



Information literacy for design & merchandising students:  
Exploring the process with information specialists

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As many programs in higher education across the country are implementing means of assessment to demonstrate value, the Department of Apparel Merchandising and Interior Design at Indiana University was asked to articulate departmental program goals, detailed by learning outcomes that could be used to assess students' achievement of those goals. Our three departmental areas of merchandising, fashion design and interior design came together in an attempt to define and develop our common goals and learning outcomes, mindful of avoiding the trap of diluting our programs in the effort to articulate commonality. Our first program goal and key skill that emerged during the process was the ability of students to be information literate. Information literacy involves using information critically in various contexts for specific purposes, extending beyond use of library resources.

In discussion with faculty and librarians, we found there are many assumptions that contribute to unclear understandings of student information literacy capabilities. It is typical for faculty to invite librarians or information specialists into their courses to deliver targeted lectures but then rely on the students to independently navigate disciplinary use of information. Because information literacy emerged as a program goal, we looked to work across disciplines and with librarians to understand how to embed information literacy more deeply within our programs and throughout our classes. We began with a framework supported by Indiana University libraries that defines information literacy as a process of the use of inquiry, evaluation, knowledge creation, and conversation. In use of this framework, we saw that information literacy provides a basis for achieving many of the other program goals.

We will review our interdisciplinary process for rethinking and assessing students' information literacy. In the design and merchandising disciplines information comes in many forms, from visual and perceptual to textual and numeric, and is studied using many different quantitative and qualitative methods. How do we use information literacy to help us understand how we teach and assess our discipline? In a multi-year process, our three departmental areas, in conjunction with both librarians and assessment specialists, developed information literacy goals, tiered learning outcomes, and assignments for both design and merchandising programs.

This presentation shares our ideal process stages, best practices and suggestions, and how we are beginning to apply what we have developed. Beginning from a large brainstorming list of what we dreamed students would be able to think and do, we negotiated and summarized information literacy outcomes into broad categories. These categories include assessment of how students prepare for, access, evaluate, use, attribute and communicate information. Three librarians and assessment specialists facilitated our discussions, helped us make comparisons to other disciplines, which further informed how our program needs are unique. We will demonstrate the application of an information literacy tiered learning structure to multiple disciplines, through assignments that assess outcomes in both design and merchandising introduction and senior level courses. This presentation will show an innovative, interdisciplinary approach to how information literacy goal setting and outcome assessment, in individual classes or program-wide, can provide measurements of the ability of students to meet programmatic goals.

#### Works Cited

Indiana University Libraries. Information literacy at IUB. Retrieved from <http://libraries.iub.edu/information-literacy-iub>