An Institutional Ethnography of Information Literacy Instruction: Key Terms, Local/Material Contexts, and Instructional Practice

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Abstract

This essay shares the results of a three-year study on the circulation of information literacy *as a key term in a First-Year Writing (FYW) program at a mid-sized branch campus. Tracing the use of the term* information literacy *as it shape-shifted through sites of instruction, teaching conversations, and other moments in the program was revealing of the material conditions, ruling relations, and standpoints active in the program's classrooms. Findings revealed that instructors negotiated the term as an enactment of quite personal value systems, demonstrating highly individual understandings of the role of FYW in the preparation of student writers as researchers. Instructors and library faculty enacted teaching practices around the term differently in order to manage the material conditions that influenced their everyday relations in classrooms, the library, and across campus. The realization that FYW instructors and library faculty employed the term towards very different ends was a generative moment, providing a data-driven understanding of how our ongoing collaborative conversations might be framed differently.*

As Eileen Schell writes, "One of the most important aspects of research methods and methodologies in rhetoric, composition, and literacy scholarship has been the concerted effort to analyze and assess how writing, rhetoric, and literacy practices have been shaped by material constraints and realities" (123). Teaching practices do not take shape in isolation from their material surroundings. They are the mindful actions of people who are influenced by and invested in local materialities, such as the social relations, available resources, and prevailing value systems within and across campus communities. Understanding the interconnections between mate-

rial realities and teaching practices is particularly important for WPAs, who are frequently called upon to explain how things are happening in classrooms, placement processes, assessment activities, and the many other procedures and pedagogies that organize faculty and student work within writing programs.

This essay explores information literacy instruction at a mid-sized branch campus (MSBC) using the methodological framework of institutional ethnography (IE), a methodology attuned to the material concerns of writing program work. The result of a three-year study of the way the key term *information literacy* shape-shifted in the teaching conversations of a first-year writing program, the data gathered through this project demonstrates what we've long suspected and discussed as WPAs: a yawning gap often exists between what actually happens within a program or a classroom and the professional statements, disciplinary conversations, or ongoing research-based understandings of best practice in the field at large. In the end, on the MSBC campus, the material conditions of the campus community and the local sensibilities of faculty drove the use of the term in FYW courses.

When I arrived at MSBC—a school of 8,000 undergraduates that typically offered around 65 sections of FYW each semester (staffed almost entirely with adjunct labor)—information literacy was already an active term in many of the teaching conversations central to work in FYW. I was puzzled that this term was such a central force in FYW, as the term was not a feature of the outcomes for the FYW courses (a two-course 100-level sequence), which referenced research activities for student writers, calling upon students to "Incorporate and accurately document outside sources using proper documentation format" and to "Select, effectively integrate, and document appropriate resource materials from library databases and print holdings," respectively. Even so, the term information literacy recurred in conversations with instructors, faculty, and administrators (even in the absence of library representatives) and seemed to hold deep, but different, significance for many individuals across the institution. This study brought to light the divergent array of teaching practices umbrella-ed under the term in the FYW program and helped me, as WPA, understand that FYW instructors most often discussed and enacted the term in response to the local/material conditions that informed their individual sense of the program's mission. As the study progressed, I gained important understandings of the complex program I directed and how it responded to the exigencies of our unique institutional contexts.

Louise Phelps once noted that writing programs can have a well-articulated central vision but may still be sites of "tensions and oscillations

between order and chaos" (172) and demonstrate "huge disparities and variations among [teaching] experiments" (173). Likewise, the presence of a key term in program conversations can be deceptive. This study demonstrates that a term such as information literacy may act as a generalizing force, lending an illusory sense of pedagogical connection to national and professional discussions of writing pedagogy, when in fact the teaching practices that it encompasses may be influenced far more dramatically by local constraints, values, and relationships to others on campus. As this study traced how the term shape-shifted in different sites of instruction and a variety of conversations about teaching research, it became clear that national and professional discourses, such as the Association of College and Research Libraries' (ACRL) Information Literacy Standards, the WPA Outcomes Statement, or other current understandings of composition pedagogy (such as teaching for transfer or the rhetorical situation) held less sway over what actually happened in classrooms or library sessions than did an array of highly local, materially-inflected relationships, beliefs, and constraints.

Exploration of a Key Term: The IE Framework and Methods

In this study, I approached the key term *information literacy* as a dynamic problematic or "situated point of entry" (LaFrance and Nicolas 151) into the complex processes of decision-making, spheres of influence, and routine that were the writing program in action. I have written elsewhere with Melissa Nicolas about institutional ethnography (IE), noting that IE asks researchers to uncover the empirical connections between individual practice and the conditions that make a site of study unique. Work with IE reveals how "organizational context invisibly shapes the [professional] practices of a site" (Townsend 179). To that end, I was interested in analyzing how teaching practices in the writing program were mediated by the material realities and social relations of our campus, particularly the constraints of contingent employment status and the impact of our collaboration with the under-resourced campus library.

Qualitative data-collection activities for this project spanned three years and included the survey of adjunct instructors in the program (23 of then 28); observations and notes from collaborative work within the program and with the libraries; a review of relevant documents (assignments, handouts, library resources, and readings); and a series of focus groups (four total groups with three to five participants in each) and one-on-one interviews (fifteen total) with FYW instructors and faculty in the disciplines. In surveys, interviews, and focus groups, first-year writing instructors were asked to share basic identifying information (including educational background),

their definitions of the term, whether they invited library staff to work with their classes, as well as any instructional concerns, teaching strategies, and challenges faced when teaching information literacy-related skills. Subsequent interviews and focus groups asked participants to look over summarized results from survey data and comment upon the initial findings, expanding upon their own original answers and the trends represented.

The constraints upon this study are important to note: Because this project began with a concern for how the term circulated exclusively in the FYW program, librarians and a large sample of faculty outside of English were not recruited to participate in the survey, interview, or focus groups. Instead, online source texts produced by library staff and ongoing, public discussions about the FYW/library collaboration provide the primary (textual and observational) data for this study—field-oriented sources of data that have long been valued within the ethnographic tradition.

All responses, observation notes, and textual data were analyzed for emergent patterns (typically, frequency of response), following the grounded theory model (Glaser; Strauss and Corbin). Two heuristics central to the secondary analysis of data were "ruling relations" and standpoint (Smith *Sociology*). Smith describes ruling relations as "that extraordinary yet ordinary complex of relations . . . that connect us across space and time and organize our everyday lives" (Practice 8). Standpoint theory holds that "knowledge is always socially situated" (Harding 7). In the juxtaposition of these terms, IE asks researchers to think about how participants co-construct institutional sites through their daily work. Differences of practice and meaning are always a given in the IE framework; as such, I particularly sought to understand how unique definitions of the term circulated through the many ways of doing, knowing, and being that constituted our program. To ensure the reliability of this study, I triangulated the findings across data collected via participant observation, online survey, interview, focus group, and analysis of documents. As categories of response emerged, initial findings were reassessed and re-developed to attend to the complexities across data sets.

Ruling Relations: National Disciplinary and Professional Tensions

For disciplinary professionals such as WPAs, ruling relations are established norms of professional discourse, organized by the national organizations, statements, standards, noteworthy publications, and subsequent best practices central to the work of particular communities or professional fields. The WPA Outcomes Statement or the ACRL Information Literacy Stan-

dards, for instance, offer educators a sense of the ideals of practice and prevailing sensibilities within their disciplines. As epistemological frameworks, these statements idealize aspects of student learning, endorsing and sanctioning particular types of practice and very specific understandings of work with students and colleagues.

The ACRL established the definition of *information literacy* in 1989 when the organization first indexed the term as a "set of abilities" requiring individuals to "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information" (n. pag.). As they have redeveloped the term over time—for instance, publishing a lengthy list of competencies for information literacy instruction in 2001 and establishing a new framework for understanding how information is created, granted value, and then circulated in 2015—the ACRL has tried to account for the rapidly changing landscape of education, especially as technology has altered the nature of library services and ideals of research practice at large. Twenty-five years after the ACRL's original definition was released, librarians, libraries, and library journals continue to lead in the circulation of the term, often inadvertently reinforcing the campus library as the primary hub for all research activity on campuses.

I will note here that this study took place before the ACRL's revisions to the Information Literacy Standards were made public in 2015 (see Malenfant-IL). With the revision of the information literacy competencies into the new Framework for Information Literacy, collaborations between libraries and writing program has continued, as leaders in the conversation hope to create clearer connections between the ACRL's understandings of information literacy and the ways FYW classes and other writing programs teach research. The ACRL has hosted a series of online workshops about first-year writing program and library collaborations, for instance ["Innovative"]), building upon previous efforts to overcome the difficulties that arise when separate disciplinary communities collaborate (see Maid and D'Angelo or Brady et al.).

Complicating this discussion, the field of Writing Studies has dozens of different critical conversations about what research is and what sorts of instruction students as researchers need, a series of ruling contests that shape pedagogical approaches in quite different ways. From Manning's query in 1961 about whether the research paper was here to stay, to Macrorie's *I-Search* essay that pitched research as a form of inquiry, to Bizup's call to teach research as a rhetorical practice, to Wardle's critique of Composition's reliance on mutt genres including the research paper, to efforts by the Citation Project team to understand source usage (see Jamieson and Howard), there is ample discussion of research even if there is little agree-

ment in the field of Writing Studies about what constitutes research or how students best learn the basic conventions of research. In fact, some recent research efforts around writing transfer put enormous pressure on many of the traditional efforts to teach research in composition classrooms at all (see Downs and Wardle 2007).

A number of sources published in library science venues have treated the resulting structural difficulties of collaboration between libraries and writing programs. D'Angelo and Maid note the frustrations and barriers that complicate library and composition collaborations when faculty in the disciplines oversee curricular developments and librarians are positioned as consultants. These relationships are further complicated by the low prestige granted library faculty—a situation that mirrors the low status or prestige granted contingent faculty who teach writing courses. Likewise, McGuinness and Saunders acknowledge that the campus library conversations about information literacy standards often exclude input from faculty across the curriculum. Mazziotta and Gretano are very clear about the persistence required to find connections between the former ACRL Information Literacy Standards and the WPA Outcomes Statements. These scholarly projects reveal that the concerns, interests, and notions of best practice central to professional conversations about writing program pedagogy and administration may simply be foreign to campus librarians and difficult to implement for contingent faculty.

Standpoint and the Local

Standpoint recognizes the dynamism of individuals as they negotiate the discursive patterns and highly localized realities of writing programs—an awareness particularly important for WPAs, who must rhetorically negotiate the many different investments on a campus. Individuals are always situated within the material, engaging in highly personal association(s) with institutional histories, memories, and patterns. As such, an individual's social alliances, experiences, and sensibilities play a defining role in how that individual negotiates everyday institutional settings such as classrooms, programs, or departments.

Recent research in Writing Studies has shown that local relationships exert enormous force on the pedagogical investments of instructors in FYW programs. Estrem and Reid have shown, for instance, that the primary pedagogical influences for TAs as new teachers are the local peers/other TAs with whom they work most closely in graduate programs. Grettano, Ingalls, and Morse write eloquently about the resistance of faculty they worked with to the WPA Outcomes Statement—entrenched local values were

simply at odds with the value systems embraced by the Outcomes State-ment. Just as tellingly, Brannon and Scott illuminated crucial differences exhibited in approaches to writing assessment between tenure-line faculty and instructors in the same program: tenure-line faculty "established their expertise with their peers through staking out different positions in writing education," while non-tenure-line instructors tended to focus on "the teach-ing they have done for years in this program," and a consensus-based sense of what mattered most in student writing. Surface concerns ultimately mattered most in non-tenure-line conversations—while tenure-line faculty favored rhetorical moves, questions of style, or notions of audience (284). These studies demonstrate the importance for ethnographers who work in institutional locations to account for standpoint. Our thinking about writ-ing and writing instruction may not only be foreign to those we work with across campus; the ideas WPAs embrace may indeed be foreign to people working within the programs we lead.

MSBC's local and material factors persistently shaped conversations about the relationship between information literacy and student writing instruction. MSBC had struggled financially for over a decade due to the consistent decline in state funding. The material conditions of campus were particularly dire: Classrooms and buildings were in disrepair. As enroll-ments had grown, classroom space had not. It was difficult for writing classes to book into the nearly obsolete computer classrooms (which had persistent issues connecting to online resources such as the library web site). Instructors often negotiated the limitations of classrooms and digital tools in very creative ways—using static screen captures of the library's web pages in lieu of real-time online access or putting together extensive step-by-step handouts that described the processes of research. Cutbacks to the library budget had required that many senior library faculty, including those who had previously only worked with upper division students, staff information desks and provide instructional support for FYW courses.

Faculty at all ranks (in and outside of the FYW program) frequently expressed dismay that first-year students were not prepared for college-level writing. These conversations often posed instructors affiliated with the FYW as gatekeepers and interrogators of student work—a role at times embraced by a number of instructors who believed that correctness was the central feature of effective writing. Conversations about student deficien-cies, corresponding with a desire that writing instruction focus on polic-ing student texts, often dampened initiatives to support student writers in other ways. In a meeting with me about FYW and library collaboration, for example, senior library faculty quite vocally asserted that it was the FYW program's job, first and foremost, to teach students "how to write

sentences." These same library faculty steadfastly asserted that first-year students were prepared only for the most basic of search tools available through the library's web site—tools that tended to access popular sources, such as newspapers and magazines, over scholarly journals, trade journals, or other venues for research intended for professional and disciplinary audiences. At the same time, the English library liaison also insistently voiced the desire that "one-shot" sessions become a requirement for all FYW classes. These 50-minute sessions brought FYW classes into one of the library's computer labs. The library faculty who led them typically provided a series of search terms based upon the current assignment in the class, highlighted one or two search tools on the library's web site, and demonstrated the process of finding sources via one or two of those search tools. As the English library liaison confided to me in one of several meetings about our collaborations, these sessions were essential because "We need to keep students from going to the reference desk."

In light of these conversations, it often appeared that the library staff saw their work with the FYW program as a means to prescribe how students should conduct research and access the library and its overwhelmed services. These material conditions dramatically shaped our collaborations, reducing the library's role to discussions about finding the correct sorts of sources over other aspects of information literacy as defined by the ACRL at the time. While the library faculty and instructors involved in the FYW program all valued helping students become more sophisticated users of research tools, we simply did not share a vision for how instruction around research tools might be carried out or teaching a more expansive understanding of information literacy.

Tracing Information Literacy: Disciplinary, Professional, and Personal Relationships

> *Historically at the center of the university's intellectual process, the [MSBC] Library is many things to many people. It is the librarian working with a student in the discovery and evaluation of search methods and knowledge resources. It is the physical building with its collections, it is seating for group study and individual contemplation. It is a virtual space with resources that are accessible at anytime from anywhere.*
>
> —MSBC Library Vision, Values, and Commitment Statement

Three years of IE data gathering—the careful unearthing of ruling relations and exploration of standpoints—were required to map the complicated

interrelationships proliferating through information literacy instruction in the program. The examples in this section show individuals personally negotiating the different ideals of the term in relation to their own investments, professional positions, relationships, and pedagogical leanings within the local landscape. In pointing out the disjunctions I uncovered, my intent is less to identify (good or bad) camps than to reveal how personal differences and local constraints made a significant difference in typical uses of the term and the work it came to actualize.

Overall data reveals that use of the term corresponded with demonstrations of anxiety around the growth of unsanctioned search tools, sources, and research practices. The library—often cited by survey respondents (17 of 23) as the source of the term's popularity on campus—deployed discussions about information literacy in ways that endorsed a prescriptive use of library resources. FYW instructors' responses are less cohesive in this sense but demonstrate unevenness in understanding and application of the term, while also foregrounding the primacy of the library in efforts to discuss, describe, and organize research undertakings. The majority of FYW and library faculty seemed to center on correctness over broader understandings of research, such as how to understand when library-based research was necessary, the sort of evidence needed to persuasively argue a position, evaluate evidence once found, or other elements of academic literacy central to professional statements such as the ACRL standards and the WPA Outcomes.

The "ENL 101 Lib Guide"

The MSBC library website provides resources for student researchers, including lists of area-specific search engines, web pages that offer information or explain key resources, tips and research strategies, and resources for navigating the particularities of the library. The "ENL 101 Lib Guide" supported the library's one-shot sessions for FYW classes (see fig 1), offering a general orientation to the library web page, information on finding books and journal articles, and citation style guides. At the time of this study (the guide has since been removed from the library's web site), the guide included a tab on "Information Literacy," which offered a side bar titled "What is Information Literacy?" The page provided a link to the ACRL website and this definition: "Information Literacy is the set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze, and use information." Readers familiar with the ACRL's 2004 definition of *information literacy*—one of the national ruling relations identified in this study—may recognize the descriptions of the sub-skills listed on this tab, as the guide borrows ACRL's language verbatim and without citation.

Fig. 1. MSBC library ENL. 101 library guide

Each header references one of the skill sets central to ACRL's definition at the time of the study. A few words are also offered to provide further context, offer specific practices, or highlight resources: "An Information Literate person is able to: Recognize and define the need for information . . . Define an information need and choose appropriate resources . . . Search resources effectively and efficiently . . . Evaluate information . . . Use information . . . [and] Cite information correctly." The broad abilities identified by the ACRL are broken into smaller tasks such as "choosing and narrowing a topic," "identifying search terms," "asking a series of questions about the sources located," and "strategically strengthening your arguments." Readers are directed to "key word searches," local resources such as the "online catalog," "books and articles," and the "MLA 7th edition format." The paragraph under "Resources," reads: "Online catalog may have books that talk about interview techniques. A good database for journal articles would be Academic OneFile." The paragraph about "Examples" reads: "keyword search could include 'thin slicing' or 'thin-slicing,' as well as related terms such as 'decision making,' 'snap judgments,' 'first impressions,' or 'rapid cognition.'"

Discussion

The "Lib Guide" demonstrates a number of tensions circulating between the ruling definitions of *information literacy* as a key term in a disciplinary or professional sense and how the term deployed locally to reflect value systems around correctness at work at MSBC. Because the site was designed to be the background for one-shot library sessions with a librarian, there is little explanation of the terms or processes. Even as the guide nods to the broad literacies central to the definition posed by the ACRL, it slips into prescribing student practice via a step-by-step process for researchers to follow. Over all, the focus remains on a rote process of finding sources via the library, with little attention given to the broader aspects of the term.

In referencing the ACRL, the guide draws on the professional organization as a source of legitimation for particular types of research practice, centering the campus library as the key source for the information literate individual. This focus situates library faculty as the stewards of research and reinforces the library itself as the site that sanctions effective research. While the guide does make direct reference to a portion of the FYW curriculum ("thin slicing" from *Blink,* the summer reading), it reduces "sources" to "books and articles" and reifies the MLA sourcebook as the primary source for citation practice. These moves reinforce notions of correctness as central to the research activities of FYW students.

FYW Instructor Definitions, Discussions of Practice

Another set of tensions became clearer as I began to analyze how instructors described *information literacy*. The survey and interview scripts asked participants to describe their most recent educational experiences, whether they scheduled one-shot sessions with the library faculty in their FYW courses, how well library collaborations worked in their courses, and to describe their challenges and teaching strategies as instructors. These questions allowed me to triangulate participant's affinities across different types of responses.

FYW instructors who indicated in survey, interview, and focus group responses that they worked closely with the library staff (17 of 23) tended to foreground a series of rules about conducting research and rote approaches to student research practice. These instructors often discussed information literacy in light of how their students failed to meet their expectations. For example, an instructor who responded very positively to the question "How would you characterize the library's support services for your work with students around information literacy?" also noted in a later response about the challenges of information literacy instruction: "The library is helpful—Wikipedia not so much!"

On the other hand, FYW instructors who did not indicate a close working relationship with the library faculty tended to indicate that they held broader ideas about research activities. These individuals often indicated on survey and interview responses that they had recent experiences in graduate school or continuing education practicums (6 of 23). They tended to discuss information literacy in relation to an array of possible practices and literacies, including research methods not associated with the library: ethnographic observation, cultural critique, strategic reading, and/or exploration of the strengths and limitations of tools such as Google. Their concern was for the effective support of student research as a form of critical inquiry and problem solving, over particular uses of the library and preferred tools.

Overall, survey, interview, and focus group findings revealed that the majority of FYW instructors (17 of 23) conceived of information literacy as a fixed, arhetorical need to find sources. These same instructors indicated that they privileged library-based research practices, particularly use of the library's search tools to find scholarly or peer-reviewed sources for use in student writing. But, most significantly, this tendency to reduce the term to searching for certain types of pre-approved sources was overwhelmingly true for those individuals who identified that they learned about the term from the campus library (13 of 23). We can see an immediate echo between the "Lib Guide" definition above and the following interview response, for instance:

> Participant 6: Usually when I break it down for students, I say 'It's steps.' Being able to understand the directions, what you're being asked to look for. Being able to find the resources that you need to find that information. Being able to gather that information. Being able to process that information. So it's a step-by-step process.

This indicated to me the degree to which many FYW faculty embraced prescriptive understandings of research practice in their writing classes, an approach shared and encouraged by library faculty, as I have discussed above.

Interestingly, several FYW instructors from this same grouping (13 of 23) tended to exhibit quite a bit of anxiety around the reliability of general online sources, students' information-seeking behaviors, the ability of students to evaluate texts for credibility, avoid plagiarism, and adhere to correctness in citation/documentation of sources. Members of this group of instructors noted that they spent a good amount of time teaching citation practices in their classes (10 of 23). One respondent noted, for instance, "We go over the styles extensively and yet [students] are still confused. It is

frustrating for me." Another described his/her challenges in teaching information literacy simply as, "Citations, citations, citations."

Another small group of faculty (7 of 23) noted that their discussions of information literacy were most focused on dissuading plagiarism. These instructors tended to voice distaste toward commonly bemoaned student research behaviors, particularly the use of widely available online research tools. Google and/or Wikipedia were frequent targets for casual vehemence, and a number of responses persistently pitted the library's resources against Internet-based resources, noting, for instance:

> I recognize that most students will rely on Google whenever possible . . .

> [I]nformation literacy includes the ability to use technology and databases to find and use relevant information of high quality (not Wikipedia, Google, *National Enquirer*, bozos-r-us.com).

Moreover, members of this group of respondents also tended to characterize students as underprepared, often resistant to learning, or simply uninterested in more sanctioned forms of research. An example:

> [Students] just want to Google crap and then comment poach it in and call it good. They are not interested in learning about their topics (even when they choose them). They simply want to get the paper written as fast as possible.

References to student information seeking behaviors among this group of instructors are almost entirely negative, characterizing their students as disinterested, even lazy, researchers. "IT'S BORING and students don't connect what they do on one paper to the larger academic community," one instructor noted. Another shared that "Students do not critically evaluate the credibility of sources. They often do not ask good research-based questions despite prodding. Usually they are content to 'dump' information at me, not worrying about synthesizing or analyzing it."

In contrast, instructors who were more likely to challenge definitions of *information literacy* received from library-related sources (6 of 23) often worked to expand the range of practices available to them as teachers. Consider the following responses about information literacy instruction:

> Participant 7: I think many students feel that they are very information literate because they know how to do a Google search. So my goal is to get them beyond a simple Google search and getting them to see that there are better ways to search for information. And that includes using Google.

Participant 9: When I hear other people talk about the term, I hear them talking about going to the library and looking things up. It isn't about the process of inquiry. It isn't about the process of evaluating sources—reflecting on why we use sources.

Participant 2: Restrictions on types of sources students can use in their papers just seem to end up being counterproductive. Some sources are reliable or relevant or strong, but students have found them on their own—they haven't gone through the library's databases.

Participant 4: A lot of what will be happening in this research process is that my students will be gathering general information about their communities. And specific information about one community. . . and that will lead me outside of the typical realm of academic research. So I guess the question that comes up for me is what is academic research? What is it not?

Discussion

The responses of faculty instructors in the FYW revealed the complexity and constraints of our local conditions. All faculty in FYW aligned their teaching practices with personal beliefs, but for many faculty, the primary belief driving their teaching of information literacy was that correctness mattered most. These beliefs often closely reproduced broader campus values for instilling correctness into student behavior and work. Others aligned their teaching practices as a reflection of personal experiences and beliefs gained from graduate studies or continuing education programs.

Understanding the quite different standpoints of FYW instructors as a reflection of the everyday material realities that instructors negotiated allowed me to also understand how FYW instructors were approaching information literacy instruction in their classes. Performing different allegiances to personal ideals in their teaching was perhaps one means by which instructors managed the unwieldy nature of teaching research— some simplified the nature of research in their classes while a smaller subset presented research endeavors as a rhetorical and problem-solving enterprise. In most cases, as this data reveals, personal beliefs (especially around correctness and sanctioning particular types of activities over others) and relationships on campus were a far more pressing concern than reflecting the broader values demonstrated by statements like the WPA Outcomes or notions of *information literacy* central to the ACRL Standards.

Conclusion: A Data-Driven Local Picture

The findings of this study are particularly timely in light of the ACRL's redefinition of *information literacy* and subsequent possibilities for renewed collaborations between writing programs and library faculty. This study lends insights into the sorts of beliefs and related practices some WPAs may encounter as they discuss the revised framework with colleagues on their campuses and in their programs. The divergences I uncovered in the course of this study enabled me to understand far more strategically where to begin conversations I hoped to foster via professional development and how to more strategically target information literacy instruction in the FYW program I then directed.

WPAs benefit from this sort of inquiry into the key terms of the programs they lead. The study of how teaching is shaped in relation to site-specific materialities, such as social relations, beliefs, and other constraints allows us to understand the many different—highly personal, always locally inflected, and materially mediated—ways the people that we work with make decisions and teach within a program. Our local conditions have extraordinary power to overwrite, refuse, ignore, or resist the professional discourses that shape the broader field. Because a key term, like *information literacy*, indexes so many different cross-institutional concerns, its use may easily become a site of local contest. Librarians and FYW faculty alike may willingly embrace a key term to demonstrate their desire to serve students and a campus community but may do so in ways that diverge from the pedagogical currents of national statements and more recent research-driven findings about effective practice. A deeper understanding and appreciation of what is happening within a program and across a campus may emerge from the process of study of these differences.

As WPA, this study enabled me to take a few informed steps toward shaping the conversation about information literacy in our program to be more reflective of ongoing national conversations:

1. I worked closely with a FYW instructor who shared my interest in offering new models for the one-shot library sessions. We developed a new session that highlighted the rhetorical and disciplinarily-inflected nature of the search for information, building on the work some FYW instructors were already doing. This session asked students to read a scholarly essay in their chosen field or major (selecting an example from a collection of essays provided by the FYW instructor). The library faculty was then asked to offer a shorter session that supported students in first critically evaluating and then finding two of the sources listed in the bibliography

of the essay they had read. Our hope with this new model was to demonstrate that different types of writing tasks would require different approaches to finding and evaluating sources.

2. I worked with this same FYW faculty member to develop a series of online, reusable learning tools that focused on practical concerns around the use of Google and Wikipedia in writing classes. (If we could not dissuade students from thinking of these tools as the go-to sites for research—or instructors from feeling anxiety about the tools—we could still have a conversation about what these tools did and did not enable us to do as researchers.) Instructors could ask students to view and reflect upon these videos inside or outside of classes.

3. I also asked the FYW instructors who had been excited by the ideas we were discussing in our interviews and focus groups to help me put together a series of workshops for their colleagues in FYW about information literacy. To complement other curricular revisions, we compiled and circulated several different models of FYW assignments that reimagined the nature of research projects.

The realization that FYW instructors and the library faculty employed the term *information literacy* to enact sometimes quite personal values and to reflect different experiences of the material realities of our campus was a generative moment for me as a WPA. Understanding more about the overlapping and competing forces at work when we used the term helped me to consider more than just problems we were facing; it required me to think through the degree to which individual teaching practices were often the responsive products of local sensibilities and undeniable materialities beyond my control. Approaching the program as a site of proliferation and difference also informed my understandings about what we valued in common, what aspects of institutional mission we might also share, and how these mutual investments informed what we actually did in our classrooms.

Work with institutional ethnography may provide WPAs in other settings with equally useful and data-driven insights into perpetually thorny administrative questions and issues. WPAs who are more attuned to the many different value systems and material realities at work within programs, who better understand how personal value systems shape classroom practice in understandable ways, are more effectively situated to support those in their programs in their everyday work, to usher in new curricular direction as necessary, and to respond to the actual conditions that subtend classroom practice.

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