Good things come in small packages: Reimagining IL instruction in the first-year seminar
Today’s plan

• What is a first-year seminar (FYS)?
• Librarian involvement in the FYS
• Context: Dal FASS FYS
• What I did
• Final thoughts
What is a first-year seminar anyway?

- Two main types (with variations):
  - First-Year Experience Seminar
  - Topic-centred or Thematic Seminars

- Why?
  - Positive impact on retention
  - Increases student use of services/activities
  - Promotes academic socialization
Librarian involvement in the FYS

- John N. Gardner
  - Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education


The First-Year Experience and Academic Libraries: A Select, Annotated Bibliography:
[http://www.ala.org/acrl/aboutacrl/directoryofleadership/sections/is/iswebsite/projpubs/tmcfyebib](http://www.ala.org/acrl/aboutacrl/directoryofleadership/sections/is/iswebsite/projpubs/tmcfyebib)
Selected initiatives

• Baker, 2006
  – Longitudinal view of FYE instruction program
• Braquet & Westfall, 2011
  – Librarians teaching topic-centred FYS
• Filgo, 2012
  – Embedded Twitter librarian
• Philips & Case, 2013
  – Developed 9 IL enrichment modules based on the academic research process
Selected findings & observations

• Boff & Johnson, 2002, nationwide survey (US)
  – 86% of FYE curricula contained library component
  – 81% librarians involved with curriculum development;
    84% librarians involved with teaching

• Borrelli & Johnson, 2012
  – Stronger collaborative ties in the FYS resulted in greatest
    improvement in measured outcomes

• Philips & Case, 2013
  – Completion of IL modules can decrease students’ confidence
Selected findings & observations 2

• Baker, 2006
  – Focus on what is important and relevant (or, “the scavenger hunt was fun, but how will it help with research?”)
  – Research is a hard sell for first year students; future need is not enough

• Stamatoplos, 2000
  – FYS as a site for experimentation

• Lindsay, 2003
  – “all of their experiences in GenEd 104 foster information literacy”
Context: Dal FASS FYS

• Dalhousie, FASS, retention
• Two-semester FYS pilot
• Criteria for a successful FYS:
  – Helps students excel academically
  – Provides students with core competencies promoting lifelong learning
FYS goals

- Interactive discussion
- Small sections
- Students from across FASS programs
- First-year students only
- Quantitative assessment over 4 years
Fall 2013 offerings:

• The Celtic World
• Freedom
• Friend, Neighbor, Stranger, Self: The Political Significance of Personal Relationships
• Latin America Through the Lens of Hip Hop
• The Performer in Society
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Opportunities

• Connect better with faculty
• Get to know first-year students
• Experiment

muppet.wikia.com
Initial approaches

- Meetings with professors
- Contact info (“Your librarian”) added to course syllabi
- LibGuide pages
- Scheduled 5-minute introduction in each section
The Performer in Society

- Opportunity to talk about IL concepts

Jean-Louis Forain [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons
The Performer in Society

First session

• IL concepts
  – Different information sources and purposes
  – Research is iterative & about discovery

• Modelling the research process
  – Googling without shame

Second session

• Worked with the professor to address gaps
  – Scholarly vs. popular sources
  – Evaluating sources for relevance
  – Integrating sources – having a conversation
Freedom

- Intersection between seminar topic and information literacy
- New exercise for in-text citations

http://www.gurusfeet.com/files/blogpics/repeatafterme.jpg
Freedom & Online Privacy

- Assigned readings and facilitated 80-minute seminar discussion
- Established connection between information and the library
- Active learning/Jigsawing during seminar session
Freedom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research session</th>
<th>Citation session</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Designed annotated bibliography assignment</td>
<td>• Citation exercise: Rob Ford &amp; Selfies meet APA style</td>
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<td>• Created authentic activity for IL session</td>
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FULL NAME:

WRITE A COUPLE OF SENTENCES ABOUT THE TOPIC PROVIDED:

PARAPHRASE THE ABOVE STATEMENT (PUT IT IN YOUR OWN WORDS)
Feedback

• Students liked knowing I was there
• Students liked being pointed to new resources
• They might have welcomed a trip to the library... and perhaps some more database demos
• Thought I “taught pretty dry material in the most interesting possible way”
Final thoughts

• Information literacy straddles the academic/intellectual and the practical
• Connection with faculty is essential
• There might be a fit between IL and the seminar topic
• Librarians can provide insight into the academic preparedness of first-year students
• The annotated bibliography is a good assignment!
• The first-year seminar is a laboratory
• Instruction should remain as relevant as possible


Sanabria, J.E. (2013). The library as an academic partner in student retention and graduation: The library’s collaboration with the freshman year seminar initiative at the Bronx Community College. *Collaborative Librarianship, 5*(2), 94-100.

Thank you!

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