INFORMATION LITERACY

Focus Group Report
February 8, 2007

Introduction
The focus group session was held February 8, 2007, 12:00-1:30 p.m. in the President’s Dining room. All five participants were present which included 2 freshmen, 2 sophomores, and one senior. All attendees participated fully in the discussions.

The key objectives were to obtain feedback on what and how much students understood about the library instruction program, how effective it is perceived to be, and to gather suggestions for improvements and enhancements.

It should be noted that the majority of students in the focus group used the library and had participated in Information Literacy instruction/classes.

Questions and Responses:
For your research you are required to use certain resources, instructors tell us that you like to use the internet (Yahoo, Google, etc.) What is your strategy for conducting a literature review or finding research materials? What sites do you use? How do you usually find information?
The majority responded that the internet was their main source of gathering information (Wikipedia, Yahoo, etc.) The respondents had some knowledge of our online catalog and the information that could be accessed using our online databases, but said they still used the internet to research information for their classes.

When you come to the library what kinds of materials do you need help with?
The majority of participants needed help with locating books on the shelf, and using the online databases.

What types of information do you have trouble finding?
Participants stated that the Dewey Decimal Classification System was the system they were familiar with and the Library of congress Classification was challenging for them, which made it difficult to locate the resources needed.

Ideally, what services would satisfy your information needs?
All participants stated tutorials would be useful under limited conditions. They should be short, the longest span 15 minutes, with ten being preferable. Participants offered these reasons why tutorials might be good: they can be used anytime, if the participant lives off campus, and if they are user friendly.

Further comments on tutorials offered by participants:
- Develop them for basic things: how to use the online catalog, how to get started in information searching, quick reference, and maps/floor plans of the library.
- Subject guides
• The length of the tutorials were a definite factor, they should be brief and to the point.
• The length should be indicated at the beginning.

What types of library instruction would be most helpful?
Receiving information tailored to the student specific needs and the course requirements was stated to be two aspects of library instruction that would be most helpful in understanding how to process information and research the correct sources.

What do you feel is the most challenging aspect in looking for information from library resources, or computers?
The participants all agreed that using the various online databases was the most challenging aspect when looking for information from the library resources, or computers.

Are you currently aware of the electronic resources the library owns? How did you find out about resources the library owns?
Most participants were aware of the electronic resources the library owns and found out through the libraries’ IL classes.

Could you please describe the best/worst experience you had while looking for information off of computer or databases?
Locating full text journal articles using the online catalog was the best experience while looking for information off of computer or databases. There were no worst experiences expressed from the group.

Have your abilities to do or understand library research changed since you had library instruction? How? In what way? What was the most useful piece of information provided to you during your library instruction?
The ability to understand library research has changed for most participants since receiving library instructions, they are more aware of what the library has to offer and how to locate information. The most useful piece of information provided was the wealth of information found using the online catalog.

Overall do you feel that library instruction is effective? Explain.
Participants felt that the library instruction was effective, and that they can now access information and resources that the library has to offer. The participants can now locate valuable resources and also perform literature reviews.

Suggestions From Participants
• Have information literacy instructions offered during forum and colloquium courses.
• More publicity
• Make IL mandatory
• Have a floater (library personnel) to help students.
• More flyers/posters advertising resources i.e. tutorials, classes, and types of references.
• In class announcements about resources available to students.
• Use the school paper (the FAMuan) to advertise tutorials
• More up to date books.

**Focus Group Analysis**
Information gathered during the focus group sessions indicated that the IL program is meeting the need of our patrons, and that in general our goals are being met. It was determined that IL needed to promote more of its services and products already offered, continue enhancing electronic access to many of its products and patron services, and explore some new areas not yet offered, as stated in the above suggestions. Most of the information was welcome news and fell in line with the IL strategic plan. Some of the suggestions for exploration had never been considered before, such as in class announcements about resources available to students, and having information literacy instructions offered during forum and colloquium courses.

In all, the data was very informative and helpful in understanding the information needs of our patrons. The IL program will continue to work on addressing the issues raised and to incorporate the new ideas into the current strategic plan.