



Chapter 18

University of Minnesota Duluth

Surfacing Shared Purpose

Kim Pittman

Population Served

The University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD) is a midsize public comprehensive regional university in the University of Minnesota system. As of 2017, the library's instruction program served 9,199 undergraduate and 1,021 graduate students.¹ Our program supports a wide range of subjects, including ninety-plus undergraduate and twenty-plus graduate programs across six colleges and schools.

Unlike the range of programs we support, our student population is quite homogenous. In 2017, 85 percent of our students were from Minnesota, with 72 percent of students hailing from the Duluth and Minneapolis/St. Paul regions.² Additionally, 77 percent of the 2017 UMD student body identified as white.³ Given the high concentration of Minnesotan students, librarians often incorporate topics of local interest, such as statewide access to affordable housing, mining, or local environmental issues, into library instruction. With the predominantly white makeup of our student population in mind, librarians also use social justice–related topics in sessions as a subtle way to encourage students to develop a more inclusive lens. In 2017, 295 international students attended UMD.⁴ Our program works closely with courses designated for English language learners in order to support international students in navigating a US academic library environment.

Program Scope

Our instruction program primarily serves undergraduates through in-person course-integrated library sessions. At the core of the program is a partnership with our campus writing program. Students in our required first-year writing course, College Writing, participate in two library sessions and complete three online tutorials. Sessions for College Writing account for approximately 40 percent of each year's instruction, while sessions for required subject-specific advanced writing courses account for roughly 10 percent. In addition to working with the writing program, liaison librarians partner with faculty to reach students at key points in their academic careers by offering sessions in research-intensive courses within disciplines, including capstone and thesis courses. We also offer drop-in workshops on topics like citation management, evaluation of news, and research data management. Online course support is an area in which we are working to grow our program.

Operations

Our program is primarily staffed by eight librarians within the library's Research and Learning Team, representing approximately 29 percent of the total library staff. In addition to this core group, the library director and Research and Learning's archivist and scholarly communications librarian also teach a more limited number of sessions each year. All Research and Learning librarians have teaching responsibilities for College Writing and assigned liaison areas written into their job descriptions, and the archivist is responsible for teaching sessions related to archival research. The library director and scholarly communications librarian opt to teach based on personal interest.

In 2016, a library-wide reorganization generated structural changes for our program, including updates to the instruction coordinator position, the creation of an online learning librarian role, and a revised distribution of subject areas for liaisons. Rather than assigning liaison areas based on interest and expertise after filling positions, the reorganization and a series of retirements allowed us to assign individual librarians to broad subject areas (e.g., humanities and fine arts or science and engineering, rather than unpredictable combinations like engineering and music). This structure streamlines faculty outreach and allows librarians to work with programs that share more similarities than differences. Changes to liaison roles have also made our program's structure more transparent in and outside the library, making it easier for colleagues and campus partners to identify the appropriate liaison for a particular department or major.

Five of the eight Research and Learning librarians have liaison-intensive roles, providing instructional support, research help, and collection development for broad subject areas like humanities or business. The other three librarians in our team have primarily functional roles (Head of Research and Learning, Information Literacy and Assessment Librarian, and Online Learning and Outreach Librarian), but offer College Writing instruction and act as liaisons to smaller programs. In addition to teaching, all of these librarians provide drop-in research help for the campus community.

Despite its small size, our team teaches a high number of sessions each year: we taught 433 sessions in 2017–18, and our total number of sessions has grown in six of the last seven

years despite frequent librarian turnover and some years of declining student enrollment. In 2017–18, our team taught more sessions per professional staff member than in any of the eleven institutions UMD identifies as peers based on size, programs, research, and degrees offered, demonstrating the reach and scope of our program as well as our team’s commitment to teaching and learning.⁵

While the instruction program does not have its own budget, it receives substantial support from library leadership. Library administration supports the program through the library director’s delivery of classroom instruction, participation in trainings related to teaching and learning, sharing of instruction program information with campus partners and leaders, and identification of opportunities for librarians to participate in campus educational initiatives.

Marketing

As instruction coordinator, I promote the library’s role in teaching and learning through campus presentations and our web presence. At new faculty orientation each year, I lead a discussion about preconceptions or expectations students might have about academic libraries and research. As we discuss students’ perspectives, I draw connections to what we know about students’ research experiences from Project Information Literacy and introduce instructors to options for information literacy instruction.⁶ I also maintain a library web page where instructors can learn about information literacy, contact their liaison librarian, and request library instruction.⁷

Liaison librarians promote one-shot instruction through outreach to instructors via email, departmental meetings, and working with faculty members who serve as “library liaison” for their department. While liaison librarians vary in their approach to outreach, common strategies include identifying assignments that generate a high volume of research questions, courses where key information literacy skills and understandings can be addressed, or instructors who are interested in information literacy. Our social sciences librarian creates and shares a regular email newsletter with her departments in order to share library updates and publicize her teaching role. Our business librarian checks in each semester with instructors who are teaching research-intensive courses and proactively reaches out to new faculty members in order to establish new relationships.

Because of our team’s small size and heavy teaching loads, some liaison librarians are limited in their ability to seek new teaching opportunities. Within our department, we have begun to discuss ways to increase awareness of information literacy on campus while keeping in mind our limited capacity to work with new courses.

Collaboration

We enjoy a long-standing productive relationship with our campus writing program. While information literacy instruction delivered by librarians has been a required component of College Writing, our required first-year writing course, for many years, our relationship has become stronger recently through my participation in our campus Writing Program Committee and collaboration with our writing program administrator on a 2015–16 ACRL Assessment in Action (AiA) project.⁸ As a result of this strengthened

partnership, we now work more closely with writing instructors to design information literacy instruction, gather student work for assessment, and offer additional optional information literacy instruction for College Writing.

While liaisons have developed positive relationships with faculty in the disciplines, we plan to enhance those collaborations through faculty development. In the near future, we will develop a workshop series in which instructors will partner with librarians to incorporate information literacy into course design.

The library's participation in campus initiatives generates new opportunities to promote information literacy. In 2018, digital literacy was a topic of focus for our campus shared governance. Library staff involvement in these committees enabled librarians to participate in conversations about supporting digital literacy learning at all levels. The library is an active participant in campus-wide student learning assessment efforts, allowing us to build relationships and share strategies with staff members in Student Life and other cocurricular departments. The library's efforts to work collaboratively with campus partners on student outreach and events have strengthened these partnerships. A recent example of a teaching opportunity arising from an existing Student Life partnership occurred in the lead-up to the 2018 midterm elections. Our Vice Chancellor for Student Life assembled a cross-campus team to coordinate campus voter education efforts. As a result of our existing partnership, librarians were invited to offer voter education workshops designed to help attendees evaluate information critically when researching candidates and issues. Our Student Life partners worked hard to publicize these events, leading to higher than typical attendance for drop-in workshops.

Assessment

Assessment is one of our program's strengths. As part of a campus-wide assessment process, we assess and report on one to two student learning outcomes per year on a three-year cycle. Our original student learning assessment plan focused on assessing search skills as demonstrated in one-shot sessions. This plan enabled us to meet campus assessment requirements but rarely generated data that informed our teaching. Following our AiA project that focused on using reflective writing to understand how students respond to challenges in the research process, I created a new assessment plan. Working from this plan, we gather authentic evidence of student learning in first-year and advanced writing courses, helping us better understand information literacy learning over time. Rather than focusing exclusively on discrete research tasks, we analyze reflective writing, allowing us to identify "stuck places" in student learning and understand students' motivations, values, and feelings related to the research process.

Each year's assessment work is completed by an ad hoc working group of librarians. With the exception of my role as instruction coordinator, this group's membership rotates yearly, allowing all interested teaching librarians to participate in assessment. For each outcome, we assess student work from library instruction, including online tutorial quizzes, in-class worksheets, or written reflections. In order to see how students apply what they learn over time, we complete rubric-based assessment of work produced after library sessions, including annotated bibliographies, written reflections, and research topic proposals. We developed our rubrics internally, drawing inspiration from the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* and Association of American

Colleges and Universities VALUE rubrics.⁹ We partner with writing instructors to gather anonymized student work and discuss results with instructors once the process is complete. This approach helps us understand how students experience the research process and informs the way we design instruction and partner with instructors.

In addition to our ongoing student learning assessment efforts, in 2017, we partnered with our Office of Institutional Research (OIR) to include the “Experiences with Information Literacy” module of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in that year’s survey delivery. This NSSE module invites first-year students and seniors to identify how frequently their instructors address information literacy in course assignments and activities.¹⁰ Survey results compare UMD students’ responses to those from other institutions, allowing us to contextualize our campus information literacy curricular integration. Our survey results indicate that UMD instructors emphasize information literacy less frequently than instructors at other comparably sized public institutions, suggesting the need for additional faculty development in this area. Our campus administers the NSSE every three years and includes only one topical module each time. We see OIR’s willingness to include this module as evidence that our institution values information literacy. While we do not plan to administer this NSSE module regularly, we will incorporate results from relevant questions on the standard NSSE survey into our assessment practice.

Role of the One-Shot

The majority of our instruction happens in one-shot sessions; however, librarians have an expanded presence in a growing number of courses at the first-year level. In College Writing, librarians teach a minimum of two library sessions in each section and offer additional sessions at instructor request. Last year, after we added a section on follow-up sessions to our College Writing library instruction scheduling form, requests for these sessions tripled. This means that instead of seeing a College Writing section twice, librarians may work with one section up to five times per semester, allowing librarians to address concepts more fully and develop rapport with students and instructors. Similarly, librarians have a significant presence in first-year developmental writing courses, including courses for English language learners. In the majority of these course sections, librarians teach a multi-session sequence on reading academic journal articles, evaluating sources, and navigating the research process.

In addition to these examples, librarians extend learning beyond the one-shot by creating online tutorials and research guides and promoting research help options. While these approaches support deeper learning and library engagement, they present problems of scale for our program. Because librarians already teach more sessions per staff member than our peer institutions, we have limited potential for growth as we work to integrate instruction more fully into research-intensive courses.

Pedagogical Highlights

The content we teach in our instruction program is guided by a set of *Framework*-inspired learning outcomes. Following ACRL’s 2015 filing of the *Framework*, we mapped our existing outcomes to the frames, drafted new outcomes to fill gaps we identified, and

revised existing outcomes to reflect the *Framework's* focus on conceptual understandings, the affective dimension of learning, and students' roles as content creators. Our outcomes consist of one overarching outcome derived from each frame with matching learning outcomes mapped to levels of student development (beginning/undergraduate, major/discipline, and graduate).

Information literacy is not specifically highlighted in our campus student learning outcomes, although many of the outcomes can be linked to information literacy. Our liberal education program includes a writing and information literacy requirement fulfilled by College Writing. Liberal education program requirements also state that liberally educated students “will be prepared to access, evaluate, and make use of information gathered through multiple methodologies.”¹¹

Within the library, we create a community of practice around teaching by emphasizing teaching and learning in the hiring and training process and providing ongoing training and support for librarians who teach. Candidates for librarian positions with teaching responsibilities complete teaching presentations that are open to all library staff members. This means that non-search committee staff feedback on candidates is primarily based on performance in the teaching presentation. Once hired, new librarians complete a training process designed to introduce them to our instruction program and their role in it. First, they complete a series of meetings with me to discuss our program's structure and goals, tools and resources to support their teaching, and logistics involved in developing and delivering instruction. Second, new librarians observe other librarians in the classroom. Finally, I arrange a time to observe new librarians teaching and offer feedback.

I make regular opportunities for support and discussion available to librarians who teach. During our busiest teaching weeks, I schedule optional, unstructured drop-in teaching prep sessions. Librarians who participate can request feedback on lesson plans, collaboratively design instruction, or work in the company of colleagues. At the beginning of each semester, we hold instruction-focused team meetings to discuss new approaches for teaching College Writing sessions and plan for the semester ahead. Toward the end of each semester, we hold debrief discussions that help us identify successful strategies and areas for improvement. I also make it clear that I am available to consult with librarians on the instructional design of their sessions, and librarians frequently drop by my office or schedule time to discuss lesson plans with me.

Based on librarian requests and changes like the release of the *Framework*, I offer additional training sessions on timely topics. This year, I facilitated a five-part training series on instructional design. In these sessions, librarians discussed learning theories that inform the *Framework* and created instruction plans based on the *Understanding by Design* approach to backward design.¹² I have also facilitated “jigsaw” article discussion sessions in which small groups of librarians read different articles on teaching and learning and share what they've learned with the rest of our team. This focus on ongoing learning and development builds a culture of collaboration and sense of shared purpose among teaching librarians, helping us continuously grow as educators.

Administrative Highlights

I complete detailed annual reports on our program statistics and present highlights from these reports at library all-staff meetings. These reports allow librarians to monitor

changes in our programmatic and individual teaching loads, as well as the distribution of instruction by subject, course level, format, and location. These documents make our teaching efforts more visible to library administration and library colleagues outside our department. Beyond the library, our director discusses these reports with the Information Technology and Library Subcommittee of shared campus governance and the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, highlighting the scope of our instructional work for campus partners and leadership. Most importantly, these reports inspire discussion of big questions about our program within our team and with library leadership: How do we ensure that our growth is strategic and sustainable? What is a reasonable teaching load for a librarian? How does our growth impact our capacity for reflective practice as educators and our capacity to meet other job responsibilities?

In order to explore these questions and learn more about librarians' individual experiences beyond statistics, I held recent conversations with each teaching librarian about their teaching load and experiences with instruction. These discussions invited librarians to share how their teaching loads impact their approach to instruction and outreach to faculty. Librarians also reflected on their coverage of key courses in their subject areas and big-picture goals for instruction. These conversations generated valuable, informative feedback that complements the data I track in our annual statistical reports. While I'm proud of our team's enthusiasm for teaching and willingness to grow our program each year, these reports illustrate the challenges of workload and scale that our small team faces. Identifying these challenges has generated productive discussions with library administration about how we can work strategically to ensure that our program is sustainable.

Information Literacy Coordinator Profile

While information literacy has been a longstanding priority for UMD librarians, the instruction coordinator role has evolved over time, resulting in positive changes for me and our program. For many years, a liaison librarian with several competing responsibilities coordinated our program in an informal capacity. In 2009, the library formally defined the role and hired an instruction program coordinator. This position does not rotate. Teaching responsibilities are shared among teaching librarians and are not seen as the primary domain of the instruction coordinator. While not articulated in my job description, early in my career, I was expected to be the first to fill in for absent or unavailable colleagues. These coverage decisions are now made with availability, subject expertise, and teaching workload in mind.

When I was first hired into the position in 2011, instruction coordination was one part of a role that included significant liaison responsibilities. Although my original position description identified "leadership and direction in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the library's information literacy instruction program" as a responsibility, it was clear that in practice, coordinating logistics for College Writing library instruction was the position's highest priority. After some time in the position, I began to view my role more expansively, understanding that I should seek opportunities to grow our program beyond the first year; guide our teaching practices proactively, rather than primarily

coordinating logistics and responding to instructor requests; and support librarians' ongoing growth by facilitating regular learning opportunities.

Unfortunately, this clarity of purpose was not accompanied by time with which to make my goals a reality. While I still found my work rewarding, I felt frustrated by the ways in which my workload limited my capacity to work toward these priorities. As part of our 2016 library reorganization, every library staff member met individually with our library director to discuss our roles, including challenges we faced, what we liked best and least about our positions, and areas of opportunity we felt the library should pursue. This meeting allowed me to articulate how I could provide more support and leadership for our program in a redefined role. In what I think of as a significant turning point in my career, my desire to shift focus from logistics to leadership aligned with our library director's goal of providing more support for teaching and learning. Fortunate timing facilitated the shift of my departmental liaison, student engagement, and outreach responsibilities to new positions created as a result of retirements. My job title and duties were updated, increasing my role's emphasis on information literacy and assessment. In my position description, information literacy and assessment-related duties now account for roughly 60 percent of my responsibilities, increasing from 40 percent in my original position description. In my updated role, I can devote more time to the big-picture work of leading our program, rather than primarily keeping up with what Arellano Douglas and Gadsby characterize as day-to-day "housework" that keeps our program running.¹³

While my position now allows me a greater focus on information literacy, it still includes additional responsibilities like coordinating projects that assess user satisfaction with library services, facilities, and collections. In contrast to my original role, these activities often inform, rather than compete with, my work as instruction coordinator. For example, library website usability testing provides insight into students' approaches to the research process. Similarly, user satisfaction surveys help me understand students' feelings and attitudes about libraries and research, highlighting affective components that impact student engagement in learning experiences. While balancing these different aspects of my role remains challenging, I value the ways in which my responsibilities complement and enrich each other.

What I Wish People Knew

While I most enjoy the big-picture components of my role, many routine tasks are required to keep our program running. Most of my role's hidden labor involves coordinating the information literacy components of College Writing. My goal is to avoid becoming bogged down in logistical details while still completing the behind-the-scenes preparation for our involvement in this course. By taking responsibility for these necessary but mundane tasks, I hope to enable my colleagues to focus on collaborating with course instructors and working with students. Based on instructor requests submitted in an online scheduling form, I create a schedule that factors in librarians' teaching load and schedule preferences and matches librarians and instructors based on personality and teaching style whenever possible. In addition to scheduling, I prepare lesson plans; create templates for presentation slides and emails to instructors; reserve classroom space; design and print worksheets for activities; work with library systems and campus IT staff to resolve technology issues; and troubleshoot problems students encounter when sharing their online tutorial results

with instructors. Whenever possible, I have streamlined this work by eliminating unnecessary handouts, altering activities to reduce printing and preparation, and working with library administration to simplify classroom booking.

As a new librarian in my first professional role, I had limited awareness of what this position would require, so in many ways, most of my growth as an instruction coordinator has been a surprise. While I had more teaching experience than many new graduates, I was still uncomfortable in the classroom and lacked confidence in my ability to effectively design instruction. By developing expertise for my individual teaching role, I have strengthened my ability to coordinate our program, collaborate with instructors, and serve as a resource for my colleagues who teach. While these skills and strengths positively impact our program, our success is contingent on our team as a whole. Our collective enthusiasm, willingness to learn together, and commitment to supporting students make our continued progress possible.

Discussing the potential of my role and our program with my library director during our reorganization helped initiate changes to my position. While our reorganization provided a convenient impetus for these conversations, instruction coordinators need not wait for an invitation to provide feedback. Documenting growth in our teaching activities, identifying areas of need based on student learning assessment results, and articulating the importance of alignment with the ACRL *Framework* all helped me make an effective case for change, demonstrating that there are many possible approaches to advocating for your program. Based on my experience, my advice for other instruction coordinators is to seek out opportunities to make your hidden labor visible. Advocate for what you need in order to be an effective instruction coordinator and initiate conversations within your library about your program's future. Develop a vision of your program's purpose and potential, and articulate that vision in order to create a sense of shared purpose with your colleagues, library administration, and campus partners.

Notes

1. "Student Profile," University of Minnesota Duluth, accessed November 1, 2018, <http://d.umn.edu/about-umd/student-profile>.
2. "2017 All Student Profile," University of Minnesota Duluth, Office of Institutional Research, November 2017, http://www.d.umn.edu/vcaa/institutionalresearch/All_Student_Profile_2017.pdf.
3. "2017 All Student Profile."
4. "2017 All Student Profile."
5. "University of Minnesota Duluth Peer Institutions," University of Minnesota Duluth, Office of Institutional Research, accessed March 29, 2019, http://www.d.umn.edu/vcaa/institutionalresearch/OIR_CDB_Peer_Institutions.html; "ACRLMetrics," Association of College and Research Libraries, accessed October 30, 2018, <https://www.acrlmetrics.com>.
6. "Publications," Project Information Literacy, accessed January 3, 2019, <http://www.projectinfolit.org/publications.html>.
7. "Library Instruction," Kathryn A. Martin Library, University of Minnesota Duluth, accessed October 31, 2018, <https://lib.d.umn.edu/research-collections/library-instruction>.
8. "University of Minnesota Duluth: Project Description," Assessment in Action, Association of College and Research Libraries, accessed January 9, 2019, <https://apply.ala.org/aia/docs/project/13916>.
9. Association of College and Research Libraries, *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2016), <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>; "VALUE Rubrics," Association of American Colleges and Universities, accessed January 9, 2019, <https://www.aacu.org/value-rubrics>.

10. “Topical Module: Experiences with Information Literacy,” National Survey of Student Engagement, accessed November 1, 2018, http://nsse.indiana.edu/pdf/modules/2017/NSSE_2017_Experiences_with_Information_Literacy_Module.pdf.
11. “Liberal Education,” University of Minnesota Duluth, accessed October 31, 2018, <http://d.umn.edu/catalog/liberal-education>.
12. Grant P. Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design*, 2nd ed. (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2005).
13. Veronica Arellano Douglas and Joanna Gadsby, “Gendered Labor and Library Instruction Coordinators: The Undervaluing of Feminized Work,” in *At the Helm: Leading Transformation: ACRL 2017 Conference Proceedings*, ed. Dawn M. Mueller (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2017), 270, <http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/conferences/confsandpreconfs/2017/GenderedLaborandLibraryInstructionCoordinators.pdf>.

Bibliography

- Arellano Douglas, Veronica, and Joanna Gadsby. “Gendered Labor and Library Instruction Coordinators: The Undervaluing of Feminized Work.” In *At the Helm: Leading Transformation: ACRL 2017 Conference Proceedings*. Edited by Dawn M. Mueller, 266–74. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2017. <http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/conferences/confsandpreconfs/2017/GenderedLaborandLibraryInstructionCoordinators.pdf>.
- Association of American Colleges and Universities. “VALUE Rubrics.” Accessed January 9, 2019. <https://www.aacu.org/value-rubrics>.
- Association of College and Research Libraries. “ACRLMetrics.” Accessed October 30, 2018. <https://www.acrlmetrics.com>.
- . *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2016. <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.
- . “University of Minnesota Duluth: Project Description.” Assessment in Action. Accessed January 9, 2019. <https://apply.ala.org/aia/docs/project/13916>.
- National Survey of Student Engagement. “Topical Module: Experiences with Information Literacy.” Accessed November 1, 2018. http://nsse.indiana.edu/pdf/modules/2017/NSSE_2017_Experiences_with_Information_Literacy_Module.pdf.
- Project Information Literacy. “Publications.” Accessed January 3, 2019. <http://www.projectinfolit.org/publications.html>.
- University of Minnesota Duluth. “Liberal Education.” Accessed October 31, 2018. <http://d.umn.edu/catalog/liberal-education>.
- . “Library Instruction.” Kathryn A. Martin Library. Accessed October 31, 2018. <https://lib.d.umn.edu/research-collections/library-instruction>.
- . “Student Profile.” Accessed November 1, 2018. <http://d.umn.edu/about-umd/student-profile>.
- . “2017 All Student Profile.” Office of Institutional Research. November 2017. http://www.d.umn.edu/vcaa/institutionalresearch/All_Student_Profile_2017.pdf.
- . “University of Minnesota Duluth Peer Institutions.” Office of Institutional Research. Accessed March 20, 2019. http://www.d.umn.edu/vcaa/institutionalresearch/OIR_CDB_Peer_Institutions.html.
- Wiggins, Grant P., and Jay McTighe. *Understanding by Design*, 2nd ed. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2005.