

# The Credo IL Strategy Handbook

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From Planning to Assessment:  
*A Guide to Creating a  
Successful IL Program*

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## SECTION 1

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# **Marketing Your IL Program: *Strategies and Resources for a Successful Rollout***

## The Value of IL for Your Users

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Information literacy (IL) is having a moment in the sun—perhaps you’ve noticed?—as politicians, journalists, and the general public decry the growth of disinformation (commonly called “fake news”) and our inability to spot it. While most commenters don’t use the term IL, the problems they notice, such as a failure to understand what makes a reliable source and an unwillingness to seek and consider multiple viewpoints, are tackled by IL instruction. As librarians, we know disinformation is not a new phenomenon; helping students to see the value in others’ perspectives isn’t a novel role for us, either. What is new is the public’s awareness that information can be deceiving and finding a way through the morass is desirable.

IL instruction can help students better discern among reliable and unreliable materials, especially online. A lack of media literacy among students is something Credo’s customers frequently express. Their experiences are backed up by a 2017 *Library Journal* article<sup>1</sup> in which librarian Tim Wojcik, formerly with Mercer Universities in Atlanta, noted that “historically trusted repositories of information, specifically the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*, that even ten years ago weren’t viewed as sources of content with a slant, have now been cast as producers with an agenda.” This poses a problem, because these sources are ones professors expect students to use and your library pays to make available. A bias against scholarly and other vetted sources represents an even bigger problem in students’ lives after college, as they may rely on material that is of low quality or even purposefully false. Professors should be aware that your IL program offers a structured plan for graduating students who know disinformation when they see it, and who understand the importance of being informed.

A need for information literacy is not usually front-of-mind outside of academia, making today’s heightened awareness of disinformation helpful when starting an IL program. If your library already offers IL instruction, you can still seize the day by boosting your offerings to include up-to-the-minute guidance on how to spot disinformation in various media.

It might seem basic, but let’s define here what Credo means when we talk about IL. For us, it’s far from a catchphrase that’s meant to sell products. We view it as a means of encountering the world of information and making it your own; a means to becoming a capable citizen in today’s world. **Information literacy starts with figuring out a problem or a need you are facing is something that can be answered by learning what others have found out and using your fluency in print, digital, and hybrid information gathering to sift through what they say and synthesizing it.** Information rejection is perhaps just as important, and it only starts with being able to push aside unreliable sources. Even after a researcher finds quality material, it’s crucial to figure out which paper, book, website, or other item is best for the project and the audience at hand. In some cases, students also have to figure out how to scan what they find to match the source types specified by their professor. **Being able to efficiently move from the recognition of an information need to finding a thorough, factual answer to that need is information literacy.**

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1 Verma, Henrietta. “Reference as Resistance.” *Library Journal*, November 15, 2017.  
<https://reviews.libraryjournal.com/2017/11/reference/reference-as-resistance-reference-2018/>

## The Value of IL for Your Users

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Of course, the importance of information literacy doesn't end once a student graduates. All work students will undertake after they leave college requires the ability to make sound, informed decisions. These days, there is a great emphasis on data literacy, with everything from decisions about baseball players to political machinations based upon the crunching of vast arrays of metrics and sophisticated accompanying visuals. This emphasis has happily worked its way back to colleges, which are now incorporating data elements more and more into their expectations for students.

It's worth noting what IL is not. Librarians know a solid IL program when they see, but you might need to make the case to your school's administration. Looked at individually, the various skills an information literate student might learn and practice by themselves make them information literate. Being able to use your library's catalog is an essential skill, but it doesn't make you information literate by itself. Similarly, being able to find articles using a library database is just a start and not information literacy. The definition of IL given above—beginning with recognizing a need—starts on purpose before a student ever enters a library or visits a library website. It begins with a habit of mind—noticing an information need and methodically going about meeting the need—and isn't any one skill. The definition also omits librarians on purpose, because we are just one component of an IL program. Students themselves, faculty, and ancillary teachers such as tutors are all part of the world of IL.

Lastly, we must mention the role of an IL program in helping your institution to create graduates who are able to function well in today's information-rich world. GPAs, retention, and other academic benchmarks are important, but ultimately, you are preparing students for life after school, not just trying to get them to the next semester. **Information literacy, especially concerning digital information and media, is essential for today's graduates.**

This handbook is designed to help academic librarians start or improve an IL program. It will look at why such a program is important and beneficial to student outcomes and address every step of creating, implementing, assessing, and fine-tuning the work, by describing how you can:

- **Gauge attitudes towards IL in your school's administration and in the institution's various departments.** In order to take advantage of existing goodwill toward the library and IL instruction, you have to figure out who and where your supporters are and, conversely, who and what may put up roadblocks to your plan
- **Assess current library and institutional IL work.** What efforts are underway (if any), what is working, and what is needed?
- **Assess students' IL knowledge and needs.**
- **Inform yourself about current best practices with regard to IL and curriculum design.**
- **Create a sustainable program designed to grow and to offer scaffolded IL instruction to students throughout the institution.**
- **Market the program to students and faculty.**
- **Assess what works and what doesn't and making changes accordingly.**

## The Value of IL for Your Users

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In addition to referring to Credo-created material such as our Learning Tools, Instruct™ and View™, this handbook will draw heavily upon the expertise of our librarian customers in creating successful IL programs that turn around learning in their schools. You'll hear, for example, from librarians at Pueblo Community College and Arizona University, who have built robust, successful IL programs that are scaffolded throughout their institutions.

This handbook provides additional resources such as links to Credo's free webinars with thought leaders in the IL field and to free IL textbooks that offer an up-to-date, peer-led way of continuing your IL education. Recent, in-depth scholarship will be referenced, and the lengthy appended bibliography will give you plenty of further reading and alert you to ongoing sources of IL guidance. We at Credo hope this handbook will be of use in your work. We welcome your feedback on the handbook and on ways we can help your library become the hub for your institution's IL efforts. Please contact us at [support@credoreference.com](mailto:support@credoreference.com) if you have any questions or comments.

Next is a look at marketing your IL program.

## Library Marketing 101: Promote the Value of your IL Program

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You have a new IL program and you need to get the word out about it. Where do you begin? The great news is that you've already started. Planning the program involved multiple people throughout your institution, so your marketing informally began long before any instruction was available. Along the way, you should have been delivering elevator speeches about how information literacy classes have been shown to increase students' GPAs and the number of successful credit hours they can complete in a year. Now it's time to get the word out to your broader audience that the program is up and running. You've spent time and energy—not to mention funds—on this work, so let others know about it!

Marketing is most effective when you clearly communicate to potential users what you and your resources can do for them. Think of when you're writing a cover letter for a job application. The letter is a marketing document about yourself. You focus on how your skills and experience will help the company, not just what you can do overall or why you need the job.

Library marketing is the library's cover letter. It allows you to tell students, faculty, and others about the materials and services the library has and how those materials and services can help them to teach better or learn more easily. Your communication shouldn't just describe what the library has, nor impart the idea that library use is a good idea generally. It should mention specific benefits to the reader about using the library's materials and services. Positive statistics relating to students at your own institution are best, but before you have those, a 2017 study by the Greater Western Library Alliance<sup>2</sup> provides helpful numbers to include in your marketing efforts. The consortium's survey of 42,000 students in more than 1,700 courses at 12 major research universities includes some heartening news. At the universities studied:

- **Retention:** Retention rates were higher for students whose courses included IL instruction.
- **GPA:** The average first-year GPA for students whose courses included IL instruction was higher than for other students.
- **Credit Hours:** Students who took IL instruction successfully completed 1.8 more credit hours per year than students who did not.

### In Defense of Marketing

Some librarians express ambivalence about marketing, perhaps because it sounds more corporate than scholarly. Consider this though: without marketing your program, your users won't know about the resources and services their tuition and tax dollars pay for. You don't have to call it marketing, but you do have to get the word out.

Start your marketing initiative by thinking about why you created this program, who it will help, and how it will help them.

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<sup>2</sup> Greater Western Library Alliance (2017). "The Impact of Information Literacy Instruction on Student Success: A Multi-Institutional Investigation and Analysis."  
[http://www.arl.org/storage/documents/publications/The\\_Impact\\_of\\_Information\\_Literacy\\_Instruction\\_on\\_Student\\_Success\\_October\\_2017.pdf](http://www.arl.org/storage/documents/publications/The_Impact_of_Information_Literacy_Instruction_on_Student_Success_October_2017.pdf)

## Library Marketing 101: Promote the Value of your IL Program

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### Why Did You Develop Your IL Program?

Take a moment to consider why you created your IL program, and be ready to explain your motivation to others—enthusiasm about a project is contagious, and you can't be enthusiastic if you're unsure of why you're doing the work.

Has the recent emphasis on disinformation made you prioritize information literacy? While “fake news” is sadly nothing new, its growth creates an opening for conversations between librarians and faculty who were less enthusiastic about IL in the past. Describing your concerns about disinformation and your plan to combat it is something those outside the library can identify with.

Perhaps your institution is pushing information literacy as a graduation goal or needs an IL program to satisfy accreditors? While starting an IL program for these reasons might feel like box-checking, institutional pressure provides a chance to get institutional buy-in for your efforts. Contributions to these “outside” goals place library work in front of a larger audience.

Underuse of the library is another reason to start an IL program. You know your library has valuable resources collected with your institution's population in mind. You just need to get students in the door! An IL program can help boost your circulation and student success at the same time.

Whatever your motivation, attach a precise goal to it. This approach is recommended by library marketing expert Terry Kendrick. “The first step in creating any marketing plan is knowing what your ambition is,” noted Kendrick in an *American Libraries* interview<sup>3</sup>. For example, if meeting accreditation requirements is your reason for starting an IL program, outline precisely which of the accreditation agencies' requirements you need the program to meet and by when you will meet them. If better graduation rates are the goal, how many more students need to graduate in order for you to consider your program a success? Where disinformation is a concern, make a goal that student papers will, for example, include a certain percentage of peer-reviewed resources.

### Who Will the Program Help?

While library leadership has its own reasons for starting an IL program, in marketing your work, you'll have to express how IL knowledge will help your community. Promoting a product or service is about telling potential users how it will benefit them personally. Be ready to get out of the library so you can outline the benefits of IL to future as well as current users of your program.

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3 Potter, Ned. “Marketing Your Library: An Interview with Terry Kendrick, Guru of Strategic Marketing in Libraries.” *American Libraries* November 12, 2012.



# Library Marketing 101: Promote the Value of your IL Program

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## Administration

### *Make Your Case*

Explain to your administration information-literate students show better retention rates and other measures of success, which in turn makes the institution successful. This kind of marketing has the benefit of alerting the administration to the library's worth. Without data correlating library activity with carefully watched metrics such as test scores, retention, and graduation rates, the library can appear only as a cost. If you have an office of institutional effectiveness (IE) on campus, partner with them to present your data in the best light and get it into the right hands. The IE office is used to asking the right questions to showcase how student success has been helped by a given initiative or service.

### *Do Your Homework*

If you have to present your data alone, prepare bullet points on the benefits of IL and connect the dots for administrators. Go beyond simply noting that students who take IL instruction show better retention rates. Bring up specific retention issues at your institution, and illustrate how your program will help. You might say something like, "Last semester 5 students dropped out of the engineering program before completing their capstone project. Our new program will help students gain the skills required for this project before beginning their capstone semester; we'll also offer capstone students drop-in time as a further support."

For more on using statistics to demonstrate value, see Credo's blog post  
["Tell Your Library's Story Through Usage Statistics"](#)

### *Add Your Voice*

There's no shortage of committees in academia, and membership in these is a way to market the library's work. When your administration calls for volunteers for academic committees, volunteer yourself or one of your staff. You'll have a voice in creating an IL-friendly school and be able to push your services at the same time.

## Faculty

### *Give Them What They're Asking For*

How often have you heard a faculty member mention that they wish you had that one, perfect resource, or that you could teach their students the ins and outs of citations? If you know a professor wants to implement a certain kind of project next semester, tell them how your IL program can help. For example, if a professor is planning to have students complete an annotated bibliography, say "I heard you're trying an annotated bibliography this semester. Our new IL program can ease your load by teaching students about finding scholarly articles and how to evaluate them. Do you want to set up a time for me to drop into your class?"

## Library Marketing 101: Promote the Value of your IL Program

In Credo's past surveys of faculty, students' inability to evaluate resources (especially online) always topped the list of IL-related frustrations. Effective marketing to faculty should state that IL instruction can help their students better discern reliable from unreliable material. Information literate students produce better research projects and other work, making it easier for faculty to teach course content and avoid an outsize focus on research skills.

### *Correct Common Student Misconceptions*

Show faculty how your IL program can help correct students' misconceptions about research, making their job easier in the long run. A recent study by Lisa Hinchliffe, Allison Rand, and Jillian Collier<sup>4</sup> of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign revealed the 9 most common such misconceptions. Their list is a readymade marketing tool—provide it to faculty as a guide to what your IL program can “cure.” ([See here](#) for a webinar with Lisa Hinchliffe as she discusses this research.)

According to Hinchliffe, Rand, and Collier, first year students:

1. Believe they are supposed to do their research without assistance.
2. Perceive the library as only a place to get books or to study.
3. Believe that research is a linear, uni-directional process.
4. Believe that freely available internet resources are sufficient for academic work.
5. Think Google is a sufficient search tool.
6. Believe that accessibility is an indicator of quality.
7. Believe that they are information literate.
8. Believe that all library sources and discovery tools are credible.
9. Think that every one question has a single answer.

Given faculty turnover and changing course offerings, you can't market your resources to this population too much.

### **Credo's Learning Tools**

Credo's [Instruct](#) and [View](#) products include materials for professors explaining the importance of IL and how the Credo materials can help them in their work. Tell faculty about Credo's standards map, showing which elements of the ACRL Framework, AAC&U VALUE Rubric, etc. are met by which video, and in turn by your IL program. Sending links to these videos is particularly important for online faculty, who may be hard to reach through word of mouth.

4 Hinchliffe, Lisa Janicke, Allison Rand, & Jillian Collier (2018). Predictable Information Literacy Misconceptions of First-Year College Students. *Communications in Information Literacy* 12(1) 2018. <https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/comminfolit/vol12/iss1/2/>

## Library Marketing 101: Promote the Value of your IL Program

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### Students

*What's in it for them?*

First and foremost, make sure to tell students that information literacy can help them:

- **Improve their GPA**
- **Save time writing research papers**
- **Boost their employability**

Real stories of past students who have had success after IL instruction will help make the benefits tangible. Keep the stories short and include clear cause and effect details. For example, your tale could be about a student who was completing a project about criminal justice, learned how to use a related database, and told you how he got a better grade than on previous papers. Another example could be about a student who was thinking of dropping out of school but stayed after she received IL instruction that cut through the jargon and taught her how to find library materials that simplified what was difficult for her in class.

#### *Peer-to-peer Word of Mouth*

Student workers can give a great boost to your marketing efforts. Whether they work in the library or in other academic-assistance areas in the school like the tutoring center, be sure to make student workers aware of your IL program and what it offers. They will likely become ambassadors for your work. Penn State University has a Research Bar that is staffed by well-trained students. Staff noticed that visitors are more likely to seek academic help and advice from a peer than from a librarian because they find the peer less intimidating.

#### *Secondary School IL Instruction*

Partner with local middle and high schools that “feed” your institution to ensure students arrive with a solid foundation of IL skills. This may mean fewer remedial courses will be necessary for your freshmen, saving their families and the school time and money.

One way of doing this is by participating in [Credo's Building Bridges program](#). Through Building Bridges, colleges and universities provide select local high schools with access to Credo's [Source](#) skill-building research platform.

### Parents

#### *Make Information Literacy a Family Affair*

Given today's hands-on parenting and the cost of college compared to years past, higher education is often a family effort. Parents are eager to know what their child is learning and how their hefty tuition payments will help the child find and keep a job.

## Library Marketing 101: Promote the Value of your IL Program

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Reach out to parents via:

- **Parent sessions at orientation**
- **The school newsletter**
- **Flyers posted in high traffic areas** for parents (e.g., the Bursar's office, residence halls on move-in day, etc.)

In your presentation or on your flyer, try swaying parents with information from Project Information Literacy (PIL). A 2017 paper by its founder, Alison Head<sup>5</sup>, noted that employers weren't satisfied with candidates who relied exclusively on Google to meet their information needs. They sought curious and engaged grads who could demonstrate patient and persistent research using multiple sources and formats. Create a chart for parents outlining employers' needs and show how they are met by your IL lessons. Make sure to include the contact information for IL assistance at the library.

### Formal Marketing Efforts

So far we've discussed relatively informal marketing methods that largely target in-house users. In order to keep your program front of mind for users and to reach non-users, you'll need to go further. Large institutions might be lucky enough to have a marketing department to help promote library efforts, but most of you are on your own. The marketing strategies you should undertake depends upon your population and the resources you have available.

### Market Segmentation

Market segmentation means identifying various subsets of your customer base and targeting them separately with information tailored toward their needs. For example, if you want to reach English faculty, choose a place where they can be found—their department's mailing list for example, a departmental meeting, or the noticeboard outside their office area. Don't bombard them with information that's better suited for students or faculty in other subjects; stick to news and resources for English teachers. Links to Credo's View and Instruct can be sent as part of emails so faculty can view a video or tutorial, giving them a taste of what the library has to offer their students. You know the population best, so figure out what will grab their attention and elicit a response.

#### Know Your Segment!

Researching the segment you wish to target will help improve your outreach. Jen Kendall of the University of Alberta found that first-generation students tend to use their public library more than the facility at their school because of the ability to bring children to the public library, parking availability, and other reasons. Cooperative marketing that involves placing materials or giving presentations at your local public library would be an effective way to reach these students (your admissions department will probably thank you for the outreach as well).

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5 Head, A.J. 2017. Posing the million-dollar question: What happens after graduation? *Journal of Information Literacy*, 11(1), pp.80-90.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.11645/11.1.2186>

## Library Marketing 101: Promote the Value of your IL Program

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In each communication, mention only a few things and include an “action item”. In an email to faculty, for example, ask them to contact the library to set up IL lessons or to attend a session in which you’ll address how the library can help with devising IL-rich assignments.

Even if your library has only one newsletter that goes to everyone, or all your marketing is done on your website, you can still engage in segmentation. At the broadest levels, your site could have respective pages for faculty and for students, or you could offer LibGuides targeted toward those populations. You can also get more granular in these broad-audience tools by addressing an article toward online students, for example, or potential users of a particular library database.

Here are some more best practices for your marketing communications:

- **Time your communications for when the relevant segment is available** (In the business world, marketers avoid sending communications on Mondays or Fridays.).
- **Establish regular contact with your various segments** (though not so regular that you’re spamming them).
- **Remember that a resource or service might still be news to them even if you’ve had it for a while.**

### Social Media

Today, your library is expected to maintain an engaging social media presence. Select your platforms based on what resonates with your users and what you want to post. At the moment, Instagram is one of the best places to reach young people, but that may change over time; Take advantage of social apps international students are using including WeChat, KaKao, and Line that have yet to catch on in the United States. While Instagram is largely image driven and less suited for text, Facebook and Twitter work well for textual posts.

Social media posts can be useful as you’re planning your IL progress, allowing you to reach potential users and quickly receive feedback on your plans, as well as communicate progression in your IL program. Don’t forget to let your followers know how you can help them in addition to asking for their opinions and ideas.

Here are a few tips to help you get the most from your social media strategy:

- **Post at regular intervals and stick with it.**
- **Don’t only post about “yourself,” or in this case, about your library.** Mix it up, sometimes offering info about your collections and services, but also sharing other interesting school-related or non-academic topics.
- **Follow your users back, as well as other libraries, librarians, and schools** so that you can get tips on IL instruction and see trends and ideas spreading among patrons and potential patrons.

For a great example of a compelling, informative library Twitter account, see Darien Public Library’s feed, [@darientlibrary](https://twitter.com/darientlibrary).

## Library Marketing 101: Promote the Value of your IL Program

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### Marketing Once the Program is Underway

The elevator speeches you gave while developing your IL program are still useful when the program is underway, only now you can include success stories related to your institution. For example, you're used to telling professors that IL instruction helps students to better complete research papers. Now you might add that ever since Prof. So-and-So's students came to the library, she notices them utilizing a much greater variety of sources and completing better citations.

After an IL interaction, follow up with the faculty member or students involved and ask about outcomes. Use follow-up questions to discern how IL knowledge has affected the student or faculty member personally. For example, if a student mentions they now have a better understanding about how to use databases, ask about what that improvement means for them: Less time per paper? Reduced anxiety about future work? Potential users of a service want to know what's in it for them. Hearing concrete examples can show them how they too might benefit from the service.

The various outlets you used while planning the program—social media, newsletters, speeches at faculty meetings, etc.—should remain in play after your IL program starts. Make sure people all across campus know about your upcoming classes, successes, new initiatives, and more.

Once your IL program has some satisfied customers, ask them to talk up your program. You might even be able to get some users to write about their experiences for your blog, present at new student orientation, or an event where you're pushing your IL services.

**Remember, however you choose to market your IL program, have a measurable goal for the work, tell users how the program can help them, and then do it all over again.**

### Further Reading

- [\*Developing Strategic Marketing Plans that Really Work: A Toolkit for Public Libraries\*](#) by Terry Kendrick: *A must-read book that offers many tips that are appropriate for academic libraries as well as publics.*
- [\*Super Library Marketing\*](#) (blog) by Angela Hursh: *Regularly updated blog offering strategies proven in the business world that can also work for libraries.*
- [\*Embedded Peer Specialists: One Institution's Successful Strategy to Scale Information Literacy Services\*](#) (pdf) by Danielle Salomon, Casey Shapiro, Reed Buck, Annie Pho, and Marc Levis-Fitzgerald: *A paper introducing the Embedded Peer Inquiry Specialist Program at UCLA, a service that combines the academic context of embedded librarianship with the scalability of peer learning services.*

## See Your IL Program Come to Life

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In order to implement an IL program, your curriculum, including assessments, should be in place. You should already know the outcomes planned for your students to achieve, how you will assess when outcomes are achieved, and the lessons you will use to get them there. If these steps seem backwards, that's on purpose! At Credo we recommend a "backwards design" approach to curriculum development. This means starting by deciding upon the outcomes you want for your students and working backwards to plan lessons. For more information on this approach, see Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe's seminal *Instruction by Design*<sup>6</sup> or a brief overview of the method in a Credo blog post, [Using Backwards Design for Authentic Assessment](#).

Your curriculum plan should aim to carry students from having little or no IL knowledge to in-depth IL familiarity, which includes the ability to find, analyze, synthesize, and report upon information related to general education classes as well as specific majors. Many libraries are only able to provide one-shot gen ed sessions due to staff shortages and faculty reluctance. But there's more to figure out—how is the material best spread out and reinforced over the several years of college? Should it be presented online or in-person? Where do subject or embedded librarians come in? The possibilities can be overwhelming, but luckily guidance is available in IL-related journals. Below are ACRL-aligned maps of IL plans used by several successful programs, showing how they spread IL education throughout students' college careers.

### ACRL's Best Practices on IL "Articulation"

In its best practices guidance,<sup>7</sup> ACRL has several recommendations related to structuring an IL curriculum. For an IL program to be effective, they recommend:

- **Competencies are sequential and integrated throughout a student's academic career, progressing in sophistication.**
- **The structure is formalized and widely disseminated.**

This is best done through a method called "scaffolding," which means that each step of the teaching and learning process reinforces (by repetition) and builds upon preceding steps with increasingly complex ideas. For example, an early portion of your IL program might introduce the idea that their work should incorporate the ideas of others. In later sessions, and throughout the students' time in school, they will be reminded, through practice as well as explicitly, that they should include expert ideas in a paper. They will also learn how to find various kinds of sources in which expert ideas can be found, how to choose among those sources, read and analyze them, etc., with each step reiterating key points from previous steps. Scaffolding is a great way to meet accreditation requirements—the library portion of the institution's report can show how students are meeting benchmarks by taking various IL classes that each build upon earlier offerings.

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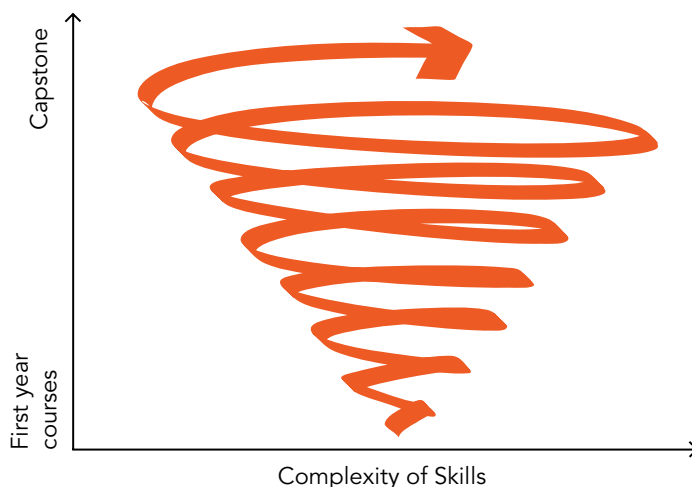
6 Wiggins, Grant, and Jay McTighe. *Understanding by Design*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2004.

7 Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), 2003. Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Characteristics of Programs of Information Literacy that Illustrate Best Practices: A Guideline. Chicago, IL: American Library Association; 2003. [www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/characteristics.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/characteristics.cfm).

## See Your IL Program Come to Life

The following diagram shows how scaffolding works, with the process illustrated as an ever-widening spiral. As time progresses (the vertical axis), the complexity of IL widens (the horizontal axis).

### Articulation of IL: Continuous, Increasing in Complexity<sup>8</sup>



If you are using the ACRL framework or other guidelines that specify understanding rather than the ability to complete specific tasks, start with a foundational expression of each item and reinforce it over time, getting more complex with each “repeat.” Speaking in terms of the ACRL frames, this means that you shouldn’t introduce the frames one by one; rather each frame should be in operation at each stage of a student’s time in school, but expressed in terms of what they are currently working on. For example, with the “Research as Inquiry” frame in mind, over time, students can take the following lessons, which corresponds to the Credo Learning Tools videos shown:

IL Skill	Instruct	Multimedia
Identify information evaluation criteria	Beginner	Video: Evaluating Sources
Use essential information evaluation criteria	Beginner	Tutorial: Evaluating Information
Conduct in-depth evaluation of sources	Beginner/Intermediate	Video: Types of Bias

<sup>8</sup> Illustration is by Credo and inspired by Porter, J.A., Wolbach, K.C., Purzycki, C.B., Bowman, L.A., Agbada, E., & Mostrom, A.M. (2010). Integration of information and scientific literacy: Promoting literacy in undergraduates. *CBE Life Science Education*, 9(3): 536-542. doi: 10.1187/cbe.10-01-0006



## See Your IL Program Come to Life

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With the scaffolding approach, a progressive IL instruction is more effective than one-shot instruction. While librarians are aware of this, faculty and administration may need to be educated as to why it's in the students' best interest to receive progressive IL instruction over time. It is impossible to present all the material that students need to succeed in one lesson, let alone give them concepts they will need further in their education. Remind faculty of what they probably see in their classes; without reinforcement, students' knowledge and skills can drift backwards, especially during long breaks—hence the dreaded “summer slide,” a phenomenon requiring faculty to reinforce last year's learning.

If more formal convincing is needed, see this handbook's section on marketing, which covers statistics on increasing GPA rates and other measures experienced by students who take effective IL instruction. The marketing section also discusses techniques to promote the effectiveness of progressive IL instruction, especially if you're facing opposition to implementing more than a one-shot.

Becoming information literate involves many steps. In order to ensure all students graduating from a program have been exposed to all the necessary ideas and have had a chance to practice the skills involved, you will have to develop a formal plan. The plan (which can be tweaked over time as necessary) should “map” progress from first year to graduation, showing where IL appears in the various tracks a student can take. The expected outcomes must be stated, with milestones noted along the way. ACRL's recommendation of a “formalized” plan means that faculty should have a plan in place to see students when they notice a need, instead of relying on random invitations. It's too haphazard and will likely result in some students and some concepts being missed.

Presenting IL concepts widely imparts on the idea that research and other IL skills are useful in all areas of education. IL instruction is not just for English classes, and it's not just for Freshmen. With backing from administration, you might even be able to go a step further and teach IL skills to faculty—perhaps at first during new-faculty orientation, and later in other situations like course design institutes. You can present it as helping faculty with research for their own publications or teaching them the concepts their students will need.

As well as disseminating your in-person instruction throughout the institution, the wide dissemination recommended by ACRL means providing IL instruction online and in other remote ways such as phone assistance, texting, and Skype. Try to find out what communication method your students prefer and use most often, and don't forget this will likely change over time. Especially if you have online-only students, you will need to provide online IL classes that cover the same skills as your in-person presentations. Remember, too, that faculty who teach online classes may need IL assistance.

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Online instruction can be either synchronous (live) or asynchronous instruction (lessons that students can take in their own time and at their own pace). Research<sup>9</sup> has shown that students—not just those who take online classes—prefer asynchronous instruction. Credo's Learning Tools are ideal for asynchronous instruction as they are designed for students to use alone as well as with a librarian or professor. You can also use services such as LibGuides to present IL tips and strategies students can use when they need help with a particular IL concept outside class.

- ***ACRL also suggests local governance structures to advocate for and ensure institution-wide integration into academic or vocational programs.***

Loosely translated, this means the library needs a seat at the table when curriculum decisions are being made. Try to be included in departmental curriculum meetings and use the “elevator speech” approach to advocate for IL being part of curriculum plans. Come prepared with your statistics as well as specific ideas about how IL instruction can help in the subject being discussed. For example, if you're meeting with science faculty, be prepared to talk about how students can learn to find and interpret traditionally published scientific literature, and open-access and preprint documents, as well as understand what these different publication choices signify. With humanities students, you can discuss how Credo's reference materials or other items can be used to get solid overviews of historical events. In these meetings, make sure faculty are informed about the academic-integrity aspects of IL instruction.

Moving up from departmental meetings, librarians should also be included in the school's curriculum planning committee. If you are invited and, as too often happens, allowed only an observer role, try to give members flyers or other handouts on what the library can offer. If you have Credo's Learning Tools, use these promotional materials:

- [Getting Started with Instruct](#)
- [Instruct Multimedia Aligned with Research Assignment](#)
- [Curriculum Mapping of Instruct Multimedia](#)

People respond well to hearing how a product or service can help them in their work, so try discussing how the library's subscription materials can be used to create up-to-date, affordable-learning textbooks (see “Supporting Affordable Learning Initiatives With Credo”<sup>10</sup> for more on this). Try using your database usage statistics to generate initial interest and following up with your IL-instruction services.

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9 Nevius, A.M., Ettien, A., AHIP, Link, A.P., Sobel, L.Y. (2016). Library instruction in medical education: a survey of current practices in the United States and Canada. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, 106(1). Doi: 10.5195/jmla.2018.374

10 <http://mktg.credoreference.com/affordable-learning-using-credo>

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- **Finally, ACRL specifies programs and courses charged with implementing competencies**

We know the saying, if someone isn't responsible for a task it doesn't get done. Make sure you specify exactly where and when IL instruction will happen, and assign tasks to keep track of different components. Identify where IL skills belong in general education and in programs, with the overall goal of having each student emerge after four years with the same kinds of top-level skills and particular competencies flavored by the major they're taking. For example, each student will know how to complete a research paper, but science students may be familiar with one kind of citation style used in their field and social science students another.

### Information Literacy VALUE Rubric

The ACRL Frames and other guidance that encourage mindsets rather than specific abilities can feel vague. If you don't need to adhere to the ACRL Frames or if you need a more concrete supplement to them, try the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Information Literacy VALUE Rubric<sup>11</sup>. The IL Value Rubric, developed by the organization, illustrates progress from an opening Benchmark of little IL knowledge ("Has difficulty defining the scope of the research question or thesis") through to a Capstone level of IL fluency ("Effectively defines the scope of the research question or thesis"). Remember that the foundational level may correspond with students beyond freshman year, especially where you have transfer students who have not take your IL instruction. Conversely, some first-year students may have prior IL knowledge. Be ready to tweak your classes on the fly so you can meet the needs of students at all knowledge levels of information literacy.

### Start Small!

It's best to start small when it comes to staffing your new IL program and figuring out which classes to offer it to. At first, the librarians who have been most involved in planning the work, as well as the faculty members they've consulted with along the way, are the best teaching candidates. Once this group feels they've developed a solid foundation for growth of the program you can include a wider array of librarians and faculty.

When starting off, it makes sense to concentrate most heavily on Freshmen students' IL needs. Many of the First Year Experience programs that have emerged in recent years are fertile ground for ideas. [The Credo FYE Guide](#)<sup>12</sup> is a free resource that offers tips on all aspects of information literacy instruction for librarians who are teaching IL to freshmen students. The topics help to form a checklist for planning your own rollout of IL services to new students on campus.

IL is still important after first year, of course. In serving sophomores, juniors, and seniors, you'll need to continue IL instruction in Gen Ed classes while including it in classes covering the school's various majors. First, let's look at Gen Ed classes.

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11 [http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org/acrl/files/content/issues/infolit/Framework\\_ILHE.pdf](http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org/acrl/files/content/issues/infolit/Framework_ILHE.pdf)

12 <http://mktg.credoreference.com/credo-fye-guide-section-release>

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### Gen Ed in First Year and Beyond

While each institution is different, below is general guidance on how to impart IL throughout a general education curriculum. For Credo Learning Tools users, the [Curriculum Mapping of Instruct Multimedia chart](#) includes information on which Credo learning object can be used at each step.

If you are fortunate enough to have faculty who want to partner on IL assignments, this [annotated bibliography assignment](#) is a template for a scaffolded Gen Ed assignment completed over several weeks. While the assignment directs students to create an annotated bibliography, its structure can guide the writing of various kinds of IL assignments. The assignment progresses in concrete, measurable steps, with each aligned with a stated IL learning outcome.

### IL Instruction in Discipline Classes

The IL knowledge students learn in first year Gen Ed classes carries over and is reinforced when they choose a major in their second year and have discipline specific assignments. They still need to practice finding, evaluating, and using information. As they work with different kinds of sources and assignments in the style required by that discipline.

The Curriculum Mapping of Instruct Multimedia chart linked above shows a start on integrating IL into classes in students' majors. Given the variety of majors, accreditation requirements, and other local differences, it's impossible to provide a detailed map for how schools overall can approach IL in the disciplines, but helpful guidance is available from several sources.

ACRL's "Information Literacy In the Disciplines"<sup>13</sup> offers links to standards, IL research, and curricula in subjects from dance to political science. Librarians who are designing IL courses for public health students, for example, can find guidance from Arizona State University Library on how to formulate public health research questions, as well as a document from the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health that outlines their vision for public health education.

Remember that instructors even in the fields you're not teaching in can aid in your program. For example, the SMILE course<sup>14</sup>, developed by faculty members from the Departments of Biological Sciences and Information Science at University of the Sciences in Philadelphia, helps biology students become scientifically literate. Looking at it more generally, the program shows how to integrate IL in a two-semester class, and offers steps for foundational literacy in a discipline.

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13 <https://acrl.ala.org/IS/is-committees-2/committees-task-forces/il-in-the-disciplines/information-literacy-in-the-disciplines/>

14 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2995771/>

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Below are the outcomes required by SMILE; It's easy to see how "scientific" can be replaced with other terms and applied to other areas of study.

- **Distinguish** primary from secondary scientific literature
- **Demonstrate** an ability to analyze and evaluate data in a primary, scientific article
- **Critique** the research protocol used by the authors or describe a research protocol to extend the research described in the paper
- **Use IL skills** to access, retrieve, and cite scientific literature
- **Reflect** upon the relevance of IL and scientific literacy skills to their academic career.

Another approach, written in a 2015 paper by Robert Farrell and William Badke<sup>15</sup> describes the "CUNY model" at work in the sociology department of the City University of New York's Lehman College. The authors describe how CUNY embraces a "situated librarianship" IL model. "Situated" sounds like it might be another name for "embedded," but there's a difference. While it does involve librarians working in the classroom to increase student IL knowledge, like the embedded model, in situated librarianship when librarians enter the classroom, they are entering a community of practice that has its own culture. Those native to the culture know best how information is created, expressed, found, and evaluated in it, and the librarian is there to facilitate that work, not to tell practitioners how it should look.

A few important points to consider from Lehman College's work:

- The librarians and sociologists co-designed a series of scaffolded learning opportunities for both required and elective courses, compared to the previous one-shot classes in two sociology courses
- "To ensure that the diverse faculty, both full-time and adjunct, teaching these courses were able to offer similar learning opportunities across courses and sections, the group decided activities would be designed to be content neutral and modular." This would allow faculty to customize the material while still meeting departmental goals
- In conversations with librarians, Lehman's sociology faculty came up with over 150 discipline-specific learning outcomes, a result that the authors feel would have been impossible with an "outside-in" approach (in which librarians transport their IL knowledge into a theoretical "blank slate" classroom)

Farrell and Badke explain that they aren't necessarily advocating libraries drop their current approaches to IL. Rather, they say, librarians must find whatever way they can to give students learning experiences that are authentic to the discipline they're studying and allow them to join respective discipline's community of practice.

If you'd like to learn more about Lehman College's librarians approach with their sociology department, please see this handbook's section on interviewing faculty to determine learning outcomes, in "Setting Your IL Program Up for Success." Whether your college is just dipping its toes in the water and asking for one-shot instruction in general education classes or, at the other end of the scale, has a multi-year plan that includes faculty in scaffolded IL instruction, the library should be poised to lead the way, with your staff and resources central to planning and execution.

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15 [https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1079&context=le\\_pubs](https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1079&context=le_pubs)