<table>
<thead>
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<th><strong>Title</strong></th>
<th>Collaboration and sustainability: integrating information literacy into enquiry and problem-based learning initiatives in UCD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Authors(s)</strong></td>
<td>Dodd, Lorna</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Publication date</strong></td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publication information</strong></td>
<td>Barret, T. &amp; Cashman, D (eds.). A Practitioner’s Guide to Enquiry and Problem Based Learning: Case Studies from University College Dublin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publisher</strong></td>
<td>UCD Teaching and Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Link to online version</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/ucdtli0041.pdf">http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/ucdtli0041.pdf</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item record/more information</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10197/2806">http://hdl.handle.net/10197/2806</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publisher's statement</strong></td>
<td>Released under Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial-Share-Alike 3.0 License</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Collaboration and Sustainability: Integrating Information Literacy into Enquiry and Problem-based Learning Initiatives in UCD

Lorna Dodd

The development of generic skills is often cited as one of the benefits of introducing both enquiry and problem-based learning. One of these skills is information literacy, which is the ability to identify, find, evaluate and use information in an ethical way. Not only do students develop this skill as a result of participating in enquiry and problem-based learning, it is necessary for them to be able to become effective information seekers in order to successfully negotiate their way through the process. So it is important for academics and librarians to work together at all stages of any initiative.

Integrating information literacy into the curriculum is the most effective way to allow students to develop these skills. Although there can often be challenges such as finding space in a busy timetable, the collaboration required between academics and librarians can result in a productive and long lasting relationship between faculty and library, resulting in a sustainable partnership. Moreover, the opportunity to develop information literacy enables the student to gain skills which can be applied not only to their other academic courses but also to their work life into the future.

There are several ways in which information literacy can be integrated into a problem-based or enquiry-based curriculum. The method chosen will be influenced by factors such as the number of students, the available facilities and the available space in the timetable. However, any change in educational approach requires all aspects of student instruction to adjust accordingly and this includes the delivery of information literacy instruction. Some approaches to this are outlined in the poster on the next page.

In UCD, information literacy has been integrated into both problem-based and enquiry-based curricula. One of the key features of this success has been collaboration between academics and librarians. This collaboration has meant that the library and schools have worked together in partnership, designing and evaluating each initiative. The collaboration between library and faculty continues and it is this that has brought about sustainability in delivering and supporting these initiatives.
Enquiry and Problem Based Learning and the Information Literate Student
Lorna Dodd and Susan Boyle, UCD Library

In EPBL, the development of generic skills is considered one of the most beneficial outcomes. Students are required to become independent information seekers, a skill that can be applied to all aspects of academic and professional life. In order to become effective self-directed learners, students must be information literate. Therefore, it is important that students are equipped with information literacy skills so that they can successfully participate and engage in the EPBL process in a meaningful way.

Challenges Integrating Information Literacy into EPBL
- Finding space in the timetable
- Sustainability
- Value to Students
- Librarian understanding the EPBL process

How to Avoid Potential Problems via Collaboration between Librarian and Academic
- Involve librarian in curriculum design
- Librarians can make excellent tutors
- Involve librarians in assessment criteria and evaluation process
- Create an ongoing partnership between librarian and faculty
- Include the librarian in EPBL training days for academic staff

Integrating Information Literacy into EPBL - The Student Gains:
- Ability to find relevant information quickly and effectively
- Understanding of how to use information ethically
- Ability to efficiently evaluate information and its source.

Strategies for integrating information literacy
Any change in educational approach requires ALL aspects of student instruction to change including delivery of information literacy instruction.

1 Workshop Approach
Definition: Students work in their groups on the problem. They report to wider group on the value of resources used. Librarian guides them through the resources. Groups search for information again.
Best Use: After students are introduced to their first ‘trigger’/problem they can start gathering relevant material.

2 Problem Approach
Definition: Students are presented with a ‘trigger’ or ‘problem’ with development of information literacy skills as the main learning outcome.
Best Use: If there is no space in the timetable for information literacy instruction a problem approach can be used during orientation.

3 Fixed Resource
Definition: Students request a traditional class on a specific area they are struggling with, e.g. information seeking
Best Use: At the point of need, students request help.

For more info, see www.ucd.ie/library/pbl