

Amplify Your Impact

Yvonne Dooley, Col. Ed.

Partnering with Student Affairs to Deliver Undergraduate Information Literacy Workshops

Jessica Jackson

This case study highlights a successful collaboration with a student affairs unit (First Year Experience [FYE]) that allows the York Library to offer student success workshops directly to undergraduates. This outreach initiative required little effort from the library in terms of marketing as the FYE department managed all promotions; the library simply scheduled the sessions, showed up, and taught. These workshops introduced vital information literacy (IL) and research skills early in the undergraduate experience and successfully increased the library's total IL presentations. Looking ahead, York College plans to offer a credit-bearing course on library research skills, and these introductory workshops will help drive future enrollment by demonstrating the value of these skills early in a student's degree. Other libraries—especially those at small colleges or without librarian-led, credit-bearing courses—can replicate this model to establish a “two-pronged approach” to IL instruction, reaching eager students directly in addition to traditional, faculty-requested one-shots.

Academic libraries are increasingly tasked with finding creative ways to embed IL outside the traditional classroom. For decades, the “one-shot” instruction session has been the standard vehicle for library outreach, yet it frequently leaves librarians at the mercy of faculty schedules and limited classroom time. Too often, one-shots take place when librarians are available to teach and when faculty can fit a guest lecture into the syllabus, which may or may not be the best time to introduce IL and research skills. For example, showing students how to search databases for scholarly articles is of limited use when students have not yet chosen a topic or developed a research question. However, moving beyond the rigid boundaries of the one-shot introduces a major operational challenge: Libraries are already understaffed, and marketing standalone library sessions directly to students is notoriously difficult, often yielding low turnout despite significant promotional effort by library staff. To offer students the opportunity to cultivate foundational research skills without absorbing the unsustainable additional work of promotions and marketing, libraries must seek strategic campus partnerships that solve the problem of student recruitment.

This article details how York Library supplemented its IL presentation offerings by collaborating with York College's FYE office to develop a series of workshops so that students can develop their IL and research skills during their own time. This proactive approach has helped increase the number of IL presentations York Library offers overall, as well as the number of students that

Jessica Jackson is Assistant Professor and Outreach & Assessment Librarian, York College, The City University of New York (CUNY), Jamaica, NY. Correspondence concerning this column should be directed to Yvonne Dooley, Head of Research & Instruction, University Libraries, Creighton University, email: yvonnedooley@creighton.edu.

they reach with classroom-type instruction. In addition, these workshops have also been useful for promoting the library's other resources and services, such as course reserves and research consultations, directly to students.

York College, The City University of New York (CUNY) is a small senior college located in Jamaica (Queens), New York. It is an urban commuter school with a diverse student population. One of the many ways that the York Library supports the development of students' IL and research skills is by offering IL presentations for students at the request of faculty across all departments. During these presentations, which are conducted during class time, library faculty teach students the skills they need to complete assignments with a research component. These presentations are often referred to as "one-shots" in research literature on IL instruction from academic librarians.

Historically, presentations at the request of faculty were the primary, if not sole, way that librarians at York College provided instruction to students in a classroom format. While other forms of instruction—such as answering questions at the reference desk, over chat reference, or via scheduled consultations—exist and continue, York Library did not offer IL presentations in a classroom format directly to students. Prior to the pandemic, when enrollment at York College was higher than it is presently, York Library consistently received a high number of requests for IL presentations directly from faculty across many departments, representing a range of disciplines. For example, in the five years between 2015 and 2019, the library received an average of 130 requests each year. During this same period, the average full-time equivalent (FTE) for both undergraduate and graduate students was 6,034.

However, the pandemic disruption, lower enrollment, and an increase in online course offerings resulted in a sharp decrease in the number of requests that the library received from faculty for IL instruction for their students. This can be clearly seen in the three years from 2020 to 2022, when the library received an average of only 51 requests from faculty. During this same period, the average FTE for all students dropped to 5,212. In the 2023–2024 academic year, an outreach and assessment librarian joined York Library, and by focusing on outreach with both faculty members throughout the college and teachers at the Queens High School for the Sciences (QHSS; a specialized public school that was co-located on campus), the number of IL requests the library received increased to 92, even though total enrollment dropped even further, with an FTE of only 4,284 in Fall 2023. Since then, enrollment has continued to be well below prepandemic years, with Fall FTE in 2024 and 2025 at 4,307 and 4,377, respectively.

While York Library will continue to build on its relationship with faculty to meet their needs with respect to IL presentations, under the leadership of the outreach librarian, the library began a more proactive approach of teaching IL skills by offering a series of workshops directly to first-year students through a collaboration with the FYE office. The goal of FYE is to facilitate the transition of first-year and transfer students to York College. This division supports students by creating opportunities for academic and social integration and introducing students to campus support services.

In addition to important work such as organizing new student orientation day, FYE supports students by collaborating with various departments that provide student support to offer "student success sessions" throughout the academic year. These workshops serve several objectives, including giving students the opportunity to engage with topics that are related to career readiness, helping students develop skills that will enhance their academic and professional success, and cultivating students' relationships with faculty, administration, and peers. Given the goals of FYE

and the student success workshops, working with the library to develop IL and research-related presentations was a natural partnership.

The FYE program has been invaluable to the library in offering direct-to-students IL presentations. Prior to the start of the academic year, the outreach librarian and director of FYE select dates for the workshops. York College has “club hours,” or two time periods per week when no classes are scheduled. Having workshops during club hours is ideal because students are available and are not forced to choose between attending their classes or developing their research skills. The FYE team takes care of promoting all the student success sessions, including designing a flyer with descriptions of all the sessions offered by the library each semester. The workshop descriptions are written by the outreach librarian, and librarians working at the reference desk are encouraged to offer the flyer and mention the workshops to first-year students who ask for help at the reference desk, but this is the extent of the library’s efforts with respect to promotions. The FYE office sends students email and text reminders encouraging them to sign up and attend the workshops, tracks student attendance at the sessions via QR code check-in, and collects end-of-session satisfaction surveys, also via QR code.

The workshops are designed by the outreach librarian and cover a variety of topics. They are designed and scheduled so that a fundamental IL skills workshop is offered once a month during the first three months of the fall and spring semester, and a shorter workshop that focuses on a particular IL or research skill—such as using reference sources, archives, or artificial intelligence—is offered later in the month. This allows students to learn the basics of how to do library research and build on what they have learned. Students have the opportunity to complete hands-on learning activities, such as completing a scavenger hunt, in many of the workshops. At the beginning of each semester, some of the workshops focus on how to get the most out of the college library by highlighting services that first-year students might not be aware of. For example, a workshop offered early in the fall and spring semester on course reserves and how to save money on textbooks has proven popular with students.

The collaboration between the library and FYE has also led to an additional on-campus collaboration with an accelerated study in academic programs (ASAP) division. Accelerate, Complete, Engage (ACE) is a comprehensive program designed to help students complete a bachelor’s degree in four years. The ACE program provides students with a range of financial, academic, and personal support, such as academic advising and career counseling, as well as assistance with tuition, textbooks, and transportation. In the 2024–2025 academic year, first-year and transfer students enrolled in the ACE program were required to attend at least one IL-focused student success session, whereas in 2025–2026, ACE students were encouraged but not required to attend. Due to the positive feedback from students on the benefit of attending the IL-focused sessions and the ACE program’s commitment to helping their students develop their IL skills, first-year and transfer ACE students will once again be required to attend one of the library’s student success workshops in the 2026–2027 academic year.

In addition to introducing students to vital IL and research skills early in the undergraduate experience, the workshops have the additional benefit of establishing good rapport with students early on. Many of the students who attended the workshops followed up on what they learned by becoming regular users of course reserves, booking research consultations, asking for help at the reference desk, or simply saying *hello* when they saw the outreach librarian on campus. Establishing a feeling of community between students and the library is especially important at a commuter school that does not provide students with the “traditional” college experience of living on campus.

The collaboration between the library and FYE has been extremely successful. In 2024–2025, a total of 167 students attended 21 workshops, demonstrating the immense potential of outsourcing promotional labor to a campus partner. In 2025–2026, 129 students attended 20 workshops. The collaboration will continue in 2026–2027. During this next phase, the success of the workshops is important for several reasons. Since 2002, the QHSS has been co-located on the York College campus, but students at this top-ranked school are moving to their own campus in 2026–2027. As the relocation of QHSS will result in a slight reduction in the number of IL one-shot requests the library receives, the student success workshops can help mitigate the library's total IL presentations and overall attendance. These workshops additionally will help serve as a pipeline for encouraging students to enroll in York College's first ever credit-bearing IL course: LIB – 100, a 1-credit course to be offered starting in fall 2027. By introducing students to the value of research skills early in their undergraduate experience, the library has bypassed traditional marketing bottlenecks and laid the groundwork for future curricular enrollment. The York Library and FYE partnership demonstrates how effective collaboration with an administrative department can benefit the entire campus community.