
Engaging Students through Information Literacy Based Service Learning Assignments for Community Benefit and Academic Success

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LOEX 2016, Pittsburgh

Objectives

1. Consider the definition of service learning and the potential of information literacy based service learning assignments to boost student learning and engagement, improve university/community relations, help those in need, and help students improve their resumes and job prospects
2. Explore how IL service learning assignments have been successfully used at a variety of universities
3. Develop unique IL service learning assignments for a variety of disciplines and community partners

Opening Activity

Discuss in groups:

What does service learning mean to you?

Service Learning Defined

A form of **experiential education** in which students engage in activities that address human and **community needs**, together with structured opportunities for **reflection** designed to achieve desired **learning outcomes**.

(Jacoby, 2015)

Service Learning Defined

- **Experiential education** - Gives students hands on, practical experience applying learned skills
- **Address community needs** - Makes real impact on real-world organization
- **Reflection** - Allows for authentic learning and growth
- **Learning outcomes** - Reciprocity is what makes service learning stand apart from simple volunteering

(Jacoby, 2015)

Benefits to the Student

- Real world problem solving
- Personal growth and interpersonal outcomes
- Deeper understanding of complexity of social issues

(Jacoby, 2015)

Benefits to Librarians

- Engages and motivates students
- Demonstrates that information literacy skills are essential to completing real-world work tasks
- Personally rewarding in terms of providing insight into the students' thinking and helping community partners
- May lead to new partnerships with teaching faculty

Benefits to the Community Partners

- Students use information literacy skills to help community organizations to solve problems, increasing productivity and help for those in need
- Students become more aware of what organizations do and may be more likely to volunteer with them or donate to them in the future
- Employees of organization may learn from the students' skills or gain insight into community opinions concerning their work

Benefits to the University

- Experiential learning is a High Impact Practice that has been linked to student retention and success
- Higher education has three missions: teaching, research, and service
- Wisconsin idea. Education has an obligation to improve the lives of those outside the university
- Improve town/gown relationships

Good Practices

- Require use of course knowledge and skills to address real problems
- Apply theories covered in the course to service learning projects
- Encourage students to critically reflect on the observations they make
- Projects take place over a sustained period of time
- Students are involved in planning of their project

(CBL Scorecard)

Good Practices

- Students have important responsibilities in their project and in community
- Projects are useful to community
- Instructor has a clear understanding of what students are doing
- Partners have clear sense of what projects will accomplish for them

(CBL Scorecard)

IUP Examples - Community Research Assignment

Programs for Cancer Survivors¶



Library-151-Introduction-to-Information-Literacy¶

Indiana-Regional-Medical-Center¶

Spring-2016¶

Name-Removed¶

Are the Use of Therapy Dogs in Nursing Homes Beneficial?¶



LIBR-151-Introduction-to-Information-Literacy¶

St. Anne-Nursing-Home¶

Spring-2016¶

Name-Removed¶

Skin-Cancer-and-Tanning¶



LIBR-151-Introduction-to-Information-Literacy¶

IUP-Center-of-Health-Awareness¶

Spring-2016¶

Name-Removed¶

One- and Two-Credit Classes

- One-credit library course final assignment is research portfolio on a topic suggested by a community partner
 - Sample partners: YMCA, Four-Footed Friends, Indiana Regional Hospital, IUP Health Center
- Two-credit library course students do research portfolio and a project related to community partner need.
 - Projects ranged in complexity depending upon the students' interests;
 - posters to encourage boys to read more for the public library
 - portfolio of ice-breaker activities for family grief counseling center sessions
 - Website for a domestic violence prevention group

Student Comments

- “I think that the service learning assignment was an insightful project. I got to learn a lot of information about a topic I wanted to. Hopefully, the information I found will help others. As a senior, I have been doing research projects for years. Some have been interesting and some have been terrible, but I think I enjoyed doing this research the most. This was the first time I ever felt passionately about researching a topic in which I was both truly interested and for which I had some degree of professional experience. This was also the first time that I could put my research to legitimate use in hopes of increasing knowledge in a topic that not many people know much about. “

Buffalo State Example - Salvation Army as Partner

General Idea:

- Part of 7.5 week, one-credit, 100-level Library Research Methods course
- Students engaged with research and information literacy skills
- These skills were used in support of the Salvation Army's programs and services
- Service learning aspect added to existing student learning outcomes

What Did They Research?

- The benefits of arts and crafts programs for seniors
- Best practices for a youth nutrition program
- How to successfully run a yoga program for seniors
- The importance of after-school programs for urban youth
- **How to improve volunteer recruitment and retention**

Student Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to ...

- Efficiently and effectively locate a range of appropriate information sources
- Distinguish the differing strengths of various types of information sources
- Evaluate retrieved materials for accuracy, authenticity, and usefulness
- Understand the importance of using information ethically and legally
- *Understand the various stages of the research process*
- *Perform research to serve practical purposes*

How Did They Present the Research?

1. Annotated bibliography – addressed the learning objectives related to locating and evaluating information.
2. Slide presentation – addressed the learning objectives related to synthesizing information and using information ethically.

Lessons Learned

1. Students might appear hesitant at first
2. Be comfortable giving up some control
3. Start small and be realistic
4. Expect to revise course
5. Encourage creativity and critical thinking

Other Examples

- Roy et. al. (2009) includes examples of library service learning activities in graduate library programs
- Barry (2011) included service learning assignments in two-credit course
- New book:
 - Kott, K. (2016). *Service Learning in Academic Libraries in the United States. Service Learning, Information Literacy, and Libraries*. Libraries Unlimited.

Advice to Get Started

- Get some help from the service learning office in your institution. They probably have one.
- Seek out instructors already using service learning in their teaching
 - Get advice
 - See if they are interested in an information literacy based assignment
- Always include a reflection. It is good pedagogy in any case
- Read professional literature and attend workshops
- Consider starting with an experiential assignment where students offer a service but don't actually visit the community partner.
 - Community partners may prefer this
 - It's an easier way to get started

Group Activity

- Using handouts, create a potential activity that combines learning outcomes and community partner needs
- Ten minutes for working in small groups and five minutes for sharing with full group
- Think reciprocity - how can you (students and community partner) help each other?
- Consider a reflection piece in your activity

Thank You!

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