Information Literacy and Library Instruction in the Rutgers University New Brunswick Libraries: Report, Proposals, and Recommendations

Developed by the New Brunswick Libraries Instruction Group:

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I feel all thin, sort of stretched...like butter that has been scrapped over too much bread.
---Bilbo Baggins to Gandalf, The Fellowship of the Ring
BACKGROUND

The New Brunswick Libraries instruction librarians focused on the crisis in instruction that climaxed this past year among the New Brunswick faculty. The group sought first to develop an understanding of this crisis. There was an outcry against multiple sessions in the long-time, well-established Writing Program research and writing courses required by Livingston College students and required variably for Rutgers College, College of Pharmacy and University College students. Multiple sessions are also conducted in the Shaping a Life program required for Douglass College first-year students and are largely conducted by students in the SCILS User Education course. The Writing Program courses are offered throughout the academic year. The Shaping a Life Program, offered one semester, was moved from the fall semester to the spring semester in 2002-2003. This contributed to the crisis since more Writing Program courses are offered during the spring. Other contributing factors were the leaves of the instruction coordinators at Kilmer and Alexander, the coordinators responsible for scheduling the largest number of Writing Program courses. However, the instruction librarians were aware of these factors and attempted to alleviate the crisis situation by distributing the workload throughout the New Brunswick Libraries faculty for the Writing Program courses. For the critical spring semester, course section times and topics were distributed to the instruction librarians in January and agreements made regarding distribution of a number of the sections and proactive contact with course instructors. Understanding these factors, the instruction librarians also realized that there were deeper issues involved that were related to attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, philosophies, interests, and pedagogical background.

In seeking an understanding of the instruction crisis, the instruction librarians examined:

- their own assumptions and their perceived assumptions of colleagues regarding instruction and instruction librarian positions
- RUL (NB) information literacy/instruction history
- RUL (NB) information literacy/instruction practices and nationally recognized best practices
- Middle States draft document “Developing Research & Communication Skills” (Draft #6, March 2003)
- the background and development of the Writing Program
- New Brunswick Libraries faculty position descriptions
- long range and strategic plans of RU, RUL and other university libraries
- vision and mission statements of RUL and other university libraries
- personnel and instruction workload
- RUL (NB) position descriptions from 1987-2003
- documented feedback from library faculty on instruction

By gaining a better understanding of the roots of the crisis, the instruction librarians hoped to be able to develop reasonable short-term and long-term proposals for information literacy/instruction in the New Brunswick Libraries.
RUL (NB) INSTRUCTION HISTORY

Overview

An investigation into the history of instruction at the Rutgers libraries, with special focus on New Brunswick Libraries, yielded some interesting, fascinating, and both encouraging and discouraging results. First, there is no archive of documents and resources related to library instruction at RUL, so the cautionary note is that the following information has been gathered some personal files and, therefore, the information is incomplete.

By the mid-1980s, the Rutgers libraries were actively involved in library instruction. There is documentation for well-developed library skills workbooks, one-shot classes, walking tours, handouts, and exercises, and a Livingston College three-credit course which was no longer offered by 1990 due to “limited instructional resources”. As early as 1984, an Alexander librarian wrote a document analyzing instruction in some of the New Brunswick libraries in relation to human and technical resources which was forwarded to the university librarian. In the early 1990s, a three-phase pilot program for integrating information literacy into English 102 was developed by four instruction coordinators in the New Brunswick libraries in collaboration with the English Department faculty. An article on this pilot project was published in Information Literacy: Developing Students as Independent Learners (1992). In 1993, “Rutgers University Libraries Response to Rutgers Dialogues” provided background on the concept and goals of information literacy and reference to its importance to the Middle States Association as outlined in Framework for Outcomes Assessment (1990). This was forwarded to the university librarian and vice-president of undergraduate education. In that same year, “An Information Literacy Project: A Collaboration” grant proposal was submitted for the Rutgers Dialogues Pilot Grants, but was not funded. “Revising the Culture of Undergraduate Research at Rutgers University: A Collaborative Project between the Writing Program and the Rutgers Libraries for Promoting Excellence in Writing Across the Disciplines” was a proposal submitted for a Teaching Excellence Center Grant for academic year 1996-1997. Both proposals involved working with faculty on integrating information literacy into the curriculum. By 2001, two documents prepared by the RUL Instructional Services Committee addressed information literacy and methods to achieve it and detailed the necessary technology, facilities and skills. Every document offers clear, solid recommendations (some of the same ones) for instruction within the libraries and for collaboration throughout the university. Despite these persistent efforts and repeated recommendations, a successful information literacy/instruction program has not been implemented New Brunswick-wide or RUL-wide. “Successful” refers to a program (a) incorporated across the curriculum, (b) reaching a high percentage of students, and (c) fully supported and/or acknowledged by the university and library system as fulfilling a mission.
Chronology

1981
Comprehensive library handbooks (e.g., Kilmer Area Library Handbook) including instructional information on types of library materials and a number of “how to…” sections.

1983
“Library Research Workbook: Rutgers University Libraries” including student exercises. These were updated for several years.

February 1984
Memo from George Kanzler, Director of Alexander Library, to Hendrik Edelman, University Librarian, and Evelyn Greenberg, Associate Librarian for Public Services with an attached report “Bibliographic Instruction at Alexander Library: Report and Recommendations” prepared by Kevin Mulcahy.

June 1990
Memo from Emma Warren, Director of Kilmer Library, to Marianne Gaunt, AUL for Undergraduate & Research Services establishing priorities for user education/bibliographic instruction at Kilmer Area Library. This includes documentation of the decision to discontinue the Livingston College three-credit “Bibliography and Research Techniques” course due to limited instructional resources. Shortly afterwards the Kilmer librarians were approached about teaching such a course in the summer McNair Scholars Program. This course has been taught since Summer 1991.

September 1990
Memo to RU faculty from Marianne Gaunt regarding recent changes in the Middle States Accreditation Guidelines, highlighting the importance of information literacy

August 1991
“First Report on the Pilot Project for Integrating Information Literacy into the English 102 Curriculum”—developed by the Integrated Information Literacy Program Task Force formed as a result of the “New Brunswick Librarians Response to the Provost’s Committee on Undergraduate Education in the Context of a Research University” (Qualls Report). The Task Force under the direction of Marianne Gaunt, AUL for Undergraduate and Research Services, composed of Professor Barry Qualls, Chair of the Provost’s Committee on Undergraduate Education; Professor Maurice Lee, representing the New Brunswick Faculty Council; and subcommittee of library instruction coordinators (Stan Nash--Alexander, Catherine Geddis--Douglass, and Ben Beede and BethAnn Zambella--Kilmer) was formed to work with Kurt Spellmeyer, Director of the College Writing Program, to investigate a method of integrating information literacy into the English 102 curriculum. Ultimate goal: “reach all Rutgers freshman”.

Fall 1991
RUL REPORT published on “Information Literacy.”

Spring 1992
“Pilot Plan II for Integrating Information Literacy into the English 102 Curriculum”—January 31, 1992; revised February 21, 1992

Fall 1992
• “Pilot Plan III for Integrating Information Literacy into the English 102 Curriculum”
• SCILS and Task Force agree upon program for interns of instruction program to be presented to SCILS curriculum committee.
  Piloted in Spring Semester 1992
  Program implemented in Fall 1993
• Formation by Marianne Gaunt (AUL for Undergraduate & Research Services) of the ERC (Electronic Resources Committee—composed of instruction coordinators and online coordinators from the six major
libraries. Developed documentation for new databases coordinated a series of workshops on library databases for several years.

February 1993
Memo to library faculty from Kevin Mulcahy with the following attached document for discussion at March library faculty meeting, “Rutgers University Libraries Response to Rutgers Dialogues.” In April 1993, there is a memo from Frank Polach thanking Kevin, Natalie Borisovets, Jeris Cassel, and Stan Nash for their “fine and perceptive work” and indicating that there was “real interest in the subject and solid support for the response” by the library faculty and he forwarded the letter to Susan Forman. Attached with this memo was a letter dated March 1993 from Kevin Mulcahy, Faculty Coordinator, forwarding the response to Susan Forman, Vice President for Undergraduate Education.

1993
Teaching Excellence Center Grant awarded for “The New LSM Infomaster: Promoting Information Literacy for Science Undergraduates.”

Spring 1993
RUL REPORT published on “Information Literacy: The Libraries’ Role.”

September 1993
“Towards an Information Literacy Program at Rutgers University: A Preliminary Outline, developed by the Electronic Resources Committee: Jeris Cassel, Chair; Catherine Geddis, Theo Haynes, Marty Kesselman, Linda Langschied, Jackie Mardikian, Stan Nash, Roberta Tipton, BethAnn Zambella.

October 1993
“An Information Literacy Project: A Collaboration”: A Proposal Submitted for the Rutgers Dialogues Pilot Grants” with Jeris Cassel, Reference Librarian and Electronic Services Coordinator, Kilmer Library, as principal investigator and Marianne Gaunt, AUL for Research and Undergraduate Services. The objectives of this project including collaborating with faculty on incorporating principles and techniques of information literacy into their course syllabi.

Spring 1994
Expository 102 Instructor Workshops began for course instructors at Alexander, Douglass, and Kilmer

Fall 1995 (?)
“Revising the Culture of Undergraduate Research at Rutgers University: A Collaborative Project Between the Writing Program and the Rutgers Libraries for Promoting Excellence in Writing Across the Disciplines: A Proposal for a Teaching Excellence Center Grant AY 96-97 to improve the education of undergraduates with principal investigators: Richard Miller, Ellen Gilbert, and Boyd Collins and collaborating investigators: Rebecca Brittenham, Darcy Gioia, Stan Nash, and Kevin Mulcahy.

August 2000
“Towards an Information Literacy Program at Rutgers University: A Preliminary Working Document,” developed by the Instructional Services Committee: Jeris Cassel, Chair; Jackie Mardikian, Kevin Mulcahy, Leslie Murtha, Julie Still, Roberta Tipton, Thelma Tate, and Lisa Vecchioli, with contributions from Scott Hines.

January 2001
“Supporting Library Instruction for the Twenty-first Century: Building the Technological Infrastructure for Information Literacy: A Proposal Developed by the Instructional Services Committee,” Jeris Cassel, Chair; Scott Hines, Sam McDonald, Jackie Mardikian, Kevin Mulcahy, Leslie Murtha, Julie Still, and Roberta Tipton. Submitted to Jeanne Boyle, AUL for Public Services.
## PROBLEMS AND ASSUMPTIONS

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<tr>
<th>PROBLEMS</th>
<th>ASSUMPTIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Huge job</td>
<td>Teaching faculty don’t view librarians as educators</td>
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<td><em>(break into components to examine)</em></td>
<td>Instruction librarians are needed here</td>
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<td>Insufficient resources: technical/human</td>
<td>We know what is an effective instructional program—in comparison to WHAT?</td>
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<td>No common vision</td>
<td>Middle States/ACRL standards</td>
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<td>No agreement of value of undergraduate education</td>
<td>Our time is worth it</td>
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<td>Subject specialist vs. general</td>
<td>RU supports information literacy</td>
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<td>Lack of strategy</td>
<td>RUL supports information literacy</td>
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<td>Lack of sequencing of library programs</td>
<td>Librarians own information literacy</td>
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<td>System rewards liaison with departments, not teaching</td>
<td>Librarians are educators</td>
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<td>Lack of respect for instructional librarians from non-instructional librarians</td>
<td>Not all librarians should teach—some librarians can contribute by other means, e.g., subject guides.</td>
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<td>No framework for instructional services for NBL</td>
<td>Instruction is marketing—product is worth it</td>
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<td>Services from other librarians based on good will</td>
<td>Information literacy is goal of higher education</td>
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<td>Short term perspective</td>
<td>Personal contact is major element in learning. Digital won’t replace it.</td>
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<td>“It’s not my job!”</td>
<td>Good undergraduate programs are underpinnings of advanced programs.</td>
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<td>Protection of junior faculty</td>
<td><strong>Perception of assumptions of others:</strong></td>
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<td>Time devoted to development not valued</td>
<td>Instruction librarians will take care of it all.</td>
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<td>Job drift since jobs are not filled quickly</td>
<td>Lecture is teaching.</td>
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<td>Doing the job that TAs being paid to do</td>
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<td>Teaching is part of justification for faculty status.</td>
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*****NOTE: A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THESE ASSUMPTIONS IS AVAILABLE.*****
ANALYSIS OF RUL PRACTICES AND BEST PRACTICES

The New Brunswick Libraries (and RUL) instruction program was compared with “best practices” for information literacy, using the Instructional Services Committee Report “Toward an Information Literacy Program at Rutgers University: A Preliminary Working Document” (2000) and the ten (10) characteristics that identify programs and philosophies for best practices initiatives in information literacy provided in ACRL’s “Characteristics of Programs of Information Literacy that Illustrate Best Practices, Best Practices Initiatives, Institute for Information Literacy.” The following analysis resulted:

1. Mission:
The RUL document gives an overview of library instruction activities and a survey of teaching facilities. RUL does not have a mission statement for an information literacy program. Overall, we do not tend to look at instruction as a whole, but rather view each class or course as its own entity.

2. Goals and Objectives:
RUL does not have a set of goals and objectives for an information literacy program. We do not integrate information literacy through the entire curriculum, nor do we apply these theories to all learners. We are not consistent. Some programs are one-time or on-demand classes. Most librarians do not view library instruction in terms of life-long learning, but rather as an opportunity to teach library skills as a one-shot deal. On the RUL instruction home page, we do recognize that instruction is best under these conditions:
- integrated into the curriculum
- related to a specific class assignment
- provided at the beginning of a term paper or research project or throughout the duration of the project
- and when the classroom instructor attends and actively participates in the sessions.

3. Planning:
Even though the Instruction home page is visible on the RUL home page, we have not established ongoing dialogue about instruction across the entire academic community. We have not taken an active role in this area. The library liaisons provide instruction to their perspective departments, but they are not necessarily integrated into the system-wide instruction committee. We are not consistent in the extent we reach all academic departments. We have not established a formal program that is integrated into the curriculum. We have not established a process for assessment.

4. Administrative and Institutional Support:
With our system-wide Instruction Services Committee we do have a structure in place that provides for leadership. We do have formal teaching facilities, and we do provide professional development opportunities for librarians and staff. The question remains as to whether instruction librarians adequately rewarded for their participation and achievement within the institution.

5. Articulation with the Curriculum
We do not offer a formal program integrated in the curriculum. We have not identified a set of competencies on a disciplinary level or at a course level. We do not see this as a continuum, providing for more advanced and sequenced training throughout the student’s career at Rutgers.
6. Collaboration
There is no consistency here either. Some librarians do seek collaboration and vice versa from teaching faculty. Teaching collaboration does exist as a one-time event or throughout a few sessions. The intention of most sessions is to help students learn library skills in order to complete one assignment, one paper or one class. But, we do not necessarily look at it in terms of lifelong learning. We have not actively sought support for the program with the rest of the university community.

7. Pedagogy
Some of us do well in this area. We do teach using different techniques. We do respond to different learning styles. We do incorporate the latest technology in our class sessions. We do make classes relevant to the student’s knowledge base.

8. Staffing:
We do have instruction librarians who can serve as role models, but this concept is not highly accepted. Whether or not we are adequately staffed is difficult since we are remiss in a number of the previous areas. We do not receive regular evaluations about the quality of our instruction.

9. Outreach:
We provide targeted publicity under the responsibilities of the liaison librarians and instruction librarians. We do have opportunities for training and we offer an annual instruction workshop for library staff, librarians and colleagues from other institutions. Our outreach program refers to reaching out to the outside community.

10. Assessment/Evaluation:
We have not established a process for continuous evaluation and assessment of the program. We do not normally evaluate the quality of the training given by the instruction librarians nor do we normally test the knowledge gained by students.

Summary: Information literacy is “understanding, evaluating, and using information technologies effectively.” Since we do not normally evaluate or measure either learning outcomes or competencies, we do not have an information literacy program as defined by ACRL. Our library instruction program is not integrated into the institutional system as a whole.

LONG-RANGE AND STRATEGIC PLANS

RUL’s planning document “A Bridge to the Future: The Rutgers Digital Library Initiative” information literacy, library instruction, and learning indirectly. The plan acknowledges the teaching role of librarians. There is reference to teaching student information literacy skills in a digital environment, collaborating with faculty, and creating multimedia curricula. In the “Goals and Activities for the Implementation of the Plan” section, instruction is combined with service in the subsection “Improving Service and Instruction.” The statements that might be remotely construed as a program-related area is “Work with Rutgers faculty, design instructional programs for students that incorporate information literacy to advance undergraduate learning goals and “Design and implement electronic navigators and interactive instructional programs”.

In the 2003 Rutgers “Periodic Review Report to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education” that “Much work has been done to increase students’ information and computer literacy.” It goes on for six paragraphs on technology support provided through the Instructional Technology Initiative, Rutgers Dialogues Grants, and Teaching Excellence Center, and only in
the last paragraph is “University Libraries” mentioned. Interestingly, the first statement is “Information Literacy remains a high priority for the university, especially the University Libraries “(p. 31).

Recently, a “Strategy for Information Literacy” of information literacy developed by Cabinet promotes information literacy through the development of “a suite of digital information literacy modules that can be customized for various disciplines and courses. We will work with the system wide library advisory committee and other groups to create the essential faculty partnerships that will give our work meaning and purpose. While pursuing these efforts at Rutgers, we will continue to provide leadership and support to the shared information literacy initiative of VALE.” This does relate to the university learning goal “E. Information and Computer Literacy Students will develop their skills in gathering, accessing, analyzing, and interpreting information, in part through using the tools of modern computer technology.”

In investigating how instruction/information literacy is addressed across the long-range/strategic plans of university libraries, institutions considered Rutgers’ peer institutions did not provide the best models. Given this, it is important that the New Brunswick Libraries review other institutions for models. **A detailed analysis of the investigation is available.**

**PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on its findings, the New Brunswick Libraries Group propose a mission statement for the instruction program of the New Brunswick Libraries, a short term plan, a long-term plan, and several general recommendations.

**New Brunswick Libraries**  
**Mission of the Instruction Program**

The New Brunswick Libraries system is dedicated to the comprehensive integration of information literacy learning goals across academic levels through collaboration among library faculty and other university faculty. The library instruction program exists foremost to advance the information literacy of all students by teaching them about locating, retrieving, evaluating, and using information through learner-centered pedagogical methods, strategies, and materials. In recognition of our leadership role and responsibility to make our entire student body information literate, library faculty are encouraged to collaborate with other university faculty and staff in the integration of information literacy learning goals into general studies courses and into discipline-based introductory, mid-level, and advanced courses.
Proposal for AY 2003-2004
Writing Program for sections of English 201: Research in Disciplines and English 301: College Writing & Research be assigned on a rotational basis among the New Brunswick library faculty.

Rationale:
♦ The position descriptions for library faculty include statements on participation in general and specialized library instruction.
♦ There is a need to balance the increasing demand for library instruction sessions across campuses among library faculty.

Facilitation:
♦ A schedule of assigned reserved dates and locations for two library sessions per English 201 and 301 section will be distributed:
  ♦ to the NBL faculty first for those to signup for specific topics and times. The remaining sections will be assigned on a rotational basis. If a library faculty is unable to conduct the assigned sessions, he or she is responsible for arranging for coverage and negotiating any appropriate exchanges
  ♦ to the Writing Program instructors during their orientation sessions for instructors (August 28) and emailed to instructors unable to attend the sessions. This will enable the instructors to plan accordingly and include the sessions on their syllabi. Sessions will be limited to two. Other sessions may be negotiated between the course instructor and library instructor based on the progress and needs of the students.
♦ Handouts, worksheets, exercises, and other teaching resources previously and currently used will be available online.
♦ SCILS students (graduate assistants or interns) with library instruction experience at Rutgers and proven instruction ability will be encouraged to:
  ♦ conduct library sessions. Students in the SCILS User Education course will be mentored to co-instruct and serve as lab assistants with the hands-on activities in the Writing Program courses.
  ♦ be mentored to conduct scripted sessions in the Shaping a Life program.
♦ Instruction Librarians will serve as a resource for teaching advice, techniques, and methods.

Assessment
♦ Feedback on the functionality of this model will be gathered via:
  ♦ a formal discussion at a New Brunswick Libraries faculty meeting at the end of the semester.
  ♦ a brief survey instrument distributed to library instructors and Writing Program instructors.
♦ An instrument to assess the effectiveness of library instruction will be distributed to students.
Proposal for Long-Term Plan

The two ISC documents “Towards an Information Literacy Program at Rutgers (2000) and “Supporting Library Instruction for the Twenty-first Century (2001), as well as ACRL and Middle States documents provide the framework for a long-range plan for information literacy and library instruction in New Brunswick Libraries and Rutgers University.

The Writing Program courses and the Shaping a Life Program course require students to develop research skills, a component of information literacy. The programs vary in the level of research required of the students, but, nevertheless, library research is a component in each. These are examples of courses in which information literacy components are an established, integral part and in which there is collaboration between Writing Program faculty and library faculty. These collaborative efforts should continue since they reach a significant percentage of students. In order to continue, there has to be an institutional and departmental commitment to the programs and collaboration. This would be evident through funding for a sufficient number of teaching assistants and their appropriate training and through support of development of appropriate instructional online resources. The proposed short-term plan should provide, if implemented, further information on how to make these collaborative efforts successful.

The need to build and develop the skills learned by many first-year students is important for upper level undergraduates and graduate students in completing research assignments successfully. This is the largest gap in the current New Brunswick Libraries’ instruction program. Greater collaboration between library faculty and departments is needed for the purpose of integrating information literacy components into the upper level undergraduate and into graduate courses. Until a strategic plan is developed for making this happen, the following is proposed as a transition plan phase:

Proposal Statement:

♦ Develop credit courses worth one or two laboratory/classroom credits, taken as co-requisites with a selection of one of the many undergraduate courses listed in the August 2000 ISC report.

Rationale:

♦ This would keep the library in the mainstream of information literacy instruction and provide income for program.

Facilitation:

♦ Library faculty will initiate collaboration with appropriate program or departmental staff/faculty for a pilot course.
  
  The pilot course:
  ♦ will consist of five weeks of classroom/lab meetings.
  ♦ will meet during the semester weeks 2, 4,6,8,10 or weeks 3,5,7, 9, 11.
  ♦ must be completed by students prior to the attainment of 45 undergraduate credits.
  ♦ online materials and/or workbook will be developed with slight variations for each course.

Assessment:

♦ Assignments for each class meeting will be graded.
- A rubric for final assessment of learning with the co-requisite course will be developed.

If successful, an organizational structure must be put in place to coordinate and administer the program. The Writing Program model might be appropriately emulated.

**Recommendations**

Since there is a functioning RUL Instructional Services Committee that meets monthly and addresses overall information literacy/instruction issues, the New Brunswick Libraries Instruction Group recommends that it exist and function as a standing task force, rather than as a committee, to address specific New Brunswick Libraries information literacy/instruction issues when necessary.

II

Given the repetitive proposals, recommendations, and other information developed at RUL regarding information literacy and library instruction, the group recommends that the New Brunswick Libraries system or the Rutgers Libraries system establish a cabinet-level position for an information literacy/instruction champion. This individual’s responsibility should be to move the information literacy/instruction program forward and stop the continual, circular motions that the library faculty has been involved for approximately 20 years. This individual’s goal should be to move the information literacy/instruction program and instruction librarians at Rutgers into the status of a national model and leadership role, respectively. To accomplish this, the individual should develop a mission, goals and objectives, strategic plan, institutional support, collaborations, and a continuous evaluation and assessment process of an information literacy/instruction program.