Program to Teach Information Literacy Skills to High School Seniors

Carrie Moran
INFO 520
Grant Proposal
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Scotia-Glenville High School Library in Scotia, NY proposes to create a collaborative program to teach high school seniors information literacy skills. Information literacy skills are essential because they equip us to know when we need more information and how to find that information in an increasingly complex world. Library and information science professionals are in the best position to teach information literacy to students. The Scotia-Glenville High School library media specialist will work with a high school teacher to assign a research project to seniors which will teach the students information literacy skills. Over the course of this project students will take part in three periods of library instruction, and have the opportunity to do research in the University at Albany’s academic library. The library seeks one year of funding of $5,610 for the project from July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011.

SETTING

The Scotia-Glenville High School Library Community

The Scotia-Glenville High School Library serves the 1000+ students, teachers and administrators who are members of the Scotia-Glenville Central School District. The Scotia-Glenville Central School District incorporates the Town of Glenville and the Village of Scotia. This area contains approximately 30,000 residents in Schenectady County, NY. The Scotia-Glenville Central School District was centralized in 1950, and the current high school building was constructed from 1953-1955. There are eight higher education institutions within 30 minutes of the high school, and Schenectady County is home to General Electric, one of the world’s largest companies.

The Scotia-Glenville High School Library

The Scotia-Glenville High School Library is staffed by a Library Media Specialist who
holds a BS in Education and a Masters of Library Science, a Teaching Assistant with 5 years experience, and a District Library Clerk with 27 years of experience. The library's collection holds approximately 10,000 books, and has 36 computers with Internet access. The library holds subscriptions to EBSCO, Gale Cengage and ProQuest Platinum, providing access to approximately 30 databases. The library has access to an additional 50 e-books.

The Scotia-Glenville High School Students

The current 2009-2010 enrollment has 932 students attending the senior high school. The 2009 graduating class was granted 222 diplomas, with over 90% of graduating seniors planning on attending an institution of higher education. Scotia-Glenville High School offers six Honors level classes and ten AP classes to students. The mission statement of the Scotia-Glenville Central School District states that it is “committed to providing an environment which allows students to realize their full potential and thus prepares them for life in an ever-changing world.” Part of accomplishing this mission is teaching students information literacy skills. These skills will be invaluable to students as they progress through their college educations and move into the job market.

STATEMENT OF NEED

According to the Education Testing Service “many college students lack the information and communication technology (ICT) literacy skills necessary to navigate, evaluate and use information” (Samson, 2010, p. 203). The Association of College & Research Libraries (2010) defines information literacy as the “set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze, and use information.” Julien and Barker (2009) assert that “information literacy skills are as essential as basic reading and writing.” (p. 12) Although these skills are essential, many high school library programs do not address these fundamental information literacy skills. A survey of School
Library Media Specialists found that the skills most likely to be unfamiliar to students included developing a thesis, critically evaluating and comparing information sources, and creating search strategies in a variety of retrieval systems (Islam, 2006, p. 504). This suggests that traditional library instruction in high school is not meeting the information literacy needs of students.

One way to accomplish the goal of increasing information literacy in high school students is through collaboration between teachers, school library media specialists, and academic librarians. Ercegovac’s (2003) review of relevant literature found that “students become information literate when teachers and librarians together guide the students through discipline related projects.” (p. 78) Islam and Murno’s (2006) survey of school library media specialists recommends that “more collaboration needs to occur among content-area teachers, SLMSs, and academic librarians, to help students and teachers see the link between library research skills and college preparedness.” (p. 507) In an ideal world these programs would already exist at every high school library. Unfortunately, budget concerns and staff time constraints make it difficult for a collaboration of this type to occur.

Montiel-Overall’s (2008) qualitative study of teacher and librarian collaboration found that a major barrier to collaboration was participants being overloaded with work during the school day, leaving them to do any collaboration outside of working hours (p. 153). This same study found that the librarian was generally the catalyst for beginning a collaborative effort within a school, and that teachers drew on the expertise of the librarians throughout these projects (p. 153). A study of academic library use by undergraduates’ finding that one of the strongest predictors of academic library use is high school library use “indicates the importance of assisting undergraduates to develop their library skills during secondary school” (Whitmere,
It is clear that information literacy skills are essential to high school students as they transition to their adult lives, and high school librarians must provide a vehicle for these skills to be taught in a collaborative and comprehensive way.

**PROPOSED PROGRAM**

The Scotia-Glenville High School Library proposes to create a collaborative program to teach high school students information literacy skills. The library media specialist will work with a high school teacher to create a research project for the Participation in Government class that all seniors must complete as a graduation requirement. The library media specialist and teacher will work with an academic librarian at the nearby University at Albany (UAlbany) to create a field trip for the students to an academic library where they will locate materials for their research projects.

This program will be implemented during the fall and spring semesters of the 2010-2011 school year. Due to concerns about time constraints during the school year, two curriculum days will be scheduled during the summer break for the librarian and teacher to create project materials. One of those curriculum days will include a meeting with an academic librarian from UAlbany to plan the field trips.

**Research Project**

Each student at Scotia-Glenville High School must complete the Participation in Government class during the fall or spring of their senior year. This class focuses on the history of the U.S. Government and the various political movements that have shaped U.S. History. The class also debates issues with current implications such as abortion, gay rights and the Iraq war. This class culminates in a research paper about a political issue and its impact on the U.S. Government. Students are encouraged to use scholarly articles, encyclopedias, books and
newspapers as sources for this project. The scope of this project and its research goals make it an excellent class for library collaboration.

The students in the class will make use of library instruction during three class periods out of the semester. The first class library period will fall within the first month of the semester. The library media specialist will teach students about different types of reference sources, where these sources are found in the high school library, how to create a search strategy, and how to evaluate resources. This will be a primarily librarian-led period that utilizes handouts, computer demonstrations and a tour of the high school library as teaching methods. The second class library period will be approximately one week later, and the students will be given an in-class assignment where they will be asked to locate and evaluate information on the library. This assignment will be graded by the library media specialist and the teacher.

The final library period will occur six weeks before the project is due, and one week before the library field trip. This period will be an unstructured session in the library where students can get help creating their thesis statements, developing a search strategy, and locating sources of information for their research paper. The library media specialist will create a pathfinder located on each library computer that contains links to political science information and UAlbany’s OPAC. This final period will give students an opportunity to apply information literacy skills to their own research in an environment where they have access to a librarian and their teacher.

Field Trip

The student field trip to the UAlbany library will take place approximately one month prior to the due date of the research project. This will give students time to evaluate their research materials and write their final papers. The field trip day will extend for the duration of the regular school day, and will require the hiring of two buses and substitutes for the teacher.
and library media specialist. UAlbany’s library is open to the public, and photocopying/printing cards can be purchased for one dollar. These cards can be loaded with any amount of money. The library media specialist, teacher, and academic librarian will each have one photocopying/printing card for students to utilize.

The academic librarian will reserve a room in the UAlbany library for students to use throughout the day. The academic librarian will present a brief overview of the resources available in the library, and lead the students on a tour of the facility. Students will spend the morning constructing and carrying out searches of the UAlbany collection. There will be a break for lunch where the students will be provided a meal in the UAlbany cafeteria. After the lunch break students will resume their searching and photocopy or print any materials for their projects. The day on the UAlbany campus will teach students information literacy skills and give them an orientation to life on a college campus.

**Evaluation**

The goal of this project is to equip students with the information literacy skills they will need in their adult lives. The assessment of the in-class library assignments can be used to determine if the initial library instruction program is teaching students information literacy skills. A qualitative evaluation and comparison of research projects from students who did and did not complete the information literacy program will be documented. To measure the outcome of this project as a whole, a survey will be created which measures the information literacy skills of students and asks for information about their college experience. This survey will contain questions based on the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (2004). These questions will assess the student’s comfort level accomplishing a variety of information literacy tasks, and ask students to rate their college preparedness. The survey will also ask students to provide their college GPA and general demographic information.
The survey will be mailed to students from the 2010 graduating class during the winter break of the 2010-2011 school year. These students, who did not participate in this research program, will act as a baseline to measure information literacy skills before the implementation of this program. The same survey will be mailed to students from the 2011 graduating class during the winter break of the 2011-2012 school year. A comparison of results from the two surveys will help determine the utility of this program.

**BUDGET**

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| Total                             | $5610 |

**CONCLUSION**

A multitude of research has shown that incoming college freshmen lack basic information literacy skills necessary for success throughout their adult lives. One of the most comprehensive ways in which to teach these skills is through collaboration between school library media specialists, high school teachers, and academic librarians. Our program combines
faculty collaboration with a variety of teaching methods and hands on experience to give students a unique opportunity to develop information literacy skills. It is the responsibility of library and information professionals at every level to ensure that patrons are given the tools they need to successfully navigate the information landscape. This program will ensure that the 2011 graduating class of Scotia-Glenville High School has the opportunity to utilize the skills they need to access, analyze and use information in their adult lives. In addition, the grades and assessment will provide the data needed to demonstrate the importance of providing this necessary skill development to high school students; data that can be utilized for budgetary requests, staffing and resources in the school system.

**APPENDIX ITEMS**

A. Resumes for key project personnel  
B. Research project assignment sheet  
C. In class handouts  
D. In class assignment  
E. ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education  
F. Survey for use in evaluation
REFERENCES


