

**Achieving Legal Research Literacy
Using Blended Learning and Learning
Community Strategies**


*Digital Innovation Gallery
CALL 2010*

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Project Goals

- Improve the experience of students by helping them to build better research and information literacy skills.
- Alleviate some of the pressures faced by the librarians because of the very heavy teaching load.



1st Pillar: Librarians

- Brian Dickson Law Library delivers a mandatory legal research methodology course for all first-year students at the law school.
 - Approx. 12 weeks, 90 minutes per week, in groups of 20.
- In 2009-10, 500+ 1L, but only 3 librarians.



2nd Pillar: Legal Research

- Professional rules of responsibility include legal research literacy as a competency.
- No standardized or universally-accepted approach to teaching legal research skills exists, in Canada or elsewhere.
- Result? Law faculties say it is important, but don't want to teach it!



Example: Legal research in the law school curriculum

uVic • 1.5 cr 1L F/W • 1 paper course	UBC • no 1L LRW offered, but at least one 2L/3L course w/research component • 1 paper course	U of A • series of lectures on LRW as part of 1L Law in Context course
U of C • 4 cr 1L in legal reasoning and research	uSask • 0 cr 1L course • 2 paper courses	U of M • no specific LRW course required
uWindsor • 1L course • 1 paper course	Western • 3 cr, 1L F/Jan in LRW and advocacy • 1 paper course	U of T • series of lectures on LRW as part of 1L Intro to Law course • 1 paper course
Osgoode • no separate required 1L course • 1 paper course	Queen's • 1 cr 1L F/W • 1 paper course	uOttawa • 1 cr 1L F • 1 paper course
McGill • 3 cr, 1L F/W, followed by 2 cr, 2L F/W course w/mooting component	UNB • LRW instruction as part of 1L advocacy course • 1 paper course	Dalhousie • 3 cr 1L F/W • 1 paper course

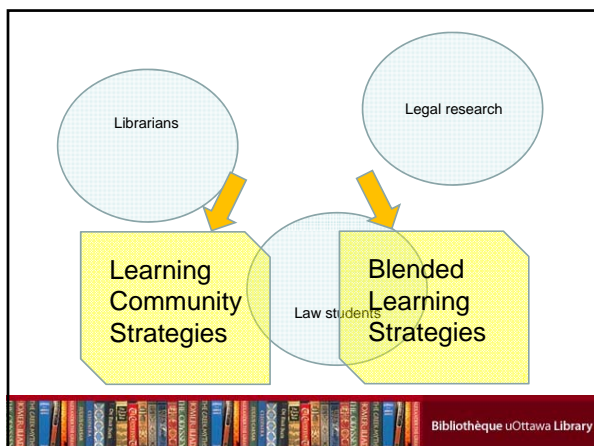
3rd Pillar: Law Students

“Yes, you really will use algebra when you grow up”

- Law students think they already know how to research, but most don't.
- They also don't understand *why* they have to learn these skills.

Kelly M. Feeley, & Stephanie A. Vaughan, "Yes, You Will Really Use Algebra When You Grow Up: Providing Law Students with Proof that Legal Research and Writing is Essential in the Real World" (2002) 10 Perspectives: Teaching Legal Research and Writing 105.





Learning Community Strategies

Create a course in advanced legal research, writing and teaching methods for 2L and 3L students who would also act as teaching assistants and mentors to 1L.

- **Dean's Legal Research & Writing Fellows Program**
 - advanced research and writing taught by librarian, professor, and local practitioner-mentor
 - teaching assistants to 1L legal research course



Blended Learning Strategies

Develop a number of web-based self-instruction modules on various aspects of legal research.

- **Online modules in Blackboard:**
 - search strategies, keywords and Boolean logic;
 - using secondary sources in law;
 - the rules of legal citation;
 - finding Ontario legislation and regulations





