What does “Tech Savvy” really mean?

“Tech Savvy” students can email, text, Twitter, download multimedia and hang out in Facebook, but...

“Tech Savvy” students still struggle with evaluating content, finding quality information, synthesizing concepts and developing their own ideas.

Library Research in context

Library Research in Context (LRC) is an activity-based course aimed primarily at sophomore and junior students, though all students are welcome.

This is a flexible course that can be adapted to complement almost any class, program or discipline. The fundamental goal of the course is to help students build and develop critical thinking and research skills for academic life and beyond.

“I wish I had known about this class when I was a freshman!”

Subject-specialist librarians use in-class activities, assignments, and discussion to present the course material.

Assessing student skills

Results from a pre-test of Library Research in Context students showed that:

- 49% seldom or never use the library catalog
- 75% could not identify a characteristic of a peer-reviewed article
- 57% could not identify the title of a book in a citation for a chapter of that book
- 42% could not say what could be found in the library catalog

Skills and Concepts Addressed in Library Research in Context

Basic Skills
- How to read citations
- How to find books and articles
- How to evaluate information
- Differences between online library resources and free Web resources

Advanced Skills
- How to formulate a research question
- How to create and modify a search strategy
- How to determine the scope of a particular database
- Differences between primary and secondary texts

Bigger Concepts
- The non-linear nature of the research process
- The value of the scholarly peer-review process
- The nature of scholarly communication
- The social and ethical contexts of information

The Result is confidence

At the completion of the LRC course, students felt more confident in their researching skills. They understood how to evaluate information they found online and were able to develop their own ideas based on that information.

Student scores on the LRC post-test went up on most questions by at least 40%.

Students reported feeling less “library anxiety” and more confident in navigating what had previously seemed like an information quagmire.

“I never knew how to use maybe 60% of the resources available at the library. I think this course would be valuable to everyone.”

LRC student comment from course evaluation

“I learned how to use different databases and find quality information, whereas before I was really just ‘Googling’ everything.”

LRC student comment from course evaluation

Students learn to integrate information skills and concepts to accomplish course goals, and also to become better lifelong learners. They also build and develop critical thinking skills.

LRC student comment from course evaluation
Information literacy should not be considered a given. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, the information literacy skills of new students are not improving as the post-1993 Internet boomlet enters college. At the same time, in a sea of user-created content, collaborative work and instant access to information of varying quality, the skills of critical thinking, research and evaluation are increasingly required to make sense of the world.

From the 2007 Horizon Report
New Media Consortium

Life-long Learning and information literacy

It has become increasingly clear that students are in need of skills to filter through the vast amount of information in their lives. Information literate students are equipped with the skills they need to become thoughtful and efficient users of information. These skills also help students become independent, life-long learners by enabling them to analyze and evaluate the information they find.

LRC is a one-semester hour credit class. For current offerings, check ISIS (http://isis.uiowa.edu) or the Instructional Services page (www.lib.uiowa.edu/instruction).

For more information, contact Kathy Magarrell at 335-5093 or kathy-magarrell@uiowa.edu.

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“Very, very useful! I wasn’t way over my head like I feel in some classes, but I still learned a LOT!”
LRC student comment from course evaluation