GAINING GROUND
Building College Information Literacy Skills
Introduction

Gaining Ground: Building College Information Literacy Skills (referred to as GG) was a pilot community outreach initiative between Murphy Library and selected public high school college-bound seniors from the La Crosse area during the 2015 spring semester. The project was presented as a proposal to Provost Macpherson’s call for Strategic Initiatives with Measurable Outcomes, and was selected, and was selected to be funded as “External Relations with Community”.

The main goals of GG were to assess and build upon college level information literacy skills and research awareness of area college-bound high school seniors, introduce students to a selection of essential research skills and tools as they transition to college, advocate for higher education in general, and promote UW-L as the college of their choice.

Pre and post assessment was designed to be used to assess and re-design Murphy Library’s first year information literacy program. The proposal included lunch, a campus tour, and a student panel of current McNair Scholar students.
Information Literacy objectives

- Formulate a research question.
- Formulate a research strategy using Boolean operators.
- Evaluate web sources for use in an academic setting.
- Use library databases and tools to locate appropriate sources for scholarly research on a topic of their choice.
- Explain the cycle of research.
- Discuss the notions and implications of the personalization of search results.

A variety of teaching techniques were used: presentation, group/pair, interaction, video, and discussion.

Participants

A total of seven area high schools participated in GG: Bangor, Central (La Crosse), Fountain-City, Holmen, Onalaska, Royall, and Whitehall. A total of 126 students participated in GG. Most participants were college-bound seniors with a few juniors.

Budget

The original proposed budget was $1985.28 and was composed mostly of transportation costs.

The modified budget, to include lunch, came to a total of $3745.28.
A breakdown of the day

9:00 am - 11:00 am
- Information Literacy active learning activities
- Learning stations
  - Website evaluation
  - Database basics
  - Library of Congress classification
  - Murphy Library search tools
  - Boolean operators
- Library scavenger hunt
- Beware Online Filter Bubbles” TED Talk by Eli Pariser, debrief about the personalization of search engines

11:00 am - 12:00 pm
  - Campus tour with UW-L Vanguards

12:00 pm - 12:30 pm
  - Lunch

12:30 pm - 1:15 pm
  - Cycle of research game; mock research exercise in pairs

1:15 pm - 1:35 pm
  - Student panel with UW-L McNair Scholars

1:35 pm - 2:00 pm
  - First year writing conversation with Dr. Darci Thoune, English

2:00 pm - 2:15 pm
  - Post assessment exercise

2:15 pm
  - Departure
The pre and post assessment was comprised of 12 questions. Ten of which were designed to be qualitative measures of students’ understanding of information literacy concepts and two free-response questions. 126 students participated in GG. The average pre assessment score was 78.17%. The average post assessment score was 92.38% — a 14.21% improvement overall.
Gaining Ground Assessment Questions

This is a pre/post test assessment tool for the Gaining Ground Outreach program. Answer these questions to the best of your ability. This test is not graded.

Please tell us your first and last name.

What high school do you attend? *

What grade are you currently enrolled in?

When doing academic research, it is best to choose scholarly and peer-reviewed journal articles because: Choose the best answer.

- It is information that has been written and reviewed by experts in the field.
- It is the most current source of information.
- It is always more informative than a web source.
- It is the only type of information that I am allowed to use in college.

The letters in the CRAAP test acronym stand for: Choose the best answer.

- Currency, Right, Accuracy, Authority, Purpose
- Complete, Relevance, Accuracy, Authority, Purpose
- Currency, Relevance, Accuracy, Authority, Purpose
- Currency, References, Accuracy, Authority, Purpose

Why is it important to critically evaluate information found online? Choose the best answer.

- Not all information found online is factual.
- Not all information found online is up to date.
- To evaluate whether or not it can be used in a research paper or project.
- All of the above.

What is the cycle of research? Choose the best answer.

- The process that happens after a book or article is written, but before it is published.
- All the steps of the research process beginning with topic development and ending with a research paper or project.
- The steps taken in a library database to find research articles.
- Finding books in the library catalog.
When using a library database it is best to enter my search terms as: Choose the best answer.

- Keywords that describe my research topic.
- An entire sentence that describes my research topic.

What are keywords? Choose the best answer.

- A word or short phrase that describes a research topic.
- A sentence about a research topic.
- Special library terms that help users find information.
- The information found on the spine of a book.

Your topic is: Smoking bans on college campuses. Choose the best combination of keywords for your search:

- Smoking ban AND college campuses
- Smoking ban
- College students AND smoking
- Underage smoking AND colleges

Choose the best definition. The Boolean Operator AND...

- Narrows down a search by combining two or more keywords.
- Broadens a search by telling a database to bring back one term or the other or both.
- Narrows down a search by excluding a search term.

Choose the best definition. The Boolean Operator OR...

- Narrows down a search by combining two or more keywords.
- Broadens a search by telling a database to bring back one term or the other or both.
- Narrows down a search by excluding a search term.

Choose the best definition. The Boolean Operator NOT...

- Narrows down a search by combining two or more keywords.
- Broadens a search by telling a database to bring back one term or the other or both.
- Narrows down a search by excluding a search term.

Why do you think search engines try and personalize your search results? Can you think of at least one pro and one con of using personalized search results? Use 1 minute to answer this question as completely as you can.

Critically evaluating information online is a key part of being information literate. Below, briefly explain how to evaluate information found online. Use 1 minute to answer this question as completely as you can.
Future of GG
Post program survey results indicate a desire to continue the program.

Survey highlights:
- Juniors would be a better target age because they have not made their college choice.
- The spring semester would be better for school calendars.
- The campus tour was greatly appreciated.
- Students enjoyed speaking with the McNair scholars about their college experiences.
- Students felt less intimidated about their first year experience after speaking with Dr. Thoune.

Report completed by:
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