

# UNCA

## ***Academic Policies Committee***

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### ***Report on Library Research 102:***

On September 16, 1999, APC met with the University Librarians to discuss their report on LR 102 which satisfies the General Education Library Research requirement. The Committee benefitted from an excellent, concise and thorough document submitted by the library which provided sufficient background and ample room for discussion. The Librarians were candid and the topics addressed were wide ranging.

From the report and this discussion APC draws three conclusions.

1. *Library Research 102 appears to be an excellent course.*
  - From all appearances the Library staff offers an excellent introduction to the library taught by thoughtful and dedicated educators with a sincere commitment to the library and the liberal arts.
  - The librarians have made every effort to update the content of LR 102 and to accommodate new methods of gathering information. They have designed for themselves a clear set of objectives and have made an effort to assess their work.
  - The librarians seem to have adapted as efficiently as possible to severe resource limitations.
  
2. *LR 102 departs markedly from the original charge.*

Senate Document SD3684 states:

“All students must pass a competency examination administered by the library prior to taking the first Humanities course. Students who do not pass this examination by this time must take a 1-hour Bibliography course concurrently with the first Humanities course.

“Rationale: The ability to use the library must be developed early to be of use to students. The Bibliography course will cover in more detail the topics on the competency examination. In order to encourage students to review their skills and exempt the course, the library will make study materials on the topics of the examination available to students.”

SD 1992S modified this requirement in 1992, but not sufficiently. The result is the current practice has departed significantly from the original charge. There is no longer a traditional course option, but only an independent study experience which, in effect, requires all students to test out of the requirement even as they take it.

To partially remedy this situation, APC suggests that the library submit appropriate catalog changes to make the catalog consistent with current practice. Such changes, however, will not address more basic issues surrounding using information in the twenty-first century.

### 3. *As Constructed Under its Current Charge, LR 102 cannot Deal With a Variety of Relevant Issues*

The discussion raised numerous issues regarding information and its use that the current general education requirement does not address and for which Library Research faculty are not responsible. Some of these issues were raised by the librarians themselves as they explained how they struggled with structuring the content of the course. Among these issues, three are central.

- a. Given the explosion of information sources not confined to the traditional library, students must be equipped with more skills than were anticipated by the original Bibliography course if they are to become information literate citizens.
- b. In addition to the technical skills necessary for accessing information, students must be equipped with enhanced critical abilities which help them identify “valid” information. They also need to confront fundamental issues such as plagiarism.
- c. While students must be equipped with general information retrieval and evaluation skills, they must also refine such skills in the context of their discipline. This raises the question of whether library research skills are best developed in a general all purpose course or within the major department

where primary responsibility rests with departmental faculty. Specifically it raises the issue of whether students should take additional advanced training to keep their skills current.

It is clear that UNCA's librarians are aware of these issues and have wrestled with them in constructing their program. It is equally clear that their ability to address these problems is limited by the original charge, resource limitations, and the campus culture. Short of a new discussion about information access and evaluation it will be difficult for the current requirement to adapt to changed needs and still conform to the original general education requirement. A reconsideration of the original charge may be necessary if the university's mission is to be achieved in the wake of the challenge of the "information revolution."