using hybrid or fully online methods of teaching. Since this seems like the most efficient method for reaching large numbers of students, this is not an unexpected finding. Moreover, it was encouraging to learn that many respondent schools were offering classes for two and three credits and that there is a slow advance toward connecting library credit-bearing classes to specific disciplines. In

view of the fact that librarians by and large would like to see an information literacy class attached to every major, the author was pleased to see this sort of progress.

It was disappointing to discover that many of the responding libraries have a rather *laissez-faire* attitude toward learning outcomes. Since accrediting agencies are increasingly demanding an accounting of learning outcomes, libraries must take this subject more seriously. Most librarians have not received instructional training and may find developing assessment tools daunting. For that reason, the author hopes that librarians, who have developed successful assessment strategies, will share their experiences with the larger academic library community in the not too distant future.

At all universities, retention is key. However, very few responding schools actually reported that they had any information relating to library credit-bearing classes and how these classes might affect retention. However, the small number of schools that did collect retention data revealed that they had positive numbers relating to retaining students who have taken library credit-bearing classes. The author suggests that tracking this data should become a regular component of credit-bearing classes. Not surprisingly, there was virtually nothing in the literature on this subject. Librarians have to be insistent that retention data is tracked. If it can be established that library credit-bearing classes improve retention, this would indeed be a powerful tool for making the case that these classes be required across the board in the university curriculum.

It was revealed that less than half the academic libraries surveyed actually fund these classes. Because libraries are not

profit-making entities for the university, credit-bearing classes have to be funded by other constituencies throughout the university, thereby creating a situation where frequently the library loses control and autonomy. Unfortunately, the recent recession is creating budget cuts and the author does not see this situation changing in the near future.

This survey was conducted in order to call attention to the library credit-bearing initiative from a practical point of view. It has attempted to touch on questions that have come forward from the program at Axinn Library. What the author found was a variety of interesting approaches that are helping the credit-bearing initiative to move forward. As noted by Owusu-Ansah (2001), it is the conviction and activities of librarians themselves that will finally provide authenticity to the academic library's role as a teaching department on campus. While this study is not comprehensive and does not delve in depth into every issue concerning credit-bearing instruction within academic libraries, it is hoped that it will elicit further research on the topic.

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APPENDIX

**Academic Library Credit-Bearing Class Survey
November 2008**

1. How are your undergraduate credit-bearing classes offered?

Face-to-face ___ Online ___ Hybrid ___

2. To whom are these classes available?

Freshmen ___ b) Sophomores ___ c) Juniors ___ d) Seniors ___

3. Are your credit-bearing classes elective or required?

Elective ___ Required ___

4. If they are now elective, do you have future plans for a required course?

Yes ___ No ___

5. If your answer is yes, please expand.

6. Are your library credit-bearing classes connected or embedded with other courses in the university?

Yes ___ (please specify department) _____

No ___

7. If your answer is yes, has the connection worked?

Yes, completely ___ Yes, somewhat ___ No ___

8. Why did the connection with other faculty work, or not work?

9. In addition to the basic one-credit classes, do you offer any credit-bearing higher level classes for two or more credits?

Yes ___ No ___

10. If your answer is yes, please specify the types of advanced classes that are offered and the number of credits earned.

| <u>Class</u> | <u>Credits</u> |
|--------------|----------------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

11. Is assessment an integral part of the overall credit-bearing program?

Yes ___ No ___

12. If the answer is yes, is it mandatory that faculty employ some form of assessment in the program?

Yes ___ No ___

13. If assessment is part of your program, what type of tool do you use?

Pre/Post test ___ Graded Test ___ Evaluation ___ Other (please specify) _____

14. Does your institution have any statistics to prove that these classes contribute to higher retention rates?

Yes _____ No _____

15. If the answer is yes, please expand on this.

16. Do adjuncts teach credit-bearing classes?

Yes _____ No _____

17. If the answer is no, please expand.

18. Which university unit/department/school funds and grants the credits for library credit-bearing classes?

Library _____ School of Liberal Arts _____ School of Education _____

Other (please specify) _____