Georgia International Conference on Information Literacy

Sep 26th, 9:45 AM - 10:45 AM

Justice (through Literacy) for All: Library/English Collaboration and Faculty Development

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Justice *(through Literacy)* for All

Collaboration through a Common Denominator: Riding the Subway to Faculty Development

Mark McBeth, Assoc. Prof./English &
Ellen Sexton, Information Literacy Librarian

John Jay College of Criminal Justice/City University of New York
Virtuous Circle of Literacy & Faculty Involvement

Literacy initiatives drives faculty development which reciprocally leads to literacy initiatives.
• One of 23 publically funded colleges composing the City University of New York.

• 15,000 FTE students. 449 full time faculty, including 15 full-time Library faculty.

• 4 year and masters degrees, with PhD offered through the CUNY Graduate Center. [2 year degrees phased out].

• Degrees awarded: forensic psychology, forensic science, criminal justice & related areas, public administration, political science. New: English, History, Gender Studies, & more new majors evolving . . .

• Midtown Manhattan location. Commuter college primarily, no traditional campus, 2 buildings owned, space rented in 3 others, new building to be completed in 2011.

• All classrooms are technologically “smart” classrooms.

• College currently revising General Education curriculum.

• Librarians have faculty status and sit on Curriculum Committee & College Council.
Information Literacy Policy

Information literacy is not
the sole responsibility of the Library!

Information literacy should be sponsored
and enriched by all disciplines, at all
levels, and at a variety of venues and
occasions.

Following the guidelines of Middle States—
information literacy should be
embedded within and across the
curriculum.
Reading/Writing Policy

Student literacy is **not** the sole responsibility of the English Department!

Student literacy should be sponsored and enriched by all disciplines, at all levels, and at a variety of venues and occasions.

Following the guidelines of Middle States (our accreditation agency) – reading, writing, and critical thinking skills should be embedded within and across the curriculum.
The John Jay Subway Series serves as an alternative to the traditional common reading project. Unlike those enrolled at a sprawling-lawn, residential campus, students at an asphalt-and-cement, commuting college spend normally six to eight hours per week traveling to and from school. For them the subway is a common denominator: it is their means of transportation, their multicultural contact with the city's inhabitants and, maybe most significantly, their reading room. We wanted also to turn it into a scholarly experience for them -- a specifically urban, intellectual journey.

In a joint effort of administrators, faculty, and librarians, this initiative attends to the literacy strategies and rehearsals of the urban undergraduate. It links the hustle-bustle of students’ everyday commute to the academic life of the mind, demonstrating that those two activities are not mutually exclusive.

For the faculty at an urban, commuting college, the contexts of city-living and a non-traditional student body present particular challenges. This presentation offers ways to introduce multi-disciplinary faculty to productive pedagogical approaches that promote students’ reading, writing, and research abilities. The panelists of this presentation discuss the funding, policies, and institutional structures that allowed them to promote their faculty development initiatives.

You can view The John Jay Subway Series at http://johnjay.jjay.cuny.edu/subway.
John Jay Subway Series:  http://johnjay.jjay.cuny.edu/subway

Administrative Strategies/Project Background

The John Jay Subway Series: An (Un)Common Learning Experience accommodates the reading habits of urban commuting students, links their daily know-how to academic goals, and encourages them to rethink what they thought they knew. In other words, this learning initiative uses students’ daily encounters with urban transportation to both expand their knowledge about academic disciplines and to introduce them to advanced reading, writing, and research strategies. The assignments in the subway series ask students to rehearse tasks that they might be given in their regular classrooms. Through these introductory exercises, this literacy initiative seeks to enhance students’ confidence as they begin their academic careers at college.

This literacy initiative has also given writing program faculty and librarians the opportunity to collaborate on faculty development seminars in which full- and part-time professors from multiple disciplines explore new pedagogical strategies of reading, writing, and research.

Vocabulary & Concepts

Academic Behavior                  Literacy Sponsorship
Appreciation                       Literacy Task
Common Reading                     Transition
Common Topic                       Transfer

Before the Presentation Questions

1. Does your institution have a common reading program? If so, describe it.
2. If your institution does not have a common reading program, list the reasons why not.

During the Presentation Questions:

1. How could an alternative program such as the “Subway Series” work at your institution? Explain
2. What single, common topic could address the daily concerns and contexts of your institution’s student body?
3. How might this internet-based, student-generated literacy serve your student writers?

After the Presentation Questions

1. Visit the John Jay College of Criminal Justice Subway Series Site (www.jjay.cuny.edu/subway). Peruse, play, and even plagiarize if you wish.

2. Report comments, ideas, suggestions, and/or critique about the Subway Series or these faculty development seminars to Mark McBeth at JMark.McBeth@yahoo.com and/or Ellen Sexton at esexton@jjay.cuny.edu.
Instruction by librarians

Library provides a variety of not-for-credit instruction and faculty resources:

Drop-in workshops

One-Shot Classes/In-Class Workshops
Freshman-Year Composition Courses (ENG 101)
Research Methods Courses (300-level: psychology, sociology)
Graduate research methods courses

Librarian-faculty tutorials (by request)

Librarian liaisons for specific departments
Classroom faculty are key to reaching students.

Learning about Electronic Information Sources—by College Students and Total Respondents

Other than search engines, how do you learn about electronic information sources? (Select all that apply.)

- Friend
- Links
- Teacher
- News media
- Online news
- Coworker/professional colleague
- Reference from a library Web site
- Librarian
- Promotions/advertising
- Relative
- Instant messaging/online chat
- Blogs

Trusted Sources for Validating Information—by College Students and Total Respondents

Who or what is that trusted source you most typically use?

Respondents selecting “recommendation from a trusted source” in question 725.

- Teacher/Professor: 45% (College Students), 10% (Total Respondents)
- Other Web sites with similar information: 15% (College Students), 17% (Total Respondents)
- Print material: 14% (Total Respondents)
- Expert in the field of interest: 19% (Total Respondents)
- Library materials: 6% (College Students), 5% (Total Respondents)
- Relative: 9% (Total Respondents)
- Friend: 11% (Total Respondents)
- Librarian: 2% (College Students), 2% (Total Respondents)
- Coworker/professional colleague: 11% (Total Respondents)

Faculty Development

Multipronged approach to information literacy faculty development:

- Communication through college wide committees (advocacy, departmental cooperation, campus-wide news access)
- Workshops/seminars (*How do we increase attendance?*)
- One-on-one tutorials (*How do we increase interest?*)

The library relies on post-workshop information exchange amongst faculty -- a multistep flow of information model!
Responsibility for Information Literacy is Seen to be Shared

Librarians conduct workshops in the Center for the Advancement of Teaching (CAT), not the Library, including:

What is info literacy? Wikipedia & beyond. Library databases pdq.

Disciplinary faculty also offer information literacy workshops as part of the same series, including:

Podcasting
Public Administration Information Literacy (by Public Administration Faculty)
The university-wide Coordinated Undergraduate Education (CUE) budget provided funds which were then matched by the college’s Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) budget.

These funds were used for:

- Faculty attendance incentives: stipends & refreshments
- Faculty credit for Writing Intensive Course Certification (see appendix)
- Top Administrative Enthusiasm for Faculty Development
- Evidence of Teaching Enhanced Performance considered in Tenure Process
- Workshop materials: books about teaching, college rhetoric handbooks
- Marketing materials: t-shirts, postcards, bookmarks
- Outside speakers
Informing Sources


Yancey, Kathleen Blake. “Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key.” *College Composition and Communication* 56.2 (2004), 297-328.