

CHAPTER 9.

GOING WILD: ADDING  
INFORMATION LITERACY TO WEC

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*The University of Vermont adapted the writing enriched curriculum model in a collaboration between the writing in the disciplines program and the university libraries. Our writing and information literacy in the disciplines (WILD) program invites departments to reflect on the ways writing and information literacy are intertwined and disciplinarily situated. Collaborative attention to the intersections of writing and information literacy helps departments refine their disciplinary goals. Our work is grounded in an emerging set of four principles, which we explore in three programmatic contexts: biomedical & health sciences, engineering, and geology. WILD's productive boundary blurring of writing and information literacy encourages deeper dives into both fields.*

The WEC model offers many benefits to participating institutions, not least among them a way out of the perpetual literacy crisis mode that plagues American higher education. As a project that tackles rigorous reflection on and definition of disciplinary priorities, as Anson's introduction in this volume describes, it creates a rich environment for curricular and pedagogical change. The WEC model flips the crisis mode script, inviting participants to focus not on what students can't do, but on what disciplinary practitioners themselves do—and thus what disciplinary faculty want students to achieve. It changes the conversation from *what makes writing good?* to *what kinds of effective writing are done here in this discipline?*

UVM's emerging version of WEC expands focus to include both information literacy and writing. What it means to be *information literate* is as elusive as what it means to *be a good writer*, and writing scholars know that literate achievements, or "good writing," are iterative and nuanced. In her Conference on College Composition and Communication Chair's address, Adler-Kassner noted, "writing is never 'just writing,'" for writing is learned in specific places, at specific times, and realized in particular ways in given contexts (2017, p. 323). Informa-

tion literacy, too, is shaped in and realized by contextual factors, and knowledge of this—among students and teachers—is uneven and tacit. (Mis)conceptions about how both writing and information literacy are learned can contribute mightily to faculty discontent about why student performance doesn't always match expectations. The project described here builds on transformations in the field of information literacy to broaden the focus of department-based WID/WAC work. Our Writing and Information Literacy in the Disciplines (WILD) model treats information literacy as an equal partner to writing and explores the intersections of our two fields in the workings of other disciplines. WILD is directly inspired by WEC: our work begins with student/faculty/community partner surveys and curriculum maps, and leads to departmental implementation plans. The survey process provides a systematic backdrop for departmental conversations about desired outcomes, and the curricular mapping process offers the opportunity to examine how those desired outcomes are currently realized—and how they might be. WILD reinforces some dimensions of current practice and creates plans for change. But WILD's intellectual challenge is unique in that it asks departmental faculty to consider how students' writing skills, abilities, and dispositions are fundamentally intertwined with students' abilities to evaluate, synthesize, and contextualize information.

Each WILD team—17 to date—brings together WID, the library, and a department faculty leader, who jointly coordinate a departmental process for reflecting on faculty, student, and community partner assumptions about writing and information literacy; creating learning goals; and exploring how those goals are—or could be—implemented via the department's curriculum. By bringing together WID, departmental faculty, and the library, WILD recognizes that writing and information literacy are intertwined and disciplinarily situated. This intertwining is a hallmark of UVM's general education reforms.

UVM has come relatively late to the work of developing curricular general education expectations. Historically, its general education has had quite a loose structure (each of seven undergraduate colleges has its own degree requirements, and university-wide requirements are few in number). Only in 2014 did all UVM undergraduates have a common first-year requirement involving writing—and that new requirement asked faculty to attend to foundational writing *and* information literacy in a foundational course. The Faculty Senate adopted this requirement with the explicit recognition that communication and information literacy outcomes are developmental and not learned in any single course. While the institution neither structured nor funded any particular implementation of disciplinary attention to writing and information literacy in the majors, the general education initiative did shape the ways in which the campus' writing in the disciplines work proceeded. UVM, despite its relatively prominent history in writing across the

curriculum (WAC) thanks to Toby Fulwiler’s iconic Faculty Writing Workshop, has never had a fully institutionalized approach to WAC. Rather, it has relied on a WAC—now WID, writing in the disciplines—director to cultivate and organize grassroots individual and departmental attention to writing. WEC, with its department-by-department framework, was an attractive model for organizing attention to the disciplinary evolution of the foundational outcomes the faculty senate had identified. The creation of the foundational writing and information literacy requirement was a powerful boost for WAC/WID on campus. As we sought to build on the new first-year requirement, it was only natural that WID and academic librarians collaborate to engage departments in curricular reform. WEC alone wouldn’t address the priorities the Faculty Senate had identified, given the emphasis on writing *and* information literacy as a core undergraduate learning outcome. As Fodrey and Hassay argue in Chapter 7 of this volume, it is critical that WEC implementation evolve to suit the contexts and “nuanced details” of each institution. Thus WILD became a way to systematically connect with departments seeking to build on our new foundational requirement. With seed funding from the Davis Foundation, we launched a program that brought together WID, the library, and departmental faculty to investigate the way communication and information literacy outcomes are situated in departments and nurtured over time across multiple courses.

## **ADDING INFORMATION LITERACY TO WEC: EXPANDING THE MODEL**

WEC’s lever for change is its emphasis on disciplinary expertise: departments are invited to articulate how writing outcomes are an inextricable part of their discipline, rather than an add-on that requires outside expertise and intervention. When we began adapting WEC into WILD, we expected a simple extension that would broaden WEC’s focus to include information literacy. In fact, our first concern was that WEC might collapse under the addition, since we wanted to equally privilege writing and information literacy and thus our first department survey drafts were quite long. As we worked through the adaptation (eventually creating surveys of reasonable length as we consulted with departments about the information they hoped to capture), we found that information literacy enhanced WEC principles and changed them.

WILD’s attention to threshold concepts from information literacy invites departments to use extradisciplinary concepts to create disciplinary insights. Participating departments had extensive experience with disciplinary research, of course, but very little awareness of instructional librarianship as an academic discipline. Some judicious attention to threshold concepts in academic librar-

ianship created productive collaborations in which the department is central and is supported by WID/WAC and information literacy approaches. Faculty confidence in their own roles as disciplinary researchers often made it easier for them to imagine and articulate a picture of a successful student researcher. Articulations of disciplinary research spurred conversations about disciplinary writing, which was particularly helpful in departments where the belief that writers are born, not cultivated, was strong. Faculty felt more comfortable seeing themselves as teachers of disciplinary research than they did as teachers of disciplinary writing, and so addressing writing and information literacy together often provided a foothold for faculty to grapple with creating student outcomes.

While we initially envisioned WILD prompting departments to create distinct writing and information literacy outcomes, we quickly realized that the interplay of students seeking information, shaping insights, and communicating information made it difficult and unnecessary on our part to try to force outcomes into our own artificial “writing” and “information literacy” buckets. As an example, nurses created the outcome: “Students will be able to apply the information they find into their clinical and scientific practice.” This outcome necessitates student abilities in both writing and information literacy in order to perform as pre-professionals in the lab or the clinic. We finally came to the conclusion that it simply did not matter in which field we placed this outcome if it was useful to faculty for thinking about work in their discipline.

Subject librarians were an integral part of each WILD team and helped to facilitate departmental conversations that developed disciplinary outcomes. Librarians often have an expansive view of student abilities and challenges as they work with different courses and encounter students at multiple levels of a program. Their broad perspectives across departmental curricula proved useful in tracing student expectations and outcomes throughout a department’s sequence of courses. In addition, the timing was right to include academic instruction librarians in the process. The focus of the ACRL’s *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (2016) on threshold concepts made an enormous impact on academic librarians in North America and helped them to better articulate the conceptual foundation students must have in place to be successful seekers, evaluators, and communicators of information. In WILD, librarians supported departmental faculty in moving beyond skills-based thinking in the discipline toward a more holistic articulation of changes in student understanding. In Human Development and Family Studies, in fact, it turned out that the *Framework’s* concept of “scholarship as conversation” helped to unstick an emphasis on proper APA citation that had been read by students solely as an injunction about formatting a bibliography. The phrase “scholarship as conversation” helped faculty to better articulate a goal around APA formatting that centered on developing a sense of the field’s

authoritative conversations about current issues—which was, they articulated, their original goal all along and the reason they emphasized citation conventions so much. As the WILD team worked, library voices helped the department find more appropriate language for its own expectations. Academic librarians are well positioned to be valuable contributors to departmental WEC discussions. They are primed for formulating and articulating disciplinary outcomes and, in many cases, librarians can draw upon years of subject-liaison experience and relationships to help departmental faculty through the outcome-articulation process.

While librarians were an essential part of each department's WILD team, they also benefited greatly from inclusion in departmental big-picture curricular discussions. WILD was well received by subject librarians and proved particularly effective at on-boarding two newly hired subject librarians by acclimating them to the departments with which they would work. Often, librarians find themselves in the place of reacting to an instructor's or department's curricular decisions rather than helping to shape them. The WEC model, as adapted by WILD, involves librarians in deep disciplinary conversations about the students with whom they work each semester. By being part of the curricular planning process, librarians help faculty to create rich research-based instructional experiences that are meaningful to students and are reinforced throughout a department's curriculum. Subject librarians can also help scaffold a systematic curriculum that develops student facility at seeking out, considering, and integrating researched information in a disciplinary context. This benefits everyone—faculty, students, and librarians—and focuses time and effort accordingly. The WEC model is particularly attractive not only as a blueprint for shaping departmental outreach but also as a means for articulating the particular ways of thinking and doing that are valued in a department and highlighting the mutually reinforcing interests at the intersection of WID/WAC, academic librarianship, and academic departments. As Sheriff notes in Chapter 6 of this volume, the WEC model provides a heuristic that fosters “key ‘realizations’ in the process of unearthing their writing expectations and reckoning in with the tacit dimensions and curses of disciplinary expertise.” Similarly, WILD unearths tacit expectations and knowledge regarding information literacy and research.

## **LEARNING IN THE WILD: PRINCIPLES FROM COLLABORATION**

Each departmental collaboration began with a common survey, but our WILD process adapted to each of our participating departments (some of whom preferred to work as a committee of the whole, some of whom preferred smaller working groups). Despite the variations in process, a set of core principles

emerged from these varied collaborations, and they have become the threshold concepts that guide our work (and make departmental work so productive).

- Information literacy, like writing, responds to disciplinary context
- Contextual needs dictate the ways in which one searches for, selects, and communicates information

ACRL identified a need to evolve beyond its *Information Literacy Competency Standards* largely because of the *Standards*' failure to recognize contextual complexity—which would include disciplinarity—as an influence on information literacy behaviors. A statement from the *Standards* such as “students will identify a variety of types and formats of potential sources for information” (ACRL, 2000, p. 211) quickly becomes problematic in practice because disciplines create, use, and value information types and formats differently (Anson et al., 2012). Psychologists may place a premium on current empirical studies while historians might spend a majority of their time working with primary archival material. Engineers might need to search patents to research devices' specifications and functions, while geologists might be more concerned with organizing and analyzing data sets. Even within a discipline, contextual situations may necessitate rhetorical responses for different audiences. A nurse might choose to search for a health consumer factsheet for a patient rather than present the patient with a scholarly article; a business student might need to recognize that a broad industry report will not suffice for pitching a nuanced idea to a local business; a special educator might select a summary source rather than specialized language to describe a behavioral intervention. Disciplinarity governs much about how a writer creates and communicates new information but also how they seek out, evaluate, manage, and disseminate that information.

Those working in any discipline approach their work with values and expectations about how texts are composed and circulated, and particular assumptions about the history of work in the field (Lerner, 2015). Writing both enacts and shapes the discipline—and many of the ways it does this are central to the field of information literacy. The kinds of information that are valued, the terms used to describe or analyze that information, and the ways in which information is stored and circulates are all reflective of, and influential on, the nature of the discipline.

## **THRESHOLD CONCEPTS IN INFORMATION LITERACY AND WRITING HELP FACULTY CREATE DISCIPLINARY OUTCOMES**

Writing and information literacy have connections to every discipline, and while they are indeed part of every discipline, they are often a *tacit* part of every dis-

cipline. Faculty may not be aware of their abilities to teach research and writing in their fields and are likely to be unfamiliar with the language of information literacy or even unaware of the term itself. And yet, faculty are more likely to see “research” as a teachable endeavor, something that is naturally scaffolded over time. So pairing information literacy and writing provides opportunities for overcoming faculty resistance to change. For some faculty, the (incorrect!) belief that writers are born, not made, or that they don’t have time to add writing, or responding to multiple drafts, to already quite busy courses means that directly addressing how to scaffold writing in the major can be off-putting. Conversations exploring what it means to seek, create, and use information in the discipline naturally give rise to conversations about writing in the discipline.

Considering the palimpsest of writing and information literacy promotes reflection within the discipline. Schön’s (1983) notion of reflection-in- and reflection-on-action emphasizes the unity of action, reflection, and knowledge-generation: it is in the reflection on particular situations that professionals develop new, sometimes surprising knowledge and perspectives. Action, for Schön, is embodied knowledge: professionals express their expert knowledge without thinking about it, as a matter of course. But in moments of reflection (which may be structured, or may simply arise in response to troubling or complex events), new insights are generated which affect further action (Schön, 1983, p. 50). This is exactly the dynamic that WILD opens up: tacit disciplinary expertise is expressed in pedagogies that may not welcome student newcomers, and the WILD process creates repeated opportunities for faculty to reflect in action about their work with students. WILD starts conversations about what students should know, offering faculty in any one discipline the chance to situate their expertise in relationship to information literacy and writing studies. Everyone involved has a chance to learn, in an unjudgmental space. Faculty have permission to discuss past failures or obstacles, as well as aspirations and disciplinary goals. The reflection is pragmatic and generates new perspectives on tacit disciplinary expertise about how students should demonstrate their learning, how students can practice skills that support their disciplinary work, and what kinds of information students need to be able to access, understand, and use to do so.

### **INFORMATION LITERACY, LIKE WRITING, MUST BE SEQUENCED ACROSS A COURSE OF STUDY AND OVER TIME**

For both information literacy and writing, there is always more to learn, do, and know. As students enter disciplines and eventually the professional world, they experience new contexts and advanced expectations. New contextual ex-



Expectations may cause confusion about what sorts of information will serve their needs, how to process tasks, or how to shape texts for particular audiences. Repeated and scaffolded attention to the ways a discipline frames questions, cultivates data, and creates genres will nurture both writing and information literacy abilities and demonstrate that the application of critical research and writing practices must be ongoing.

Information literacy, like writing, isn't a natural activity. It's learned with other people, and it's learned in particular places and moments. Curiosity may be a natural human trait, but curiosity alone doesn't spontaneously create an information literate individual. Behaviors that work in one context may not be right for another. As students move from course to course, they experience different vocabularies, bodies of information, and expectations. A term as simple as "research" may denote poring over books and articles for one class and yet may denote taking and recording measurements in another. A tried and true archival database like JSTOR may be a good search tool for history courses but will prove almost useless when looking for current scientific information. A student may be adept at locating information typically published in western countries but all of a sudden that same student may need to develop new search strategies for a global economics class that requires local information generated in the countries he or she is studying. In each case, there is no blueprint or guidebook. Information literacy is unique and shaped by contextual experiences.

Because critical work must be ongoing, students cannot be made information literate in one class period, one course, or even one academic year. In fact, no single course can provide an inoculation that will set students up for perfect future performance. Rather, each course can present the opportunity to transfer forward knowledge and composing practices, ready to be amplified by new learning. By drawing on the WEC model in creating learning outcomes and scaffolding progress toward those outcomes across a curricular map, WILD requires that disciplinary faculty consider both writing and information literacy as learning that is best sequenced throughout their major's curriculum—and in fact, as learning that is part and parcel of the major's curriculum.

## **INFORMATION LITERACY AND WRITING ARE, AT POINTS, INSEPARABLE**

It is impossible to teach information literacy without attending to writing, and impossible to teach writing without attending to information literacy—and impossible to teach any given discipline without also teaching some form of expression or communication that draws from both writing and information literacy. As the many contributions to *Information Literacy: Research and Collaboration*



*across Disciplines* attest, both writing and information literacy are shared responsibilities across the university, and it benefits everyone when the two broad fields are worked together in disciplinary contexts (D'Angelo et al., 2016). The processes that support the revision of texts also support the revision of search strategies; the work that supports researchers learning to evaluate information also supports writers learning to evaluate needs within a rhetorical context. While parallels between the disciplines have cropped up as a topic at many conferences and presentations and by notable librarian/writing instructor pairs (e.g., D'Angelo & Maid, 2016), we came to understand early in the WILD project that certain threshold concepts were not just operating on parallel writing and information literacy tracks; rather, they were two sides of the same coin (DeSanto & Harrington, 2015). Without a label of "writing" or "information literacy," certain threshold concepts can be applied to either the seeking and consideration of information or its communication. These boundaryless concepts are mutually reinforced by attention from our two fields and point us to ways in which context shapes how writers seek out and articulate information.

One of the threshold concepts in *Naming What We Know* (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015) is that *writing is a knowledge-making activity*. It's also an *information-seeking activity*, and information-seeking activities are overwhelmingly those involving writing and reading. Reconceiving writing and information literacy as two sides of the same coin has enormous effects on how we teach and discuss composing. When revision is viewed as a re-evaluation of what information is needed for what purpose, writing is information literacy. When a writer seeks out data on a phenomenon they're studying, that's building information literacy.

Becoming more conscious of the relationship between writing and information literacy emphasizes the act of knowledge creation embedded in writing.

## DEPARTMENTAL LESSONS

To illustrate the ways these threshold concepts work in departmental contexts, we turn our attention to three collaborations. The very different ways in which WILD was adapted in each department is a testament to the power of this flexible model: it can be shaped in ways that speak to the challenges, opportunities, and constraints in particular departments and disciplines.

### BIOMEDICAL AND HEALTH SCIENCES

While the WILD initiative's very nature encourages departments to view writing and information literacy as something diffused in all courses, some departments have used the WILD program to focus attention on one foundational writ-

ing-intensive course. Although a faculty focus on one particular course can lead to an “inoculation” or “one and done” approach to writing and information literacy, a foundational writing-intensive course can, if well-structured, form the basis for a sequenced approach across the curriculum. Planning for a foundational course introduces faculty to larger conversations about the touchstones on which they hope to build in other courses. Minnesota’s original WEC initiative began in order to address gaps in a writing-intensive course requirement system. Thus it may seem counterintuitive that our WILD initiative has helped create some writing-intensive courses—but in the UVM context, where attention to disciplinary writing instruction has often been scarce, the creation of a writing-intensive course can be something that unites a department around shared outcomes that ripple throughout a major. The biomedical and health sciences department (BHSC) collectively designed a foundational course introducing the core writing genres expected in its major, and in so doing, has created a deep and networked understanding of how students are expected to work as professional writers, researchers, and data managers in multiple programs in a newly restructured department.

Biomedical and health sciences offers three clinical majors that each require slightly different skills in their respective professions. Through work in the WILD program, the department has developed a course broad enough to encompass writing and information literacy abilities in radiation therapy, medical laboratory science, and health science, yet specific enough to allow a sequential approach across each curriculum. In essence, BHSC has created its own foundational writing and information literacy class as a gateway to other activities within the major. This foundational experience within the program provides a rhetorical, disciplinary context for the later writing and research work that involve students in writing for different audiences and searching for and validating quality data relevant to their profession. The department’s goal is to ensure students are ready for more advanced writing work and that students develop a broad understanding of how writing and information literacy are relevant to their professions.

BHSC’s involvement in WILD originated when faculty noticed that students were challenged by selecting the appropriate genre for an audience. They were further challenged by performing a literature search using primary sources, and composing a paper based on that primary literature. Although each student in the BHSC department completed the university’s foundational first year writing and information literacy course (FWIL), faculty determined that the general FWIL course could not, on its own, prepare students to successfully write in the discipline; faculty determined that some kind of disciplinary introduction to writing was needed, to build on FWIL. (We note that this claim wouldn’t

surprise those associated with the FWIL courses, which are intended to prepare students for more discipline-specific learning—but that faculty in a discipline used WILD to themselves unlearn a fundamental, yet persistent, misconception that writers should already know how to write in the major is exactly what makes WILD so valuable.) These observations were validated through the survey completed by both faculty and students as part of the WILD process. Students in the major validated the faculty’s didactic sense that more disciplinary practice with writing and research is needed. The collaborative efforts to create a disciplinary foundation that can be shared across multiple majors led faculty to emphasize the rhetorical similarities faced by health professionals regardless of specialty. The new focused course was offered for the first time in 2019–2020. In the lead-up to this course’s debut, faculty have identified ways to name and sequence assignments to highlight transferable skills; they have also identified the particular ways their existing writing and research assignments reinforce students’ professional development.

## ENGINEERING

UVM’s engineering departments started with a deceptively simple goal: students needed more experience seeking out, evaluating, and communicating information. For example, local employers had reported dissatisfaction with newly graduated engineers’ research skills and writing. As part of their participation in the WILD project, engineering faculty developed curricular learning outcomes for writing and information literacy. These were mapped to the current curriculum to locate courses where these outcomes were being addressed (and where they were not). Significant gaps were visible in the sophomore and junior years. For instance, students only had the opportunity to reflect on the appropriateness of different academic and technical sources for different situations at the senior level, and some outcomes concerning intellectual property were not addressed at all. These gaps seemed to be a systemic problem, and Engineering decided to approach the challenge in part by creating a new course that would bridge the gaps identified in its existing curriculum.

Like biomedical and health sciences, engineering took up a counterintuitive-in-terms-of-WEC approach by adding a writing-intensive course to their department. While we are aware of the limitations of writing-intensive courses, the department’s collective determination to create a course that has analogs in other engineering or technical communication programs honors the local governance component of the WEC model: even given the WILD team’s presumption that addressing writing and information literacy outcomes across a network of courses would be our product, the department chose to start by creating an elec-

tive curricular space that would highlight disciplinary writing and information literacy, structured around the new learning outcomes. A three-credit course titled “Engineering Communications” was developed and opened to all students in any engineering program. Over the course of two years, multiple engineering faculty attended a week-long course development institute, facilitated by WID and the library, in order to refine the course, which sought to address some of the gaps in departmental outcomes. In the course students practice various modes of communication used in professional and academic engineering, including technical publications and documentation. They read and evaluate engineering genres, as well as draft technical reports and give presentations. The course meets with its subject librarian at multiple points in the semester.

Students have reported that this kind of detailed and explicit research and writing development is not available to them elsewhere in their departmental curriculum.

Since the course’s initial year, more engineering faculty have attended the spring course design institute in order to solidify the network of outcomes that culminate in senior design seminars. Over the course of the project, UVM restructured its organization of Engineering and diffused curricular decision-making throughout multiple departments. Yet, the WILD project has spurred more faculty engagement with and attention to scaffolding written and oral performance in the discipline. UVM Engineering continues to consider ways in which disciplinary writing and information literacy instruction might be threaded throughout its curricular sequence.

## **GEOLOGY**

The geology department’s WILD work revealed a situation exactly opposite than that faced by engineering: the department’s mapping of its outcomes led to a realization that the curriculum appeared to be tightly scaffolded, with clear and shared expectations across the undergraduate degree program, and opportunities to practice and develop key skills from course to course, level to level. The only problem: faculty reported that students consistently failed to apply knowledge from prior courses in subsequent ones. The curriculum mapping process initially felt like a disappointment, as the map we produced didn’t explain faculty perception of student experience. However, as we explored the working of the curriculum, faculty realized that the tight sequencing of the map could be exploited to make core disciplinary concepts more explicit, and could be used as the foundation of a new common assignment. Thus was born the “RoCKs Document,” an assignment that is shared across courses in the department (RoCKs stands for Record of Core Knowledge and Skills). Geology faculty created a shared

framework for the RoCKs Doc—identifying strands of knowledge that students need to call back to in order to make progress toward the department’s learning goals. The RoCKs document is an evolving written compilation of knowledge and skills that, guided by the instructor, is compiled by the students for each course. This approach was piloted in earth materials and included exercises and reflections on knowledge and skills. The department continues to assess the effectiveness of this approach with student feedback and improve accordingly. Assessment plans moving forward include investigating the effects of the RoCKs document on student performance in higher level Geology courses. However, in its early period, the initiative has already improved scaffolding of materials within and among courses and improved consistency in the curriculum.

The WILD process also created the opportunity for a newly hired sciences librarian to begin working with foundational classes in the major. While the curriculum itself appeared to be addressing topics in a productive sequence, the department reframed its relationship with the library in order to better support students. The department’s subject-area librarian thus has increased contact with courses and has been involved with a greater number of the department’s students. Involvement with the department’s librarian enabled yet another avenue for greater continuity between classes and better knowledge transfer as students progress through the major.

## **WILD LEGACIES**

The WILD initiative is still nascent. Shifting financial pressures, a wave of senior leadership changes, the promise of another round of general education reform that may (or may not) institutionalize attention to writing and information literacy in the upper levels all lead to cautious optimism: yet it’s unclear how these factors will affect departments. Whatever the institutional winds may bring, WILD has built powerful bonds between WILD and the UVM libraries, as well as with the emerging campus assessment and program review initiatives. As of this writing, WILD remains a voluntary program, available to departments or programs seeking support. It is firmly institutionalized as a partnership, for collaboration between the libraries and writing in the disciplines addresses similar challenges and offers mutual benefit. Those of us working in either of these roles face similar challenges. With or without structured upper-level writing requirements, both programs often seek partnerships with disciplines, departments, and individual faculty, and in many cases these partnerships grow out of faculty members’ sense that there is some kind of problem: an outdated curriculum needs revising, students can’t complete assignments properly, or students these days simply can’t work as well as they used to. Introducing faculty to intersecting

writing and information literacy threshold concepts shifts the conversation from “What’s wrong with students these days?” to a more helpful discussion of “What research and writing is most important our discipline? What concepts in this field are necessary and challenging? What do students absolutely need to fully engage in our major?” This reframing, as our experience demonstrates, invites a whole new conversation about the curriculum and repositions the discipline in relation to writing and research. WILD’s extension of WEC, blending writing and information literacy, situates writing as a core part of disciplinary work while inviting a more thoughtful conceptualization of information literacy.

The WILD program’s grassroots implementation of WEC proved a good match for our campus where departments have a large degree of autonomy and can be suspicious of programs that feel like administrative mandates. Throughout our work with each of these departments, the emerging and evolving intersections between writing and information literacy have been a generative connection that has inspired both individual and collective attention to teaching and learning. As time has passed, everyone involved in the projects have found that creating or maintaining strict boundaries between *writing* and *information literacy* was counterproductive to how disciplinary faculty understood, discussed, and taught the process of creating researched information. WILD’s productive boundary blurring of writing and information literacy encouraged deeper dives into both fields and made it easier for disciplinary faculty to imagine ways that partnering with either or both of the library and writing in the disciplines programs would be productive.

The writing-information literacy palimpsest leads disciplinary faculty to a deep understanding of the fact that *my discipline is not the universe*. Adler-Kassner and Majewski (2015) point to the boundary-shaping function of this understanding: faculty who come to see that their own expectations are indeed context-specific, not universal, realize the need to make those expectations more explicit. At the same time, we have found that faculty also come to see the ways that their contextual expectations have connections to expectations nurtured in other fields. Seeing the connections among disciplines—and having the opportunity to learn from other departments’ language and processes, as well as having the opportunity to learn from information literacy and writing studies scholarship—creates an academic community in which disciplinary boundaries become clearer, and in which the roles of adjacent or complementary disciplines become clearer, too.

As we reflect on the WILD initiative’s progress to date, we realize that, as with any good assignment, the value of the product is secondary to the learning. Our participating departments have created outcomes and assessment plans, but the real value of this work lies in the conversations along the way. Many of the

benefits we can identify from the program (better understandings of information literacy as a concept, a commitment to scaffolding writing, more nuanced and sequenced research expectations, a greater willingness to collaborate with departmental colleagues on curriculum, more focused department assessment plans) do not really depend upon the particular tasks the departments set out for themselves. Rather, the success comes from discussions of departmental priorities in the structured environment of the WILD project and the threshold concepts departments articulate and commonly recognize as needed to effectively teach writing and research. The rethinking and learning that faculty accomplished in WILD, the process of thinking through the work, was as important as the products and curricular revision WILD sponsored.

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