

# **Connections Between Campuses: Creating a Collaborative OCULA/OSLA Information Literacy Toolkit**

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## **Introduction**

This paper provides an overview and context about the creation and content of the upcoming information literacy (IL) toolkit, for members of the Ontario College and University Library Association (OCULA) and Ontario School Library Association (OSLA), two divisions of the Ontario Library Association (OLA). The IL toolkit aims to be a collaborative document for both divisions to read, add to, and get ideas of how to engage with one another's sectors all towards the common goal of helping high school students build the required research skills that will help them succeed in post-secondary education.

## **Why collaborate?**

Partnerships between secondary and post-secondary school librarians have been an ongoing discussion over the past decades, and there are many examples provided in library literature on successful K-20 collaborations, as outlined in Burhanna (2013) and Courtney (2009). Most of the articles discuss activities occurring in the U.S., however there are some Canadian articles that also touch upon the topic of high school and academic library collaborations, with one dating back to 1991 that references a partnership and community of practice between Waterloo high school, University of Waterloo, and Wilfrid Laurier University librarians (Hendley, 1991).

The collaborations taking place between these two areas of librarianship are usually trying to achieve the same goal – that is, to help bridge the information literacy gap that teachers, librarians, and professors witness, and even students themselves admit to experiencing between the transition from high school to post-secondary studies. Studies conducted in this area continue to uncover that students' research and writing skills may not be at a level expected for when they enter university (Head, 2013), and that they often have trouble evaluating online news sources they come across through social media (Wineburg, McGrew, Breakstone, & Ortega, 2016).

Closer to home, in surveys and studies conducted in Ontario, faculty and librarians at universities note students' "poor research skills", with over 55% surveyed feeling first-year students are less prepared for post-secondary education than in the past (OCUFA, 2009). And on the other side of the classroom, first-year university students in Ontario who were recently asked about their own post-secondary preparedness admitted they did not feel confident with what was defined as basic academic skills (Grayson, Côté, Chen, Kenedy, & Roberts, 2019). In the research category, an overall mean of 21% of first-year students at four Ontario universities noted they felt unconfident or very unconfident with their research skills, with over one-quarter (29%) identifying the subcategories "difficulty in identifying good sources for essays" and "lack of confidence

in other than online search abilities for essays” as the most difficult skills in the research skills area (Grayson et al., 2019, p. 16).

Because this skills gap among students transitioning from high school to post-secondary studies remains prevalent, continued and growing collaboration between library staff on both sides of the academic arena remains both relevant and needed. A recent Project Information Literacy report, entitled *Information Literacy in the Age of Algorithms: Student experiences with news and information, and the need for change* (2020), lists four recommendations in helping students navigate this new information landscape, which exists primarily online now and employs algorithms to make suggestions. Recommendation two states that, “the K-20 student learning experience must be interdisciplinary, holistic, and integrated” (Head, Fister, & MacMillan, 2020, p.30). In focus groups conducted with students for this report, the students described their information literacy and critical thinking teachings through most of their formal education from primary school to post-secondary studies as, “scattered, inadequate, and disconnected” (Head et al., p. 30). The report further suggests that in order for students to have a better understanding of the new information landscape, and all that it entails, including algorithms, big data, artificial intelligence, “this integrative work will require the formation of alliances at the local and national levels” (Head et al., p. 31).

### **Why a toolkit?**

A good place to start for a formal information literacy teaching and learning collaboration is between OCULA and OSLA, who are on either side of students’ research journey through the K-20 space. OCULA’s Spring Conference 2019 focused on building this bridge between the two OLA divisions. To continue the conversation and keep resources and knowledge between the areas shared together, the idea of a collaborative toolkit is proposed. Therefore, members of both divisions will have a better understanding of one another’s IL practices, and know where these gaps are.

The idea of the toolkit came from a similar document jointly created by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) and the American Association of School Libraries (AASL), two divisions of the American Library Association (ALA) (ACRL, 2019). The information and resources within the toolkit are meant to aid, educate, and inspire librarians in both sectors about the potential for collaborative IL programming, resources, and outreach services.

### **Toolkit information (so far)**

The IL toolkit currently contains the following sections, with appropriate links and resources. Listed below is a brief description of the sections.

#### **Outreach ideas for high school teacher-librarians / post-secondary librarians**

- Includes ideas for library staff working in either sector to be inspired by and try themselves. When possible, concrete examples are provided or linked to, so efforts do not need to be duplicated.

**Post-secondary institutions: Things to consider**

- Benefits, challenges, and potential pitfalls for post-secondary institutions to think about before creating any collaborative outreach resources and services with high schools.

**High schools: Things to consider**

- Benefits, challenges, and potential pitfalls for high schools to keep in mind when reaching out to colleges and universities.

**Presentations and professional development**

- Listing of presentations on this topic, with a primary focus on Ontario or Canadian content.

**Information literacy guiding documents**

- Includes information on the ACRL Framework and the OSLA's *Together For Learning* document that guide IL teaching and learning in the post-secondary and high school areas, respectively.

**Post-secondary student preparedness studies**

- Includes links to reports and studies related to post-secondary research skills and preparedness.

**Further readings**

- Includes a bibliography of book chapters and articles on collaborations between high school and university/colleges, with an Ontario, or Canadian focus. A more extensive reading list and references on the topic is included in the ACRL/AASL toolkit, with the link included in this guide.

**Questions or suggestions**

- An online form for readers to suggest additional ideas or readings, as this will be a living toolkit, and updated regularly.

**Feedback requested**

In order to create an IL toolkit that is both useful and informative for both OCULA and OSLA members, your feedback is needed. What would you like to see in the online toolkit? What is missing from the current draft? Please take the time to review what currently exists and fill out this online form with your feedback and opinion. Creating a collaborative IL toolkit is just one piece of the continued and ongoing work to bring together high school and academic library staff to help students succeed in their research journey.

**Links to review**

[OCULA/OSLA information literacy toolkit](#)

[Feedback form](#)

## References

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