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# Baiting the Hook: Building Faculty Collaboration to Improve Student Information Literacy

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# ACRL Washington Newsletter

Fall 2009, No. 65

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## Baiting the Hook: Building Faculty Collaboration to Improve Student Information Literacy

*By Julie Miller, Associate Dean of Libraries, Eastern Washington University*

On Sept. 17, 2009, EWU Libraries hosted a workshop that drew 27 faculty from across the disciplines (four of the six colleges of EWU were represented) and with varying classroom experience (full professors worked alongside newbie teaching assistants) to focus on improving student information literacy. How did we do it?

**We used an effective hook.** The workshop was titled "More Effective Academic Papers from Your Students." Across the disciplines, many faculty members are dismayed by the quality of the research papers they receive from students. This workshop focused on one problem area of student research papers—summary and synthesis—that can make a big impact on the quality of student writing.

**The workshop was a faculty-librarian collaboration.** Dr. Nanette Wichman, senior lecturer in

the English Department, partnered with library faculty member Ms. Nadean Meyer to develop the workshop curriculum. Dr. Wichman was the primary presenter, while Ms. Meyer facilitated. The workshop itself modeled the type of collaboration that results in improved student learning outcomes.

**We built on previous success.** For the previous two years, instruction librarians have worked with teams from four academic departments on a project to integrate research skills into the existing curriculum.\* This workshop grew out of a common problem expressed by faculty in the research skills project. We made sure to invite faculty who had participated in the research skills initiative, and several of them attended the workshop. The comfortable working relationships these faculty already had developed with librarians contributed to the collegial atmosphere of the workshop.

**We promised—and delivered—an active learning experience.** Dr. Wichman presented the developmental



Workshop leaders Nanette Wichman and Nadean Meyer check in with each other during group interaction.

levels of synthesis using the SOLO (Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome) taxonomy. Participants then completed a group exercise in summary and synthesis that demonstrated the levels of synthesis. Faculty left the workshop with two visual guides—and a vocabulary—they can use to help students understand the process of synthesizing information. One faculty member wrote on the workshop evaluation, “ I found the visual models particularly helpful; I enjoyed the chance to pull apart and analyze the process so that I can give better direction and support to students.” Success!



Faculty groups work on an exercise in summary and synthesis.

**We made it easy for faculty to attend.** The workshop was offered at 9:00 AM the Thursday before Fall Quarter began. Faculty members were back to work following the summer break, and many were revising syllabi and assignments for Fall classes. The workshop was free, and it only lasted ninety minutes, so it did not require a big commitment from them. We also provided snacks and coffee.

The workshop evaluations indicated that faculty participants were highly satisfied with the workshop, and over eighty percent of respondents said they would participate in a follow-up session. We continue to look for ways to reel them in—to collaborate with faculty to improve student research skills. If you have suggestions, questions, or comments, please contact Julie Miller at [jmiller7@ewu.edu](mailto:jmiller7@ewu.edu).

\*See "[Beyond Freshman Comp: EWU Libraries Partner with Departments to Build Student Research Skills](#)" *ACRL Washington Newsletter* Spring 2008, No. 62 for more information about the Student Research Skills project.

**Photo captions:**

**Caption for acadwriting-group.jpeg:** Faculty groups work on an exercise in summary and synthesis.

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