Seed Grant Application Cover Page

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Amount Requested: $10,300

PROPOSAL TITLE: Exploring Pedagogies of Information Literacy Learning and Transfer

Proposal Checklist:
- Cover sheet (1 page)
- Abstract (1 page; 200 words max)
- Narrative (2 page max)
- Bibliography
- Budget Form
- Biographical Information (3 pages max)
Project Abstract

Exploring Pedagogies of Information Literacy Learning and Transfer

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Information Literacy is a lifelong learning competency desired by employers and embedded in the University of Idaho learning outcomes. This seed grant will support the exploration of two resources to support information literacy development at the University of Idaho. The first is the adoption of an online tool called the Research Companion to support classroom learning about information competencies. The second resource will be the development of a community-oriented information literacy curriculum and technology kit to assist in transferring these skills beyond the classroom. The use of these resources will be assessed for their student learning impact using pre/post testing and the development of a research agenda by the primary investigator.

The purpose of this research project is to explore more deeply information literacy education efforts at the University of Idaho. This project will result in the development of new pedagogies both online and in the classroom, as well as a community-based curriculum that can assist other educators in the transfer of learning outcomes into real-world concepts. Further, this project will create a series of quantitative and qualitative datasets from which the primary researcher can build research-oriented expertise and scholarship in information literacy theories and pedagogy.
Context and Background
Information Literacy, like other desired twenty-first century learning outcomes such as critical thinking, technology proficiency, or problem-solving are embedded throughout a student’s academic career at the University of Idaho (University of Idaho, n.d.). However, students are rarely self-aware that they are utilizing these skills in their day-to-day tasks in the classroom. Students also rarely realize that information literacy, and other learning competencies, are transferable across a range of disciplines, contexts, or real-world situations, such as in the workplace or addressing societal problems.

A recent survey of employers found that 95% of respondents believed that a job candidate’s abilities to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems are more important than a candidate’s undergraduate major (AACU, 2013). Information literacy related skills, such as evaluating and accessing relevant information, not only supports, but also enhances, these workplace-desired abilities of critical thinking, communicating, and problem-solving. Additionally, 72% of these same employers prioritize information literacy as a practical and intellectual workplace skill they want their employees to possess.

To support this desired skill set, educators, such as librarians, have worked tirelessly to incorporate information literacy in their instructional efforts. Elmborg (2006) frames information literacy in this manner: “If literacy is the ability to read, interpret, and produce texts valued in a community, then academic information literacy is the ability to read, interpret, and produce information valued in academia....” Despite this emphasis on information value in context, Elmborg believed educators have been too narrowly defining academic information literacy with an overemphasis on peer-review journals, academic citation, etc. Instead information literacy should be deployed as means for students to better understand their own lived experience, including their college experience. For Elmborg, and myself, information literacy can be so much more of meaningful undertaking, if reframed as a humanistic learning endeavor.

“Learning becomes the essentially humanistic process of engaging and solving significant problems in the world, a process central to both teaching and learning. Information can then be redefined as the raw material students use to solve these problems and to create their own understandings and identities, rather than as something ‘out there’ to be accessed efficiently, either in the library or in the world (Elmborg, 2006, p. 198).”

This project will explore both traditional classroom information literacy pedagogies as well as Elmborg’s expanded definition that embraces problem-solving, identity, and community. This examination of information literacy pedagogies will inform how the University of Idaho can best support information literacy concerns for their students not only in the classroom or the workplace, but also in their everyday lives.

Objectives and Methods
The first phase of this project will establish a baseline for information literacy competencies at the University of Idaho through the use of information literacy testing with a small cohort of students. Information literacy assessment instruments from either Project SAILS1 or Madison Assessment2 will be used. Students will be given a small monetary incentive

1 https://www.projectspails.org/abouttest
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to participate in this testing. These initial test scores will be used as comparison dataset to other aspects of this project to determine the effectiveness of different pedagogical approaches.

The second phase will be the adoption of Research Companion\(^3\), an online based information literacy tool of videos and exercises. This tool will allow for the primary investigator, and other librarians, to experiment with the innovative learning pedagogies including “flipping the classroom”, teaching online, and more targeted instruction. Additional information literacy testing will be undertaken to assess the effectiveness of this resource in supporting library instruction efforts.

The final phase will be the development of a for-credit information literacy course by the primary investigator using community-based projects and an information literacy technology kit. The purpose of this course will be to explore with students the transfer of information literacy skills from the classroom to real-world contexts in their communities. The information literacy technology kit will consist of portable laptops, most likely Google Chromebooks, Chromecasts, possibly an internet hotspot, and other resources that students could take into their communities to address information literacy needs during this course. Student interviews will be used to determine the impact of community-based problem solving has on their own information literacy development. A final round of information literacy testing will be completed to compare the effectiveness of these various pedagogical approaches.

**Contribution to Field and Professional Development**

This project will contribute to the ongoing scholarly conversation around information literacy, learning transfer, and workplace readiness. Research derived from this project will solidify the University of Idaho Library as an organization that values pedagogical innovation, learning assessment, and student success.

This project will advance the primary investigator's scholarship, pedagogy, and professional development through the exploration of different methods of delivering information literacy instruction through online tools, one-shot instruction sessions, and a credit-bearing course. This project will result in the creation of multiple research datasets both qualitative (testing) and quantitative (student interviews) that will serve to build a research agenda and multiple publication opportunities for the researcher around information literacy.

**Outcomes and Deliverables**

1. A research agenda to explore community and academic information literacy resulting in at least 1-2 academic articles and 1-2 presentations. Specifically an article will be submitted to *Communications in Information Literacy* -- the premiere North American based information literacy journal.

2. A curriculum and syllabus on community-based information literacy that could be used by other scholars or in repeat course offerings.

3. An information literacy technology kit that can be used in other contexts or research studies


\(^3\) [http://www.proquest.com/products-services/rescomp.html](http://www.proquest.com/products-services/rescomp.html)
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Bibliography:

