Engelond: A Model for Faculty-Librarian Collaboration in the Information Age
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With only minimal reallocation of existing resources, the University of Iowa Libraries has been able to launch the Bailiwick project and continue to develop it at a modest pace. One of the components most essential for its continued success, however, is the ability to scale up to meet the expected demand over the next several years. Technical infrastructure challenges are not overwhelming as yet. An analysis still needs to be made to determine how quickly creators are developing their sites, what the implications are for network delivery of these resources, what reasonable projections there are for disk space, and who is using the resources.

Perhaps more importantly, though, adequate staffing will always remain a concern. Some faculty wish to work more closely with library staff consultants than time allows, and the consultants would certainly find it enriching to be more intimately involved with the development of each bailiwick site. Marketing of the Bailiwick project has been discrete (to say the least) because of the limited staffing available. However, embedded in the collaboration inherent in bailiwicks is the potential for stronger involvement with faculty in obtaining grant funding to support the development of specific bailiwick sites.

A Model for Research Libraries

Bailiwick is a project that allows the University of Iowa Libraries, and specifically the Information Arcade, to focus on the integration of technology, multimedia, and hypertext in the context of scholarship and research. To date, most of the bailiwick sites represent disciplines in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. This matches the overall clientele of the Information Arcade (given its location in the University of Iowa’s Main Library), but it also reflects the fact that these disciplines have been tradi- tionally undersupported with respect to technology. Nevertheless, individual faculty in these disciplines have integrated some of the most creative applications of the technology in their everyday teaching and research, in part because of the existence of the Information Arcade and the groundwork laid by the libraries for the past several years.

With the Information Arcade’s visibility on campus, and with similar resources and support in the Information Commons—a sister facility in the Hardin Library for the Health Sciences—the University of Iowa Libraries are well regarded on campus as a leader in information technology, electronic publishing, and new media. Thus, faculty and students alike are accustomed to turning to the libraries for innovation in technology and the Bailiwick project is a natural fit. Bailiwick is now fully integrated as part of a palette of new technology services and scholarly resources included within the libraries’ support of teaching, learning, and research at the University of Iowa.

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The question of how best to incorporate information literacy instruction into the academic curriculum has long been a leading concern of academic librarians. In

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recent years, this issue has grown beyond the boundaries of professional librarianship and has become a general concern regularly addressed by classroom faculty, educational administrators, and even regional accrediting organizations and state legislatures. This essay reports on the success of a pilot program in course-integration information literacy instruction in the field of medieval studies. The author’s experience with the “Engelond” project provides a model for the ways in which information literacy instruction can be effectively integrated into the academic curriculum, and for the ways in which a successful pilot program can both lead the way for further development of the general instructional program in an academic library, and serve as a springboard for future collaborative projects between classroom faculty and academic librarians.

In 1989 the Chronicle of Higher Education reported on the proceedings of a conference on teaching and technology held near the Richmond, Indiana campus of Earlham College.1 Conference speakers identified a number of concerns for those involved in teaching and learning at the end of the twentieth century. Chief among these were recent advances in information technology that threatened “to leave students adrift in a sea of information.” Earlham College librarian Evan I. Farber and his fellow speakers called upon conference attendees to develop new teaching strategies that would help students learn how to evaluate and make use of the “masses of information” now accessible to them through emergent information technologies, and to embrace a collaborative teaching model that would allow academic librarians and classroom faculty members to work together in developing instructional objectives appropriate to the information age.

The concerns expressed by these faculty and administrators for the information literacy skills of their students may have still seemed unusual to the general educational community in the late 1980s, but, as Behrens and Breivik have demonstrated, such concerns have been a leading issue for academic librarians for more than twenty years. According to its most popular definition, information literacy may be understood as “[the ability] to recognize when information is needed and . . . the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.”2 It has become increasingly clear over the past decade that educators at every level consider information literacy a critical educational issue in contemporary society.

Perhaps the most frequently cited example of concern among educational policy-makers for the information literacy skills of the student body can be found in Ernest Boyer’s report to the Carnegie Foundation, College: The Undergraduate Experience in America (1987), in which the author concludes that “all undergraduates should be introduced to the full range of resources for learning on campus,” and that students should spend “at least as much time in the library . . . as they spend in classes.”3 But while Boyer’s report may be the most familiar example of such concern, it is hardly unique. As Breivik and Gee have described, a small group of educational leaders have regularly expressed similar concerns over the past several decades. Moreover, as Bodi et al. among others, have demonstrated, the rise in professional interest in information literacy issues among librarians in the past decade is closely related to more general concerns among the educational community, especially the desire to foster critical thinking skills among the student body. By the mid-1990s, professional organizations such as the National Education Association, accrediting bodies such as the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, and even state legislators began to incorporate information literacy competencies into proposals for educational reform at both the secondary and the post-secondary levels. The confluence over the past decade of new priorities in educational reform with rapid developments in information technology provided a perfect opportunity for academic librarians to develop and implement formal information literacy programs on their campuses, and to assume a higher profile in terms of classroom instruction.

For the past two years, a pilot project has been underway at the Miller Nichols Library of the University of Missouri-Kansas City that not only fosters collaborative relations between classroom faculty members and librarians, but promotes the development of higher-order information literacy skills among participating members of the student body. Engelond: Resources for 14th-Century English Studies (www.umkc.edu/lib/engelond/) incorporates traditional library instruction in information access as well as instruction in how to apply critical thinking skills to the contemporary information environment into the academic curriculum of participating courses in the field of medieval studies. Our experience with the Engelond project provides a model for the ways in which information literacy instruction can be effectively integrated into the academic curriculum, and for the ways in which a successful pilot program can both lead the way for further development of the general instructional program in an academic library, and serve as a springboard for future collaborative projects between classroom faculty members and librarians.

**The Impetus for Collaboration**

“Most medieval Web sites are dreck,” or so wrote Linda E. Voigts, curators’ professor of English at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.
of Missouri-Kansas City, in a recent review of her participation in the Engelond project for the Medieval Academy News. Describing the impetus for the development of the project in terms of a complaint increasingly common among members of the classroom faculty, Voigts provides a number of examples from recent years in which students made extensive, but inappropriate, use of Web-based information resources in their academic research. In one example, Voigts describes a student who made the mistake of relying heavily on what appeared to be an authoritative essay for her report on medieval medical practices. The report was actually authored by a radiologist “with little apparent knowledge of either the Middle Ages or of premodern medicine.” “How can those of us who teach the Middle Ages,” Voigts asked, “help our students find in the morass of rubbish on the Internet the relatively few pearls? How can we foster skills for distinguishing between true pearls and those glittery paste jewels that dissolve upon close examination?”

By the time Voigts approached the Miller Nichols Library during the fall 1997 semester for suggestions about the best ways to teach her students how to “sift the Web” in their search for resources suitable for academic research in medieval studies, the issue of faculty-librarian collaboration in Internet instruction was a familiar one. In a representative review of the literature, Jayne and Vander Meer identified three “common approaches” that libraries have taken to the problem of teaching students how to use critical thinking skills to the use of Web-based information resources: (1) the development of generic evaluative criteria that may be applied to Web-based information resources; (2) the inclusion of Web-based information resources as simply one more material type to be evaluated during the course of one’s research (i.e., adding Web-based information resources to the litany of resources, popular and scholarly, print and electronic, typically addressed in a general instructional session); and (3) working with faculty to integrate critical thinking skills into an academic assignment that asks students to use or evaluate Web-based information resources relevant to their coursework. While the Engelond project focused primarily on the last of these options, our work on the project also fostered the use of the first two approaches in our broader instructional program.

Engelond’s Landscape

The Engelond Web site provides access to a number of resources for participating students. These resources may be categorized as course-specific (e.g., course syllabi), information literacy-related (e.g., a set of evaluative criteria for use with Web-based information resources), or multimedia (e.g., sound recordings of Voigts reading excerpts from Chaucer’s works). All of these resources are accessible from the Engelond home page www.umkc.edu/lib/engelond/ (see figure 1). Several links are also provided throughout the site to resources housed on the library’s Web site, including access to electronic databases and subject-specific guides. In describing the nature and use of the information literacy-related resources.

As Behrens and Euster have noted, recent interest in information literacy instruction has been guided to a degree by concern over student ability to make effective use of new forms of information technology. This concern is addressed in the Engelond project by its “Internet Resources” page, through which students are acquainted with the architecture of the Internet and are provided with annotated references (and links) to a number of electronic resources (including Web portals) that will allow them to begin their research in medieval studies. Students making use of the page are...
introduced, for example, to a variety of the different types of information resources available through the Internet, including Web sites, Telnet sites, news groups, and discussion lists. Users are also directed to related resources on the library Web site, including a guide to print resources for the study of Chaucer and an annotated guide to Web-based information resources generally useful for the study of literature.  

Also provided on the Engelond site is a discussion of evaluative criteria that students might apply to their selection of Web-based information resources for academic research. Designed to address Voigts' initial concern about the issue of teaching students how to apply critical thinking skills to their use of the Web, the "Criteria" page provides a general discussion of the nature of Web-based information resources, the ways in which such resources differ from traditional resources, and the kinds of questions that students must ask of any Web-based resource before making use of it in their academic work. Reflecting the idea that information literacy skills are best taught in connection with a specific subject matter, the "Criteria" page includes references to a number of illustrative examples of Web-based resources in medieval studies. This page also reflects the evolutionary nature of the Engelond project, since new illustrations are added as each successive group of student users discovers different examples (both positive and negative). Also included on this page is a link to the library's "Quick Reference Guide to Evaluating Resources on the World Wide Web," a generic version of the criteria developed for use with the broader instruction program at the Miller Nichols Library.  

While the resources described above introduce students to the information landscape in the field of medieval studies and provide them with evaluative tools tailored to subject-specific concerns in making use of Web-based information resources in their academic work, the final information literacy-related resource made available through the Engelond site is perhaps of the greatest interest. The "Class Picks" page presents the results of participating students' Web site evaluation assignments. On this page, users will find student evaluations of Web-based resources in medieval studies that draw not only on the information literacy skills provided through traditional library instruction, but also on the subject-specific knowledge that students gain as part of their academic coursework. 

Jayne and Vander Meer wrote that faculty-librarian collaboration in Internet instruction is most effective when students are asked to draw both on generic informational literacy skills and on information and evaluative criteria specific to the subject matter being addressed. As they concluded, "[t]o benefit fully from the Web's potential, students need training and guidance from librarians and faculty." Incorporating discussions of site design, organization of information, and veracity of content, the Web site evaluations found on the "Class Picks" page demonstrate that participating students have learned both from the librarian and the scholar, and have begun to consider the best ways to incorporate Web-based information resources into their day-to-day academic work.

In a review of "The Harvard Chaucer Page" (http://icg.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/), for example, students note the general appeal of the site, but criticize it both for technical problems in its design and for editorial choices that limit its utility for academic research:

The Harvard Chaucer is an insightful, colorful look at the author and his times, but is dappled conspicuously with misspellings, repeated phrases, sentence fragments, broken links, and unfinished pages. Translations of medieval texts provided on the site are often anonymous, making it hard to tell if the translation is credible and an acceptable resource for serious research in Chaucer studies. If one is interested in pursuing a topic found on the Harvard Chaucer, s/he is well advised to explore the site for ideas and background information, but to go elsewhere for authoritative sources... 

In another review, this one of "The Medieval Feminist Index" (www.haverford.edu/library/reference/mschauers/mfi/mfi.html), students provide a discussion of the scholarly authority of the site as well as a description of the results retrieved in sample searches of the index for materials relevant to the study of Chaucer. The review concludes with further examples of issues relevant to Chaucer studies that might be effectively investigated with information identified through this resource. In both reviews, students demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate a Web site both for its design and for its content, and the ability to express the strengths and weaknesses of a site from the point of view of a student concerned with how to make use of a Web-based information resource in his or her academic work. As a result, the reviews found on the "Class Picks" page not only demonstrate the successful approach to course-integrated information literacy instruction promoted through the Engelond project, but also provide a useful student resource in their own right.

The Collaborative Approach

In her review of faculty-librarian partnerships in information literacy instruction, Smalley wrote that, in the best-case scenario, "the student gains..."
mastery in using some portion of Internet resources, as well as exposure to resources intrinsically important to disciplinary pursuits. In doing the Web-based exercises, students see information seeking and evaluation as essential parts of problem solving within the field of study.1 The three information literacy-related resources found on the Engelond site— "Internet Resources," "Criteria," and "Class Picks"—demonstrate one approach to providing course-integrated information literacy instruction in such a way that the classroom faculty member and the academic librarian can work collaboratively and productively to meet their mutual instructional goals.

Both the classroom faculty member and the cooperating librarian are able to meet their instructional goals using the Engelond model because of the collaborative nature of the information literacy instruction provided to the participating students. Students enrolled in Voigts' Chaucer class during the winter 1999 semester received information literacy instruction focused both on information access and critical thinking while completing successive iterations of the Web site evaluation assignment required for the course. A brief overview of the collaborative teaching process should suggest ways in which the participating faculty member and librarian were able to draw successfully both on generic information literacy skills and on subject-specific knowledge while conducting course-integrated library instruction using the Engelond site.

Participating students during the winter 1999 semester began with a general introduction to the electronic resources available through the Miller Nichols Library at the University of Missouri-Kansas City (e.g., using the online catalog and databases such as the MLA Bibliography). Students were then presented with an introduction to the problem of applying critical thinking skills to the use of Web-based information resources, as described on Engelond's "Criteria" page. Following this introductory session conducted by the cooperating librarian, the cooperating faculty member provided students with a number of illustrative examples of the inappropriate use of electronic resources for academic research in medieval studies. From the beginning, the librarian and the faculty member modeled an integrated approach to the evaluation of information resources for their students; one that drew both on generic critical thinking skills and on specific examples of how such skills might be applied to resources in their field.

Following this initial session (which took place during the first week of the semester), students were asked to complete an evaluation of a Web site containing information they might consider using as part of their academic work. Individual sites were chosen from among those accessible through the subject-specific Web portals provided on the "Internet Resources" page. Students were provided both with the library's "Quick Reference Guide to Evaluating Resources on the World Wide Web" and with the more extensive description of Web site evaluation available on the "Criteria" page. Students completed these initial reviews over the following week and submitted copies to both the faculty member and the librarian.

In preparation for the second instructional session (which took place during the third week of the semester), the faculty member and the librarian evaluated each review twice (individually, and then together). Reviews were evaluated for the clarity of their criticism of a site, both from the point of view of organization and design and from the point of view of the significance of the information for student research in the field. Sites that seemed to merit further review by the entire class were selected from this pool of evaluations and were discussed in greater detail by the instructors.

The second instructional session took the form of an extended review of the sites selected in the meeting described above. In each case, students were asked to describe their reaction to the site in question. In cases where more than one student had evaluated the same site, each student was asked to present one or two distinct points from his or her review. The instructors then presented their reactions to the site. Again, the librarian and the faculty member modeled for the students an approach to the critical evaluation of information resources that drew not only on the professional expertise of the librarian, but also on the scholarly expertise of the faculty member. By the end of this session, students had been exposed to three separate critiques of the selected Web sites: the student's opinion of how the information presented on the site might be used in academic research; the librarian's opinion of how effectively the information was organized and presented, and how its authority, currency, etc., might differ from that of comparable print resources; and, finally, the faculty member's opinion of the place and value of the information provided on the site in the broader scheme of the discipline.

Following this session, the students were assigned to groups in order to develop more detailed evaluations of the Web sites discussed in class. As before, these assignments were submitted both to the faculty member and to the librarian. After further review by both instructors, the assignments were returned to the students for a third (and final) iteration, and then mounted to the "Class Picks" page. By the conclusion of this assignment, participating students had learned not only how to apply critical thinking skills to Web-based information resources, but had begun to think about the nature of
electronic information and the many forms that such information can take. The Web site evaluations included on the “Class Picks” page demonstrate the students’ ability to successfully evaluate a Web-based information resource both for its design and for its content, and to suggest the academic situations in which its use might be warranted for a student of medieval literature.

Evaluating Engelond

During the winter 1999 semester, we attempted to evaluate the success of the information literacy instruction provided through the Engelond project. While the Web site evaluations produced by the students provided one obvious measure of our instructional success, we attempted to learn more about the ways in which students used the materials provided through the Engelond site by polling users and by examining use patterns on the site. Both of these latter measures confirmed what the instructors already suspected: students enrolled in participating courses were making heavy use of the information literacy-related resources housed on the Engelond site and saw the skills fostered by those resources as a valuable complement to the disciplinary knowledge being gained in the traditional classroom.

As part of a general evaluation of the instructional services provided by the library during the course of the semester, students participating in the Engelond project were asked open-ended questions such as: “What features of the Engelond Web site did you find most useful as a student in this course?”; “How did the existence of the Engelond site and the collaboration between your classroom instructor and the library enhance your learning experience in this course?”; and “What aspects of the library instruction that you received as part of this course do you believe will be useful to you in other courses or in regards to lifelong learning?” Among the specific items cited most often by students as being useful to them in their academic work were two of the information literacy-related resources: “Internet Resources” and “Class Picks.” Likewise, information literacy skills such as familiarity with the structure of the Internet and the ability to critically evaluate Web-based information resources were listed by almost every student as skills that would be useful both in other academic courses and in their daily lives. Moreover, two graduate students who were participants reported that their experience with Engelond had led them to incorporate information literacy instruction into the undergraduate courses that they taught themselves.

Any conclusions about the appeal of the information literacy-related resources housed on the Engelond site based on these narrative responses were reinforced by a study of the use statistics for the same period. Through the first three months of the winter 1999 semester (January-March), the Engelond site recorded approximately one thousand “hits” on its main page.12 In each month, the most frequently accessed pages were the three information literacy-related resources described above, with the “Criteria” page regularly recording the greatest number of hits. Among the other most-frequently visited pages on the site were the multimedia resource page (“Audio-Visual”), the “Syllabi” page, and the “Quick Reference Guide to Chaucer” (housed on the library Web site, but accessible through the “Internet Resources” page). Taken in conjunction with the narrative responses provided on the evaluation form, these use statistics suggest that the information literacy resources provided through the Engelond site have become a fully-integrated, and greatly appreciated, feature of the academic curriculum in medieval studies in the Department of English at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

A Model for Future Collaboration

The Engelond project has not only been a success with students who have enrolled in participating courses, but has had a significant influence on the broader instructional program at the Miller Nichols Library. It has served as a template for future collaborative efforts between the classroom faculty and the library in terms of integrating information technology and information literacy into the academic curriculum.

In terms of the instructional program at the Miller Nichols Library, our experience with Engelond helped lay the groundwork for the development of new instructional materials and for new instructional programs. It was through Engelond, for example, that we first provided electronic access to our point-of-service guides to library materials in various subjects (e.g., the “Library Guide to Chaucer”). As of the end of the winter 1999 semester, we have made almost all of our pathfinders available on the library Web site and are now considering ways in which these might be effectively incorporated into the work being done by our faculty in developing Web-based coursework.

Also, it was through Engelond that our subject specialists started collecting and annotating Web-based information resources of potential use to our students and faculty. Now, subject specialists are developing “subject guides” to Web-based resources in a number of fields and promoting their use among faculty members who, like Voigts, are concerned about the quality of the Web-based information being used by their students in their
Initiating a culture of collaboration between members of the classroom faculty and academic librarians can be a difficult task (as so much of the literature has shown). In reviewing our experience with Engelond, we have benefited from the suggestions that Hardesty made some years ago about the means of supporting the adoption across campus of an innovative instructional model: (1) the librarian must present information literacy instruction in such a way that it does not threaten the role of the classroom faculty member as an authority in the subject matter of the course; (2) the new approach to instructional collaboration must be adopted on a limited basis at first, rather than requiring that all instructional programs immediately adopt the new approach; and (3) the results of a successful pilot projects must be "readily visible to others" on campus.13

Designed as a pilot project, Engelond has successfully demonstrated that classroom faculty and academic librarians can collaborate to meet their mutual instructional objectives, both in terms of information literacy instruction and in terms of academic course content. As information technology continues to gain a central place in the educational mission of the college and university, it is likely that the sphere of mutual instructional objectives between classroom faculty and academic librarians will only increase. Our careful approach to raising the instructional profile of librarians on campus has been rewarded, too, both by an increasing number of faculty members seeking course-related instruction in our electronic classroom as part of the regular instructional program of the library, and by the institutional commitment of resources to the TLT Center, which will become the nexus of instructional collaboration between faculty and librarians on our campus.

During the 1999–2000 academic year, no fewer than three academic courses in medieval studies will make use of the Engelond site. As more faculty become aware of the services provided by the Engelond site. As more faculty become aware of the services provided by the Engelond site, such collaborative approaches to information literacy instruction will likely become more evident across a variety of disciplines. The lessons learned over the past two years of project development will be invaluable as we move to provide course-integrated information literacy instruction to an increasing number of students in an increasingly broad variety of courses.

Acknowledgments

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The design for the Engelond site was developed by John LaRoe, former multimedia design technician at the Miller Nichols Library. The original text for the site was written by Voigt, LaRoe, and T. Michael Kelly, former humanities reference librarian at the Miller Nichols Library. Additional text and resources for the site have been developed over the past year by Voigt and myself. In addition, a number of librarians and staff members in the public services division of the Miller Nichols Library devoted time to critiquing the site and to assisting with the creation of the embedded audio files. These contributions may not always be evident to the students who benefit from the project, but they were instrumental in our ability to successfully meet our instructional objectives during the 1998–99 academic year.

References and Notes


11. Smalley, “Partnering with Faculty to Interweave Internet Instruction into College Coursework,” 20.

12. In January 1999 Engelond received 368 hits, with the three most frequently accessed items being “Criteria” (157), “Internet Resources” (130), and “Class Picks” (128). In February the total number of hits dropped to 216, with the most frequently accessed items being “Criteria” (130), “Audio-Visual” (59), and “Internet Resources” and “Class Picks” (both with 46). In March the total number of hits was 323, with the favorite resources again being “Criteria” (113), “Internet Resources” (74), and “Class Picks” (65). Statistics are based on a study of the daily use logs. Accessed Sept. 24, 1999, www.umkc.edu/_reports/.