

Decker Library Assessment Report, 2016-2020

As we embark on [new assessment](#) practices, in particular for [co-curricular activities](#), Decker Library thought it would be important to close the loop on our assessment landscape from 2016-2020.

Historically, at Decker Library, official assessment of student learning has only taken place in the area of instruction. However, we know that all the library's activities – from collection development, to digitization, to circulation, and special collections – are all integral to the student learning experience. As we move forward, we wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on what has and hasn't worked over the past four years of assessment at Decker Library.

Key Terms

Direct assessment involves looking at actual samples of student work produced during library instruction. At MICA, this was historically interpreted as requiring two scorers and a norming process to review samples completely.

Indirect assessment is gathering information through means other than looking at actual samples of student work. These could include surveys, exit interviews, and focus groups.

Source: [Skidmore College Direct v. Indirect Assessment](#)

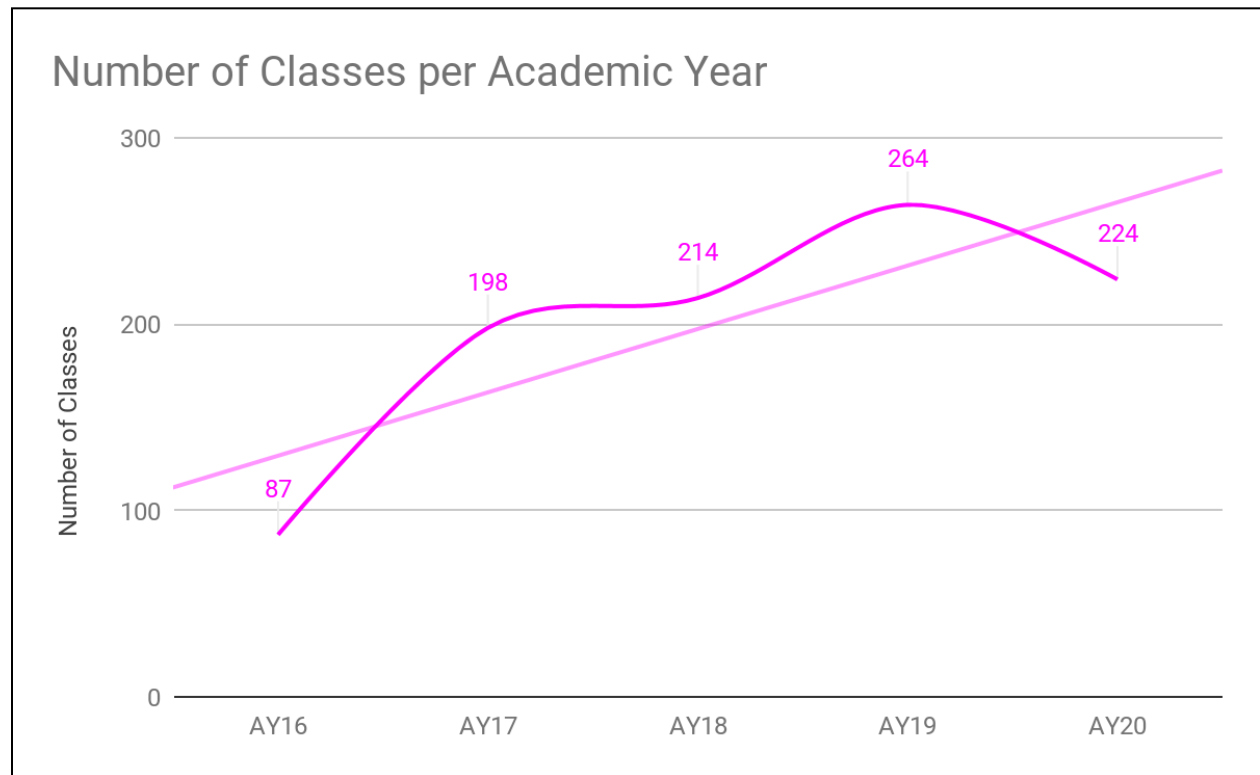
Required Instruction Overview

Before looking into the specifics of the library's assessment, it is necessary to see what tests, classes, and sessions were required over time as well as how the program changed. The following tables provide a quick overview of required library activities, what they entailed, and the visible increase in instruction over time.

Library Session Required	AY17	AY18	AY19	AY20
First Year Information Literacy Test	X			
Art Matters		X	X	X
Modernism & After			X	X
Drawing Tradition & Innovation			X	X
Critical Inquiry			X	

Content of Required Classes	AY17	AY18	AY19	AY20
First Year Information Literacy Test	11 questions on a variety of information literacy-related topics			
Art Matters		1.5 hour session on evaluating sources	Two sessions: 30 minute orientation at the beginning of the semester and a 1.5 hour session on evaluating sources	1.5 hour session on developing a research question and finding sources
Modernism & After			Two 45-minute sessions: 1st week speed research; 2nd week 3 slide presentation	Two 45-minute sessions: 1st week speed research; 2nd week 3 slide presentation
Drawing Tradition & Innovation			1.5 hour session on researching traditions and	1.5 hour session on researching traditions and

			innovations in art	innovations in art
Critical Inquiry			1 hour session on concept mapping and evaluating sources	



*Note that the number dipped in AY20 due to COVID-19, but we were on track to equal or exceed AY19 numbers

Assessment By Year

Pre-2016

Prior to 2016, the library was directed to utilize direct assessment. Decker staff took two approaches:

1. [Direct Assessment of all in-class exercises](#)
2. [Direct Assessment of Information Literacy Test](#)
 - a. Pre-test administered during the Writing Test at the start of the semester
 - b. Post-test administered in Art Matters

At the end of 2016, The Information Literacy and Instructional Design Librarian rewrote the [Information Literacy Test](#) to better align with our Program Learning Outcomes. Because of this, the library moved in the following direction, as evidenced [from 2015-2016 Annual Report](#):

“The librarians will still use library exercises in all instruction sessions for informal and indirect assessment, but the direct assessment component will be limited to the information literacy test.”

Through the results of our [Information Literacy Test from 2015-2016](#), we found that students who received library instruction were significantly more information literate than those who didn't. Considering that SNAAP data from the time showed that there was a gap between what students learned regarding information literacy at MICA and what they needed in their career, the library presented a strong case for more students being educated on information literacy by the library. These efforts merited a 100% increase in library instruction that year, due to increased outreach to faculty.

AY17

In AY17, the Information Literacy Pre-and Post-Test was once again administered, but as the sole form of official assessment. While the [Information Literacy Test 2016-2017 results](#) from AY17 showed that students who receive library instruction are significantly more information literate than those who don't, the test results this year did not show a statistically significant discrepancy between students who did and didn't receive library instruction.

However, as we noted in our [AY 2016-2017 Annual Report](#), instruction increased 125% so students may have received instruction elsewhere in the curriculum. This reinforced our belief that using the Information Literacy Test distributed to only First Year Students was an imperfect model of assessment: it did not assess students beyond their first year, while they do continue to receive instruction. It also did not account for a more scaffolded instruction plan across different coursework and majors.

AY18

In AY18, the library overhauled our assessment program to focus completely on direct assessment of in-class activities. We also wanted to expand our assessment beyond just first year instruction.

Updated Assessment Program from the [2017-2018 Annual Report](#) included two major forms of

direct assessment:

1. Direct assessment of an activity on assessing students' ability to evaluate sources, that was given to all Art Matters sections.
2. Direct assessment of an activity in four pilot sessions of a second-year Art History course, [Modernism & After](#), with an average score of 72%.

For more, see the co-curricular assessment report [here](#).

AY19

AY19 saw an expansion of the required classes that the library decided to assess:

1. The library was incorporated into every section of [Modernism and After](#) and we assessed each one.
2. We also continued to assess all [Art Matters sections](#).
3. We also assessed all sections of Humanistic Studies' First Year Requirement, [Critical Inquiry](#) (now called Frameworks), but determined that requiring all sections of the class to attend and be assessed didn't make sense, given the lack of coordination between the Humanistic Studies instructors and the variation in their assignments.
4. Information Literacy & Instructional Design Intern, Clare Kuntz Balcer, [presented](#) on a curricular mapping project undertaken with the Photography Department.

There are two major takeaways from the library's AY19 work:

1. **Assessment needed outside of required classes:** We started doing direct assessment on all of the material generated from our required classes, rather than a sampling, which is something we want to do in the future. However, this still doesn't assess where a significant amount of student learning is happening: through discussions with students.
2. **Co-curricular assessment is a round peg trying to fit in the square hole of credit-bearing course assessment:** The library would benefit professional development around holistic assessment processes that is specific to the work we do. The library currently tailors an assessment model for credit-bearing courses to our work which doesn't function exactly the same way. This means that we are likely not doing what we should be doing or want to be doing with assessment. We're currently spending time on assessment that would probably be better spent improving our teaching and services. Ideally, assessment would help us do that, but it doesn't do that for us currently and we would love a new model where it does. We're also seeking solutions to reduce how labor intensive assessment is, including technology.

For more detail, please see the [Narrative Assessment Report from AY19](#).

AY20

In AY20, partially in response the labor involved in our assessment practices, the library piloted two online assessment elements in our Art Matters classes:

1. [Information Literacy Quiz](#) for all Art Matters classes in order to assess their information

literacy skills prior to instruction.

2. [Online Direct Assessment in Art Matters](#) with mixed success

For both, however, we found it difficult to get full participation. We only got about 130 responses for each, whereas we know more students passed through our courses. Unfortunately, while online direct assessment saves time, it also makes it difficult to ensure participation during the class activities.

We also assessed a sampling of [Modernism and After](#) sections, but were unable to complete them due to COVID-19 related campus closures. However, the results were scored across several sections, library instructors, and professors, so we consider it a useful sample.

What We Learned

Assessment is a long game: Each year, we have tinkered with our rubrics and also designed our instruction around both faculty feedback and assessment results. Going into AY 2020-2021, the Instruction Team is confident that we can develop online learning, as we've spent three years now, building a community of practice around designing and evaluating our teaching.

More instruction produces better information literacy results: Throughout AY 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 we were met with both faculty and students complaining that they had too many library instruction sessions. However, both anecdotally and via assessment, we observed *far* better results in the Modernism and After assessment of [AY 2019-2020](#) than [AY 2018-2019](#). Students, across all categories, moved from "Developing" to "Accomplished" in their work. See for example the "Research & Comprehension" results:

			Average Score:	4
Key:	4-5	2-3	1	
	Accomplished	Developing	Insufficient	
Research & Comprehension	Clear understanding of the context of the movement is articulated. Key historical factors are highlighted. Appropriate article or book selected and all bibliographic information is correctly recorded.	Some understanding of the movement is articulated and/or some of the bibliographic information is incorrect.	Students do not complete the worksheet.	

We believe this is a result of the fact that this class of sophomores would have had library instruction in Art Matters, Critical Inquiry, and Drawing: Tradition and Innovation in their first year.

The library is teaching a lot, but we will need to be more targeted in the future: While the results are good, half of the librarians are teaching more classes than is typically recommended and expected, even when someone has the position of Instruction Librarian. Since the library is maxed out on how many classes it teaches, some inquiry must be made about the possibility for

required, credit-bearing research courses at different levels. Since the work makes a difference and is important to student success after college, we must consider new ways to help our students gain the research and information literacy skills they need.

Learning does not just happen through instruction: Anecdotally, we know that library instruction doesn't happen in a vacuum and should not be the only library activity assessed. Students learn through our collection development, through updates to our library management software, through Interlibrary Loan, through reference and access services interactions, and through research consultations, among many other activities.