

FINAL REPORT FOR INFORMATION LITERACY STIPEND

Submitted 12/23/11 by Peter C. Olden, PhD, MHA

Collaborating Library faculty member: Mr. George Aulisio.

Course name and number: Health Services & Systems HAD519 (Fall Semester 2011).

The 22 students who took this first-semester graduate course varied in their backgrounds and information literacy skills. Some had just finished four years here as undergraduates and were familiar with WML and its resources and some aspects of information literacy. Other students had been out of school for 10+ years and were unfamiliar with WML, online data bases, information resources, and how to effectively access, evaluate, and use information.

The course required students in a semester-long project to analyze and *report the health status, health services, and health systems of an actual community/area*. This project involved extensive research, collection of data, and preparation of a report suitable for local health care executives in the community. The final report required title page, table of contents, body, references list, and appendices (e.g., map, charts, lists, tables of data, etc.). Students submitted reports ranging from about 30 to 50 pages, which described the following content based on their research:

- a) the community's population, patterns of disease, health status, risk factors, access to care
- b) the community's health financing, managed care, health insurance, expenditures
- c) the community's public health services, ambulatory health services, hospital services, long term care services, and mental health services
- d) the community's health technology and health workforce
- e) the community's health public policy, health care quality, and health ethical issues
- f) possible future developments in the community's health status, services, and systems

Student information literacy intended outcomes for this project were taken from the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education of the Association of College and Research Libraries (<http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency> accessed 10/30/10 via the University of Scranton's Weinberg Memorial Library webpages).

Standard Two. Performance Indicator 1. Outcomes a. and d.

- a. Uses various search systems to retrieve information in a variety of formats
- d. Uses surveys, letters, interviews, and other forms of inquiry to retrieve primary information

Standard Three. Performance Indicator 1. Outcome a.

- a. Examines and compares information from various sources in order to evaluate reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness, and point of view or bias

Standard Four. Performance Indicator 1. Outcomes a., c., and d.

- a. Organizes the content in a manner that supports the purposes and format of the product or performance (e.g. outlines, drafts, storyboards)

- c. Integrates the new and prior information, including quotations and paraphrasings, in a manner that supports the purposes of the product or performance
- d. Manipulates digital text, images, and data, as needed, transferring them from their original locations and formats to a new context

Prior to the course, the faculty conferred in meetings, email, and phone calls to arrange teaching and learning methods for information literacy in this course. The following methods were used to help students develop their information literacy skills:

- ✓ Mr. George Aulisio conducted a hands-on interactive workshop during the second week of class to show how to conduct online searches for a community's health status, services, and systems using WML resources.
- ✓ Dr. Olden led class discussions several times during the semester on information sources (primary, secondary, quantitative, qualitative, online, offline) for a community's health status, services, and systems.
- ✓ Mr. Aulisio set up a Discussion Board of online sources identified by himself and Dr. Olden that would be useful for this project. Students were able to add to this when they discovered additional sources.
- ✓ Dr. Olden met with students in small groups during the semester to review resources used by them, answer information literacy questions, and offer guidance. Mr. Aulisio met with students mid-semester to do the same while reviewing their preliminary work.

All of this was a very worthwhile endeavor. Throughout the semester, students developed their information literacy skills, did the research for their projects, wrote their reports, and shared their experiences with the faculty. At the end of the semester, Dr. Olden evaluated all students' reports. This included examining types of references, types of information, actual information, displays of information/data, and citations of information. Students achieved the intended outcomes, which were reflected in the project reports and discussions with students. Students who had recently finished undergraduate studies were able to begin more quickly and needed less help. Other students (who had been away from school) needed more help in figuring out how to search for specific information, how to evaluate sources such as for bias and usefulness, how to properly cite sources, and how to present information. In several instances, review of students' preliminary material led faculty to further emphasize the need to cite sources of information. A common problem was 'information overload' in which students found far too much information and were unsure how to select from it. During the semester students developed their ability to select and use a small amount of 'high quality' information and not try to work with unnecessarily large amounts of data for one topic.

I thank the Library Advisory Committee's Information Literacy Subcommittee for approving this proposal and granting me this opportunity. I also thank Mr. George Aulisio for his excellent help and contributions to this information literacy project. I greatly enjoyed collaborating with him.