President’s Teaching and Learning Scholars Grant Final Report

For the period ending December 2015

Project Title: Enhancing nursing students’ information literacy skills through nursing curriculum: A collaborative project between librarians and nursing faculty.

Researchers
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Project Details
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Introduction
Research has demonstrated that information literacy (IL) skills are essential for the academic and professional success of nursing students. Both the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses Association (SRNA) and the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) formally recognize the importance of these skills by including them as essential competencies for nurses to acquire in order to provide evidence-based nursing care. Research also supports the need for collaboration between nursing and library faculty in developing student’s IL skills through their integration into the curriculum. The study was divided into two phases.

- Phase 1. A survey was developed with the aim of discovering how librarians can best collaborate with them in designing teaching strategies aimed at fostering student’s IL skills.
- Phase 2. (To be completed with additional funding) Development of an IL program which will be integrated and levelled into all four years of the Saskatchewan Collaborative Bachelor of Science in Nursing (SCBScN) program.
Objectives

The objectives of the study were to examine the extent to which nursing faculty at two post-secondary education institutions, the University of Regina and the Saskatchewan Polytechnic (who jointly offer the Saskatchewan Collaborative Bachelor of Science in Nursing (SCBScN) program), consider information literacy (IL) as being important to the professional and academic success of students and to identify barriers to collaboration with librarians.

Method

A descriptive cross-sectional pilot study was carried out to examine the perceptions of faculty and instructors working with librarians, in the context of teaching IL to nursing students. The nursing program was selected based on the diversity in their faculty and instructors, the collaborative nature of their programs, and their ability to yield enough participants to meet sample requirements. Participants were randomly selected. Using Survey Monkey software, an online survey was distributed to eligible participants resulting in a sample realization of forty participants (n = 40). Data was analyzed using the Software Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS: version 19; IBM Corporation, 2010.)

Results

Descriptive statistics frequencies and percentages for respondents’ answers were calculated. Of the 40 respondents who completed the survey, the majority have been teaching in a nursing education program between 6 and 10 years (42.5%; n = 17). Equal numbers of respondents have been teaching in a nursing education program for 11 to 15 years and over 15 years (each 8%; n = 20). A smaller percentage of responders have been teaching in a nursing education program for 2 to 5 years (17%; n = 7).

When asked how important respondents think IL is to their students’ academic success, 87.5% (n = 35) said it was very important while 12.5% (n = 5) said it was important. No responders felt IL was somewhat important or not important. When asked how important responders think IL is to their students’ professional success, the results were slightly different, with 77.5% (n = 31) feeling it is very important, 20% (n = 8) stating it is important, and 2.5% (n = 1) indicating it is somewhat important.

Interestingly, although 17.5% (n = 7) of responders stated that librarians exclusively should teach IL skills and 82.5% (n = 33) stated that librarians and faculty together should teach IL skills, only 72.5% (n = 29) of responders said they themselves currently teach IL skills while the other 27.5% (n = 11) said they do not currently teach IL skills. Only 37.5% (n = 15) have worked with a librarian to incorporate IL skills in their courses.

When asked how respondents have worked with a librarian to incorporate IL skills into their courses, of the 15 people who said they had collaborated with a librarian, the majority
(30%; n = 12) said they had collaborated with a librarian on projects related to IL. Equal numbers of responders said they co-taught or co-designed lesson plans, learning activities, and/or assignments with a librarian (each 12.5%; n = 5). One respondent stated they had co-designed curriculum with a librarian and another respondent stated they had engaged in a joint research project with a librarian related to IL (2.5%). When asked about other ways respondents have worked with a librarian to incorporate IL skills into their courses, two participants gave examples of having a librarian assist in researching for academic writing and “developing information for students about resource acquisition for assignments (e.g., video clips for online courses, library guides)”.

All 40 participants responded to the inquiry of why they have not incorporated IL skills into their courses (either on their own or with a librarian). No one stated that they did not incorporate IL because they felt it was unnecessary or they did not have time to access the services. Instead, participants cited a lack of classroom time (15%; n = 6) and feeling they could not give up class time for library instruction (12.5%; n = 5) as their largest barriers. Other responders cited difficulty of incorporating IL skills into the course (7.5%; n = 3), and being unaware of the services or lacking preparation time to incorporate IL skills (2.5%; n = 1).

Of the 24 participants who responded to the question of whether they would be interested in working with a librarian to incorporate IL into their course in the future, the majority said yes they would (40%; n = 16), while some were unsure (17.5%; n = 7). Only one person stated they would not be interested in working with a librarian in the future. Six of the participants who said they would be interested in working with a librarian left comments surrounding this point. Suggestions included having librarians teach faculty as well as the students so everyone is more aware of what is available and how to use the services, or that an IL class be mandatory to attend “as students do not always see the value in IL”. It was suggested that the faculty needs to “reconsider the role of librarians and the resources (knowledge, skills, abilities) they bring to the education of nursing students regarding information literacy... to better understand the contemporary place of librarians with respect to fostering IL among students”.

Three participants who stated they were unsure about collaborating with a librarian in the future also commented that they felt students should have IL skills prior to clinical experiences and IL needs to be taught in first year. “In second and third year, faculty should not have to be teaching how to find quality sources of information”. It appeared as though those who taught clinical or upper level courses were those who were unsure about collaborating to teach IL. One person who did not respond to the question of whether or not they would be willing to collaborate with a librarian also commented that it is important to “make the role of the librarian much more visible in our classes—I would suggest every class discuss with the librarian how they can improve information literacy”, saying “I am always shocked at how poorly students understand information science”.
Conclusion

Nursing faculty recognize the importance of IL skills to students’ academic and professional success and value their collaborative work with librarians, but few collaborate with librarians due to lack of awareness of librarians’ roles and library services. This pilot study’s findings have not only significant potential value in informing curriculum development in the nursing program to include IL acquisition skills but can also inform libraries and librarians on how to promote their services and strengthen collaboration with faculty.

Credits (Student Research Assistants)
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References


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