

We've set SAILS: Launching Library Assessment Across University Waters

Auburn University Libraries



SAILS
(Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills)
2003

AU Libraries one of six participants in the original pilot, an initiative of Kent State University in partnership with the Association of Research Libraries

2004
Phase Two Testing: 229 Auburn undergraduates

2005
Phase Three Testing: 509 Auburn undergraduates

A total of 82 participating libraries, 42,000 students

The average student at Auburn University performed on all standards and skill sets at about the same level as the average student from all institutions combined.

- What does "average" mean?
- What do the SAILS data reveal?
- What are the implications for Auburn's undergraduate curriculum???

Library's Instruction Committee begins to analyze data.

In which skills sets are Auburn students strong? Weak?

Which questions do students find most difficult to answer? Easiest to answer?

What are the basic research skills on which we can all agree?

Implications for library instruction and desk reference

Creation of "The Essentials"
Adopted by Reference & Library Teaching Faculty

Life Saving Support



Data shared with university constituencies

Dean of Libraries shared assessment and findings with Provost and Deans

Findings presented to university's Core Curriculum Oversight Committee. The committee adopted information literacy as one of the goals of an undergraduate education at Auburn.

"Students will be able to gather, synthesize and interpret information in accordance with contemporary scholarly standards."

Committee then adopted ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards as information literacy standards for all core classes.

SAILS assessment data, along with anecdotal evidence at the department level, prompts English Department to revise Composition Program.

The composition curriculum will incorporate a 'scaffolding' approach to both writing and information literacy.

Assignments will be designed in collaboration with library teaching faculty.

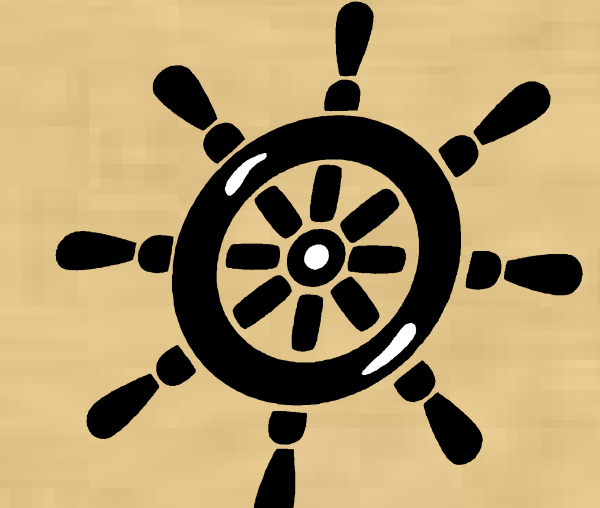
Information literacy learning outcomes will be written for all writing assignments.

Revised composition program will require at least three library instruction sessions.

Each library session will build on previous sessions.

- Continue to collaborate with English Composition program and use as model for other core courses.
- Continue to assess and improve library instruction.
- Offer faculty seminars on information literacy and creating effective library assignments.
- Target graduate teaching assistants and offer workshops on information literacy and library use.
- Host teaching and faculty development workshops across the university.
- Continue with campus-wide assessment of information literacy skills.

Steering the Course



"The Essentials"

Finding Help (Appropriate Service Points)

- Location of the Reference Desk
- Contacting the Reference Desk

Finding Articles

- Focusing Topic (Thesis Statement)
- Selecting Keywords (Subject headings/descriptors)
- Combining Keywords
- Phrase Searching
- Refining Searches
- Reading a Journal Citation
- Finding Journal in Catalog

Types of Sources

- Dialogue with Instructors
- definition of "scholarly"
- clarification of "no internet sources"
- Defining / Demonstrating Types of Sources

Finding Books

- Selecting Keywords
- Combining Keywords
- Phrase Searching
- LC Subject Headings
- Table of Contents

Citations

- Identifying different types of citations (journal, book, newspaper, etc.)
- Locating style manuals

Catching the Wave



Data shared with university constituencies

Subject Liaisons shared abridged SAILS report and findings with academic departments.

Liberal Arts, most notably English and History, concurred with results and expressed willingness to work collaboratively to increase students' information literacy skills.

Sailing into the Future



Success of information literacy initiatives creates concerns regarding staffing, classroom logistics, faculty development and administrative support

Some departments unwilling to accept data

- Results do not apply to "their" majors
- Dispute individual test questions and survey methodology

Some departments unwilling to work collaboratively with library

- Information literacy is library's purview; library responsible for "fixing the problem"
- Students should already have acquired skills in high school; not appropriate for college level instruction

Thar Be Dragons

