

2013

## Info Lit 2.0 or Deja Vu?

Patricia A. Iannuzzi

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, [patricia.iannuzzi@unlv.edu](mailto:patricia.iannuzzi@unlv.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/lib\\_articles](https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/lib_articles)



Part of the [Information Literacy Commons](#)

---

### Repository Citation

Iannuzzi, P. A. (2013). Info Lit 2.0 or Deja Vu?. *Communications in Information Literacy*, 7(2), 1-17.  
[https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/lib\\_articles/436](https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/lib_articles/436)

This Preprint is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Preprint in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Preprint has been accepted for inclusion in Library Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact [digitalscholarship@unlv.edu](mailto:digitalscholarship@unlv.edu).

I appreciate the invitation from Communications in Information Literacy (CIL) to write this essay for, *“The ACRL Information Literacy Standards –Reviewing, Reflecting, Re-envisioning.”* Upon reflection, my thoughts on this topic are better expressed by another title, *“Info lit 2 .0 or Deja Vu?”*

In June 2012 the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards Review Task Force submitted a recommendation that the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (The Standards), adopted in 2000, *“should not be re-approved as they exist today, and should be extensively revised in the near future”* (ACRL, 2012).

It is worth noting that of the eight recommendations in the task force report, seven focus on the articulation of the learning outcomes and the eighth calls for better alignment with the American Association of School Librarians’ *Standards for the 21st Century Learner* (2007).

The original Standards proved influential in 2000 because they had the right focus at the right time. Within the broader context of education reform there was a pressing need for colleges and universities to articulate measurable learning outcomes that extended beyond disciplinary content knowledge. Much has changed in the past 14 years, in some part influenced by the work of information literacy advocates. I believe that the new recommendations are focused on the wrong issues and that the process is flawed by excluding a wide range of education professionals focused on the reform of the assessment of student learning.

If the challenge before the reviewers was to reword, reframe, and rehash the writing of each learning outcome, then the recommendations would suffice. However, I see little to gain from continuing the decades-old battle of “the literacies.” That discussion is a red herring, which leads ACRL and advocates of reform down the path of professional naval gazing at a time when

academic librarians should expand their focus on the challenges of undergraduate and graduate education.

Fourteen years ago, the first task force became embroiled in the debate over semantics, and advocates on all sides lobbied for their favorite phrases from lofty soapboxes. These advocates jockeyed for their favorite slice of the literacy pie: computer literacy; IT literacy; technology literacy, technoliteracy, digital literacy, visual literacy; media literacy; multimedia literacy, textual literacy, new literacies, multiple literacies, 21<sup>st</sup>-century literacy, emotional literacy, civic literacy, health literacy, financial literacy; scientific literacy, ethical literacy, moral literacy, intercultural literacy, multicultural literacy, cultural literacy, international literacy, etc., etc., etc.

Educational literature abounds with authors who are trying to label and make sense of the outcomes associated with the “literacy du jour.” The 2000 Standards provided one of a handful of possible frameworks at a time when campuses struggled mightily with *defining* learning outcomes. The participation of the accreditation associations and the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) helped the original task force to focus on broader learning outcomes that addressed the widespread and enduring consensus of the need to address critical thinking. Ultimately, the task force chose an approach that applied critical thinking in the information environment.

If academic librarians determine that another approach is needed now, that is all well and good, but a new approach should move us forward. I believe we are long past the need to define or redefine information literacy. That concept, thanks in part to the tireless work of our professional colleagues, is recognized and linked to broader national frameworks for defining student learning outcomes.

In the late 1990's, accreditation associations shifted focus from input/output measures to the articulation of student learning outcomes. While many colleges and universities indicated they wanted students who could think critically, write, solve problems, and navigate the technologically complex information environment, few had identified metrics to measure such skills, and fewer knew how these skills and abilities might be integrated and assessed within the disciplines.

Two institutions—Alverno College and Kings College—were frequently cited for their focus on articulated student learning outcomes and developmental assessment plans. These institutions provided one of the first clearly articulated sets of student learning outcomes for skills and abilities to stand alongside content knowledge. Created with the involvement of AAHE and the Middle State Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), the Standards debuted on the national stage at a time when many other campuses sought similar products.

Advocates of information literacy have come a long way. The Standards provided a framework for both campuses and associations to develop their own articulation of needed skills and abilities. By reviewing specific outcomes that resonated with those advocating for critical thinking—problem based learning, inquiry learning, and oral and written communication—the Standards provided a focal point for others to determine their own definitions. In 2013, it is common for institutions to articulate their own sets of learning outcomes, informed by their own unique cultures, disciplinary or otherwise. The Task Force did not create the Standards to be adopted by others, and indeed numerous accreditation associations at that time stated that they do not adopt or endorse learning outcomes. These groups expect each campus to develop its own relevant outcomes.

If I have learned anything in working on this issue, it is that the process of developing standards is important for teaching faculty. Educators need to use language that resonates best with their unique campus culture and values. And it is at *this* level that individuals advocating for linkages to other literacies and learning outcomes can step up to demonstrate those connections, be they through global learning, civic engagement, the importance of affect, or the centrality of student research. This enables learning outcomes to be owned at the course and curriculum level. The Standards simply serve as a framework for campuses to develop their own measurable outcomes.

Over the years, information literacy learning outcomes evolved and were applied and integrated on campuses and in higher education. Thanks to a host of academics, in libraries and beyond, information literacy learning outcomes are now ubiquitous. As a result of the work of Patricia Breivik and the National Forum on Information Literacy (NFIL), information literacy is broadly recognized as a skill for lifelong learning.

Following the release of the Standards in 2000, almost every subsequent education initiative has called for an assessment of learning outcomes, whether labeled as information literacy or critical thinking or communication skills. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U, 2007a) LEAP report, *College Learning for a New Global Century*, identifies information literacy as one of the essential learning outcomes that prepare students for 21st century challenges. It stands alongside other “Intellectual and Practical Skills”, such as oral and written communication, inquiry, and critical thinking. (AAC&U, 2007a)

The recent *Degree Qualifications Profile* (DQP) from the Lumina Foundation recommends a specific list of learning outcomes for all graduates of postsecondary institutions. As described in the report, those outcomes serve collectively as a “qualifications framework” that

“illustrates clearly what students should be expected to know and be able to do once they earn their degrees — at any level.” (Lumina Foundation, 2011) The DQP articulates specific learning outcomes, “that benchmark the associate, bachelor’s and master’s degrees—which constitute the great majority of postsecondary degrees awarded by U.S. colleges and universities—regardless of a student’s field of specialization” (Lumina Foundation, 2011a).

The learning outcomes in the DQP are rife with outcomes that reflect those articulated in the Information Literacy Standards, regardless of the fact that the authors use terms such as “analytic inquiry,” “communication fluency,” and “use of information resources.” (Lumina Foundation, 2007)

The influence of AAC&U is clear in the DQP, and it comes as no surprise when one notes the involvement of AAC&U President Carol Geary Schneider in both efforts. AAC&U was strategically positioned to help advance this national movement to shift to outcomes-based learning, including information literacy. Fourteen years later, information literacy stands alongside oral and written communication, critical thinking, and ethical reasoning as a learning outcome that needs to be integrated with disciplinary content, and embedded into curricula. The DQP is a national framework that defines the learning outcomes – a framework in use by institutions of higher education in 45 of 50 states (National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, 2012).

The DQP is gaining traction across different types of institutions. In its 2012 report, *Reclaiming the American Dream*, the American Association for Community Colleges (AACCC), recommends “incorporating incentives for student performance and progress into student financial aid programs at the federal, state, and local levels and implementing the Degree Qualifications Profile to ensure credentials earned represent real knowledge and skills” (2012).

I agree that academic libraries should collaborate with K-12 colleagues, and I co-chaired the inaugural joint AASL/ACRL Joint Task Force on the Educational Role of Libraries in 1998-2000. I am gratified that the National Governor's Association Common Core Standards now includes information literacy learning outcomes, included in the section on English Language Arts. (National Governor's Association, 2010)

The Common Core is sweeping the nation's school districts. Our work with K-12 should:

- Support this specific learning outcome within the context of the Common Core, even though it is not *labeled* as information literacy;
- Strengthen the recognition for the role of the school media specialist/librarian within their schools;
- Prepare future educators to teach to the suite of information literacy learning outcomes through our work with schools of Education; and
- Develop strategic programming in partnerships with our local schools to prepare students for the transition to our institutions.

Likewise, higher education has also experienced a tremendous evolution in the undergraduate curricula of research universities. The practice of undergraduate research has evolved, in large part due to the seminal work of the Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University and their publication, *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities* (1998). The special one-on-one mentorship model of undergraduate research has expanded to provide broader access to more students and to better prepare all students for research projects. The traditional model of undergraduate research has been a single student mentored by a faculty member outside of the classroom (e.g., in a

laboratory or in the field.) The concept of “inquiry learning” or “research-based learning within the curriculum,” as promoted through the Boyer Report, are now common. With or without the use of the phrase “information literacy,” the learning outcomes of undergraduate research and information literacy are intertwined. One need only browse the publications of the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) to see rapid development of research-based opportunities, in and out of the classroom; these opportunities begin in the first year and continue throughout students’ academic careers (CUR, 2013).

In 2010 AAC&U and CUR partnered to advance their mutually supportive agendas in the *2010 Conference on Creativity, Inquiry, and Discovery: Undergraduate Research In and Across the Disciplines*. However, of the 40 conference breakout sessions, 28 posters, and several keynote presentations with hundreds of participants, there was only one session led by librarians from UNLV and one poster given by librarians from Ferrum College (AAC&U, 2010a).

As a result of the accomplishments in defining national standards, higher education organizations, accreditation associations, campuses, and disciplinary associations now face a different challenge. That challenge is how to embed learning outcomes such as information literacy, critical thinking, and related oral and written communication, in a coherent developmental pathway for student learning so that the outcomes are: 1) introduced, reinforced, and applied to the discipline through integration with disciplinary content; and 2) demonstrated through a culminating experience. Institutions are struggling with the need for both formative and summative assessments—ways to diagnose, intervene with authentic learning activities, and provide strategic, timely, experiential experiences for students—while at the same time meeting the needs for robust program evaluations and institutional data on student success.



The information literacy standards need not be revised; they should evolve into an even broader framework to guide these challenges. They should be clearly linked to the many frameworks and proposals in higher education that now include information literacy. The Standards should demonstrate how learning outcomes can be developmental, mapped within any curriculum to provide a coherent pathway, and integrated with other intellectual skills. Just as the 2000 Standards provided a framework for articulation of learning outcomes for colleges and universities, for disciplinary and regional accreditation associations, and for higher education associations, the new leadership opportunity for the academic library profession is to evolve that framework to offer a new assessment methodology for our institutions.

To provide an example of the current challenge facing higher education, a recent project allowed me to work with the Western Associations of Schools and Colleges (WASC) on their core competencies initiative. WASC, together with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), was one of the first regional accreditation associations to embrace and require evidence of information literacy competencies. This progress can be traced back to the 1990s and the excellent work of the California State University (CSU) system to develop information competency standards. One of the members of the original Standards task force, Donald Farmer (then Vice President for Academic Affairs at Kings College), was also a consultant to WASC. In 2013, the challenge for WASC is to collect evidence to verify that students possess and demonstrate core competencies by the time of their graduation. WASC recently launched a pilot project with a cluster of its member institutions using the DQP (WASC, 2012). WASC also offers retreats for colleges and universities in their region, which are designed to help institutions embed and assess the core competencies of oral and written communication, critical thinking, and information literacy (WASC, 2013).

After 15 years of promoting the expectations of critical thinking, information literacy, oral and written communication, and in spite of the integration of statements about information literacy into mission statements and general education requirements, there is little evidence that the graduates of institutions in the WASC region can demonstrate competency. Colleges and universities in the WASC region are no longer challenged to define information literacy and related learning outcomes, but rather to embed the learning outcomes across the curriculum by introducing them early on and reinforcing the objectives throughout the process. Institutions accredited by WASC are challenged to do the following:

1. Integrate core competencies with disciplinary learning outcomes;
2. Encourage faculty to teach in a way that provides authentic formative assessments for their students;
3. Develop assessments that scale; and
4. Collect program and institutional evidence of student success.

Academic librarians need to be facile with and to help advance an assessment agenda best characterized as assessment *for* learning that is ongoing, diagnostic, and formative; assessment *as* learning that actively involves students in their own assessment; and assessment *of* learning that is a summative assessment at the end of a period of time.

Colleges and universities are looking for the silver bullet: a standardized test for assessing integrated intellectual and practical skills. Those who signed up for the joint project from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASC&U) and the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) are committed to the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) or the Educational Testing Service (ETS) Proficiency Profile (formerly

MAAP). An examination of the questions and/or scoring rubrics used by these tests reveals that this set of standardized tests, broadly used by large public institutions, do not include information literacy. While information literacy overlaps with critical thinking, some definitions of critical thinking—namely reasoning and logic—do not necessarily include information literacy. Therefore, some critical thinking instruments exclude the selection, evaluation, and use of information resources. Where were academic librarians when these initiatives evolved? Where are they now that the instruments are in place?

Instruments designed exclusively to assess information literacy competencies face a host of challenges. For example, despite its name and widespread endorsement from the library community, the Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills( SAILS )does not assess information literacy. SAILS is designed to measure only a portion of the learning outcomes in information literacy; it fails to evaluate those that are more cognitively complex and impossible to measure through its multiple choice method. (Radcliff, 2007) SAILS is, however, a valid and reliable instrument to measure library skills

The iSkills instrument from the Educational Testing Service (ETS) is designed to assess information literacy. The instrument was initially developed in close concert with librarians and mapped to the information literacy standards. iSkills is performance-based, not multiple choice, and it includes interactive tasks that are real time, and scenario-based. iSkills is designed to evaluate critical thinking in the digital environment with scores in seven sections: define, access, evaluate, manage, integrate, create, and communicate (ETS, 2013).

Although iSkills is more useful in terms of measuring information literacy skills, the instrument is expensive and can be difficult to administer, especially when used with large numbers of students. Colleges and universities looking for an easy solution in the form of a standardized test

are more likely to adopt one that is more broadly endorsed and that better integrates critical thinking and communication skills, such as CLA, CAAP, and MAAP. For far too long the library community has gone its own way to develop an information literacy test, rather than to work with developers of these broader instruments to integrate information literacy into their products. The same is true with rubric design. While standardized tests may help institutions with accountability demands from accrediting bodies, and might also be used to diagnose baseline skills to inform intervention, the true assessment of student learning is through direct assessment of their academic work. E-portfolios are gaining in popularity as a preferred method of assessment, although many of the larger institutions struggle with the challenge of scale. Fifteen years ago, the word “rubric” was largely limited to the area of K-12 education. However, in 2007 AAC&U launched its Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) Project and developed a suite of nationally normed VALUE rubrics (AAC&U, 2007b). AAC&U partnered with AASC&U and APLU on a demonstration project to apply those rubrics to meet VSA accountability requirements (VSA, 2012), and in May 2013, those rubrics were included along with standardized tests as meeting the requirements for the Voluntary System of Accountability. In May, the VSA Oversight Board approved an expanded set of instruments for Student Learning Outcomes report on the College Portrait from the three pilot tests—CAAP, CLA and ETS Proficiency Profile – to include the AAC&U VALUE rubrics. Additionally, the reporting options for each for the instruments were expanded to include both values-added and benchmarking (VSA, 2013).

There is not only a VALUE rubric for information literacy, but several of the other rubrics include language that relates to information literacy (e.g., critical thinking; inquiry and analysis; oral communication; written communication) (AAC&U, 2010b). ACRL could partner with others to advance the use and application of rubrics to assess student learning, including

information literacy. And the revision of the Standards should most certainly align with rubrics already in place.

So what do I think ACRL should be doing as next steps to evolve the Standards?

- Work with higher education associations and groups involved in education reform (i.e., AAC&U, APLU, AACC, POD Network, CUR, CHEA and any of the regional accreditation associations, Lumina and Teagle Foundation, and others involved in program assessment).
- Distance itself from technology associations on this issue (these associations often have their own agendas and are challenged to position themselves with faculty on campus).
- Abandon the focus on defining and redefining student learning outcomes, but focus instead on existing national frameworks to clarify how information literacy is included within them.
- Assist others to plan for curriculum mapping by creating developmental models.
- Address issues of assessment through leadership on standardized testing (perhaps a joint project with grant funding).
- Partner to promote already developed, normed, and reliable rubrics that integrate information literacy with related skills and abilities.
- Promote research on the relationship between information literacy and student success.

We cannot afford to return to the debate about literacies and the difference between literacy and fluency. Now that information literacy as a phrase and a concept has become widespread in higher

education standing alongside critical thinking and oral and written communication, we should not go backwards and redefine within a technology framework. If ACRL wants to provide a seat at the table for our information technology colleagues who are less embedded than libraries, then by all means the new task force should proceed along its current path. However, if ACRL wants to support our academic institutions and remain vital partners in meeting the challenges of evolving faculty culture and faculty development, curriculum revision, program evaluation, and assessment of student learning, then they need to rethink who they invite to the table they are creating with this revision. They should be working with faculty groups and administrators involved in learning outcomes assessment of critical thinking, oral and written communication, undergraduate research, and, in general, undergraduate education reform. They should be inviting representatives from higher education associations leading education reform.

Our profession should be deeply involved in the national efforts of AAC&U, DQP, AACC and a host of other higher education initiatives that currently promote information literacy, rather than with the initiatives coming out of distance education, online learning, and our colleagues in instructional technology. Education technology experts, instructional designers, and other professionals involved in online, distance, blended and hybrid learning have a lot in common with librarians. We both recognize the need to partner on course and curriculum design; possess technology as well as pedagogical skills; and struggle to partner with faculty who believe the ownership of the course and the curriculum begins and ends with the instructor.

Successful academic libraries have developed the infrastructure necessary to step into this partnership role, and we should certainly include our instructional technology colleagues. To lead in the national arena, we must be seated at the table with those leading educational reform. One of my professional strategies is to either get a seat at the right table, or to set your own table and invite others to join you. With the next step ahead for the Standards, ACRL is setting an important table right now and I encourage them to invite the right people to join them.

I once heard that the danger of leadership is that first you build something, and then devote your time and energy to defending what you built.

I do not wish to defend the ACRL information Literacy Standards.

I have moved on and so should ACRL.

## References

American Association of Community Colleges. (2012). *Reclaiming the American Dream: Community Colleges and the Nation's Future*. Retrieved July 3, 2013 from <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/21stcenturyreport/21stCenturyReport.pdf>

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2007a). *College Learning for the New Global Century*. Retrieved July 3, 2013 from [http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/GlobalCentury\\_final.pdf](http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/GlobalCentury_final.pdf)

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2007b). VALUE: Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education. *Original VALUE Project Description*. Retrieved July 3, 2013 from [http://www.aacu.org/value/project\\_description.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/value/project_description.cfm)

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2010a). *Creativity, Inquiry, and Discovery: Undergraduate Research In and Across the Disciplines. Conference Highlights*. Retrieved July 3, 2013 from [http://www.aacu.org/meetings/undergraduate\\_research/2010/documents/URProgram.pdf](http://www.aacu.org/meetings/undergraduate_research/2010/documents/URProgram.pdf)

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2010b). VALUE: Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education. *VALUE Rubrics*. Retrieved July 3, 2013 from <http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/index.cfm>



Association of College and Research Libraries. (2012). ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards Review Task Force, *Task Force Recommendations*. Retrieved July 3, 2013 from [http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/standards/ils\\_recomm.pdf](http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/standards/ils_recomm.pdf)

Boyer Commission on Education Undergraduates in the Research University. (1998). *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities*. NY: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (ERIC Document: ED 424840). Retrieved July 3, 2013 from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED424840.pdf>

Council on Undergraduate Research. *Publication listings*. (2013). Retrieved July 3, 2013 from [http://www.cur.org/publications/publication\\_listings/](http://www.cur.org/publications/publication_listings/)

Educational Testing Service. iSkills. (2013). iSkills Assessment Content. Retrieved July 3, 2013 from <http://www.ets.org/iskills/about/content/>

The Lumina Foundation. (2011). Degree Qualifications Profile. Retrieved July 3, 2013 from [http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/The\\_Degree\\_Qualifications\\_Profile.pdf](http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/The_Degree_Qualifications_Profile.pdf)

National Governor's Association. (2010). *Common Core State Standards Initiative. English Language Arts Standards: Writing: Grade 11-12*. Retrieved July 3, 2013 from <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/WHST/11-12>

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. (2012). Degree Qualifications Profile Corner. *A Map of Institutions using the DQP by State*. Retrieved July 3, 2013 from <http://learningoutcomeassessment.org/DQPCorner.html>

Radcliff, C. J., Salem, J.A. Jr., O'Connor, L.G. and Gedeon, J.A. (2007). *Project SAILS Skill Sets for the 2013-2014 Academic Year*. Retrieved July 3, 2013 from <https://www.projectsails.org/SkillSets>

Voluntary System of Accountability. (2012). *Administration and Reporting Guidelines: AAC&U VALUE Rubrics – DEMONSTRATION PROJECT*. Retrieved July 3, 2013 from [https://cp-files.s3.amazonaws.com/32/AAC\\_U\\_VALUE\\_Rubrics\\_Administration\\_Guidelines\\_20121210.pdf](https://cp-files.s3.amazonaws.com/32/AAC_U_VALUE_Rubrics_Administration_Guidelines_20121210.pdf)

Voluntary System of Accountability. (2013). *VSA Update*. Retrieved July 3, 2013 from <http://www.aacu.org/meetings/generaleducation/gened2013/documents/Poster-VSA.pdf>

Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Senior College and University Commission. (2012). *Degree Qualifications Profile*. Retrieved July 3, 2013 from <http://www.wascsenior.org/redesign/dqp>

Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Senior College and University Commission. (2013). *Retreat on Core Competencies: Critical Thinking and Information Literacy*. Retrieved July 3, 2013 from <http://www.wascsenior.org/content/retreat-core-competencies-critical-thinking-and-information-literacy>