

HUMANITIES LIBRARY INSTRUCTION PLAN

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Humanities Instruction Plan supports the goals of the MIT Libraries as stated in the MIT Libraries Strategic Plan, 2005-2010 *“to create and sustain an intuitive, trusted information environment that enables learning and the advancement of knowledge at MIT. We are committed to developing strategies and systems that promote discovery and facilitate worldwide scholarly communication.”*

PRINCIPLES

This plan will lay out general ideas for collaborating with faculty and establish broad guidelines for implementing an instructional program for the Humanities Library (unless otherwise noted, this plan will include the Lewis Music Library as well). It will not attempt to outline specific curricular goals or learning outcomes, as this process must involve faculty input to make any such objectives relevant. It will, however, begin to articulate some underlying foundations for such outcomes.

The following principles will guide this process:

- Begin instruction with users’ needs
 - Create clear and useful tools and resources
 - Maintain flexibility to adapt to curricular and technological changes
 - Foster a strong collaborative teaching environment among Humanities Library instruction staff.
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AUDIENCES

Library Instruction in the Humanities will have an impact primarily, but not exclusively, on undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in Humanities courses and the faculty who teach these classes and/or undertake research in its disciplines. Secondary audiences include Institute-wide readers of all sorts: students, faculty, and staff.

In 2005-2006, 7434 undergraduate students¹ enrolled in Humanities courses, taught by 163 full-time faculty members.² The profile of our potential students includes:

- Undergraduates majoring or minoring in Humanities fields
- Undergraduates taking courses that satisfy the HASS requirement
- Undergraduates taking Communications Intensive required courses in Humanities subjects
- Undergraduate and graduate students in any course doing research that involves

¹ Number of undergraduate students from the Dean's Annual Report to the President.

² Number of full-time faculty from “Inside SHASS: Facts, Stats and History” at <http://web.mit.edu/shass/inside/factsstatshistory.shtml>.

Humanities subjects

- Undergraduates taking Humanities courses as electives (not necessarily to fulfill any requirement)
- Undergraduates working on UROP projects that may be outside their primary field of study
- Graduate students in any Humanities discipline
- Graduate students in non-Humanities fields whose interdisciplinary projects require undertaking research in Humanities subjects.

Also using Humanities Library resources and services are:

Faculty Members

- who teach Humanities courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels
- who engage in interdisciplinary research that touches on Humanities subjects

Staff

- administrative or research assistants conducting their own research or assisting faculty members with their research
- staff from the Writing Center who help students with class assignments, research, and writing
- teaching assistants who support students in Humanities courses

POTENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

While we will need to engage in more dialogue with faculty to determine specific learning outcomes, we can begin with some broad objectives to help inform our current classroom instruction and to provide a starting point for future conversations to develop them further. We can begin by assuming that our users will need to acquire and refine certain skills if they are to accomplish their research and educational goals.

These skills include:

1. Discovery – understanding a research need and recognizing when more help is necessary; selecting the most efficient and effective tools, techniques, resources, and services to meet that need; conducting searches using these tools with efficiency and accuracy; retrieving the material from either print or online sources
2. Evaluation – judging with confidence the value and quality of material retrieved through discovery;
3. Management – establishing connections between texts; handling citations with ease and authority
4. Communication – understanding the complexities of the ever-changing context of how information is produced and disseminated.

We must develop these ideas further and begin determining which classes provide the best setting to introduce and reinforce them.

STRATEGIES AND METHODS

Several types of instruction are available to allow us to provide instruction in the Humanities Library: online resources (offered to the MIT Community and web users everywhere), class-related instruction, and individual research consultations and instruction. Our primary, proactive strategy is to provide library instruction to undergraduate students enrolled in Humanities classes or in classes that satisfy a HASS and Communications Intensive requirement.

1. Online Resources

Various kinds of self-help tools, such as the Humanities [Subject Guides](#), the [Course Pages](#), or other online resources allow students to help themselves anytime, anyplace. Subject Guides provide discipline-specific tools, while Course Pages allow students to focus on the most relevant sources of information for a specific class. Both kinds of pages also enable us to help them at the reference desk and during classroom sessions.

Other resources might serve a similar function, even if they are not maintained in the Humanities Library. These tools might include the [Information Navigator](#), the [Virtual Reference Collection](#), and the [Help Yourself](#) section of the [MIT Libraries](#) home page.

2. Class-related Instruction (primarily for students)

As a part of a more general effort to make Humanities Library instruction services widely known to the MIT community, the Humanities Library staff strives to cultivate active working relationships with members of the faculty and to stay informed about the curriculum.

To achieve this goal, we will undertake the following:

- Continue to meet with Writing Across the Curriculum faculty and staff to discuss their students' needs and how the Humanities Library might support both faculty teaching and student learning.
- Continue to meet with Suzanne Flynn (Linguistics and Philosophy), chair of the Subcommittee on the Communication Requirement (SOCR), to discuss the importance of library research skills and its integration into CI-H, CI-HW, CI-M classes. (see <http://web.mit.edu/fnl/volume/185/flynn.html>)
- Continue to cultivate relationships with the Program in Writing and Humanistic Studies to develop further use of our instructional services.

- Study the HASS undergraduate curriculum to address the needs of specific classes, departments, or faculty members that require research and writing assignments, especially in light of the recent recommendations of the Task Force on the Undergraduate Commons. Of particular interest is their recommendation for a “Freshman Experience” course for all incoming students that will include a component on using the Libraries.

All of these steps involve identifying interested faculty. Among the ways that subject specialists can do this are:

- Keeping in regular touch – writing an occasional e-mail message to department lists or individual faculty (for example, regarding pertinent library news, new resources, special events, workshops, IAP sessions, *BiblioTech* publication, or other new developments in the Libraries).
- Getting to know key administrative players in Humanities sections to stay informed about new faculty and their fields of interest as well as about news, special events, conferences, colloquia, and research projects.
- Contacting new faculty and inviting them to learn about library services and resources; taking the opportunity to ask about their fields of interest and research agenda.
- Attending events (e.g. open seminars, book talks) as often as possible to be more visible to faculty, students, and staff.
- Taking advantage of accidental meetings with faculty, whether in the library, an office, or a hallway; and visiting departments regularly to encourage spontaneous exchanges.
- Inviting Humanities faculty members to Humanities Library staff meetings on a recurring basis; asking faculty to talk about their departments, research interests, and/or ideas for librarian involvement in their teaching.
- Look into branding Humanities Library instruction services to make them and our staff more recognizable to faculty by referring to the service by its (yet-to-be-assigned) name and by creating a brochure and a web presence describing the services.
- Develop working relationships or partner with faculty on collaborative projects that combine the expertise of librarians and faculty members.

Typically, a class-related library instruction session comes about because of a faculty member’s request. It may occur in the classroom, where hands-on components may supplement a presentation, through self-help tools such as library class web pages, through library tours, or through any combination of these options.

Regardless of the delivery method, the effectiveness of course-related instruction lies in satisfying users at their point of need (usually assignment-related), and the faculty member's involvement in the session itself. We hope to see increasing numbers of faculty returning to plan more sessions, as well as increasing numbers of new faculty requesting library involvement in their classes.

Currently, the Humanities and Music libraries offer class-related instruction to undergraduate and graduate classes alike. The faculty members teaching the following classes have repeatedly requested library instruction sessions to amplify their purpose or focus on specific assignments:

9.00 – Introduction to Psychology, a Communications Intensive class
21F.222 – Writing for Bilingual Students
21M.215 – American Music
STS 465 – Research Seminar in the History of Technology
21L.003 – Introduction to fiction

Upon request, the Humanities Library instruction staff will also collaborate with colleagues in other units to provide instruction in interdisciplinary classes.

The Humanities Library instruction staff supports in-class library instruction sessions with class-specific web pages designed to orient students to the most appropriate materials, by introducing the most effective tools and presenting the standard and ethical principles that produce sound research. Class web pages may themselves be supplemented by customized hand-outs, cheat-sheets, guides, and other pathfinders to the best tools and approaches in a given subject area.

3. Individual Research Consultation and Instruction

Although graduate and undergraduate students make up the main users of this service, the Humanities Library invites the MIT community-at-large to avail itself of our expertise as well. Individual research consultation and instruction offers personalized attention to user needs. This high level of service is typically requested by users whose research often requires a subject specialist's expertise.

Faculty members may also request a consultation with a librarian or may invite librarians to attend meetings. Special arrangements can be made to make presentations or hold instruction sessions for faculty groups or departments.

RESOURCES

Staff

Effective library instruction requires the expertise of subject librarians trained in instruction.

The Instruction Coordinator will lead the Humanities Library's instruction program and ensure that the goals in this document and subsequent plans are being met. The Coordinator will also oversee the creation of more specific learning outcomes and serve as one of the representatives for the Humanities Library on the Research and Instructional Support Group (RISG).

The Humanities Administrative Assistant is responsible for supporting Humanities Library's instruction initiatives, which might include organizing content and planning logistics, such as booking rooms, or creating pathfinders, for example, or updating or implementing new web pages and other self help tools.

Other staff interested in instruction, with experience and some subject expertise, will be encouraged and trained to do so. Their training will include roving during sessions taught by others.

Organizing sessions across disciplines with other MIT libraries' staff members will be encouraged.

Supervisory support is not only advisable, but also essential, in order to ensure that other responsibilities are met.

Rooms and Equipment

The Digital Instruction Resource Center (DIRC, Room 14N-132) is a Libraries-owned instruction room and may be booked through TechTime. The MIT Libraries' staff has exclusive use of this room, and priority for its use is for library instruction and training. Outfitted with computers for up to 20 students and instructor as well as an overhead projector, the DIRC is the best location available for hands-on, group instruction. A variety of software applications have been pre-loaded on each computer for easy access to library resources.

Classrooms and meeting rooms on campus can be booked through MIT's Schedules Office at <http://web.mit.edu/registrar/www/schedules>. Many classrooms are outfitted with wireless technology, projection equipment, Athena workstations, and requisite power and data connections, but in some venues instructors may need to request computers, projection equipment, or applications needed for their sessions.

Other available computer classrooms include:

- 1-115
- 14-0637
- 37-312
- E53-220

More information about each room, including photographs, detailed equipment information, and booking information is available at <http://web.mit.edu/acis/labs/eclassrooms.html>.

The Stata Center Information Intersection also presents some interesting possibilities, although this space would be appropriate for small groups only.

Collections

The Humanities Library's print and online collections support our instruction efforts to the extent that researchers use them in their studies and their research. Teaching students and faculty how best to select and use these materials is one of our major goals. Ideally, we will strive to create an environment in which instruction informs collection decisions and vice versa.

Instructional Materials

Librarians create a lot of material to support instruction: from pathfinders to brochures to handouts of many sorts. Some materials may be designed specifically for one particular course, and even targeted to an assignment, while others exist to be used more broadly and anonymously by any library user.

We will investigate methods of storing the instructional materials created by Humanities instructional staff, both for archival purposes and to encourage sharing of materials.

Additional Financial Resources

The financial wherewithal to hire and train one or more graduate students (from MIT or Simmons GSLIS) as Library Instruction Teaching Assistants to support class-related instruction would be welcome. The Humanities Library will investigate the possibility of applying for grant money to support such a position.

The Humanities Library instruction staff will look into developing an initiative to brand itself and market its services to the faculty – a project that will entail associated production costs.

ASSESSMENT AND ASSESSMENT METHODS

Measuring what students and faculty members learn from our instruction efforts is a difficult task, but it behooves us to try various methods of assessment to begin collecting data with which we can work. The goals of our assessment efforts include finding ways

- to improve our teaching skills
- to ascertain what our students need to learn
- to determine whether they did learn in a given session.

To date, assessment efforts include analyzing student bibliographies (e.g. 9.00) and conducting post-session surveys of both students and faculty (e.g. 9.00 and other courses).

Both of these methods require a significant amount of time to work with faculty, create and conduct good rubrics and surveys, and analyze data.

Assessment tools we will consider implementing include:

- requesting feedback from our peers in the Libraries and faculty
- working with faculty on preparing assignments that include assessment of student learning.

NEXT STEPS

The first phase is an information-gathering project consisting of the following steps:

1. Begin discussions with faculty to determine courses most appropriate for library involvement.
2. Establish learning outcomes for each course, paying particular attention to how each activity fits into both the class itself and the overall curriculum.
3. Devise a lobbying plan to educate and persuade faculty individually or in small groups of the value of library instruction.

The second phase must be part of a Libraries-wide push to integrate instruction into the intellectual and pedagogic life of faculty and students through the Institute. The Instruction Coordinator will work with the Research and Instructional Support Group to ensure that the Humanities Library remains involved in such efforts.