

# Blended Learning for Information Literacy: What Works Online

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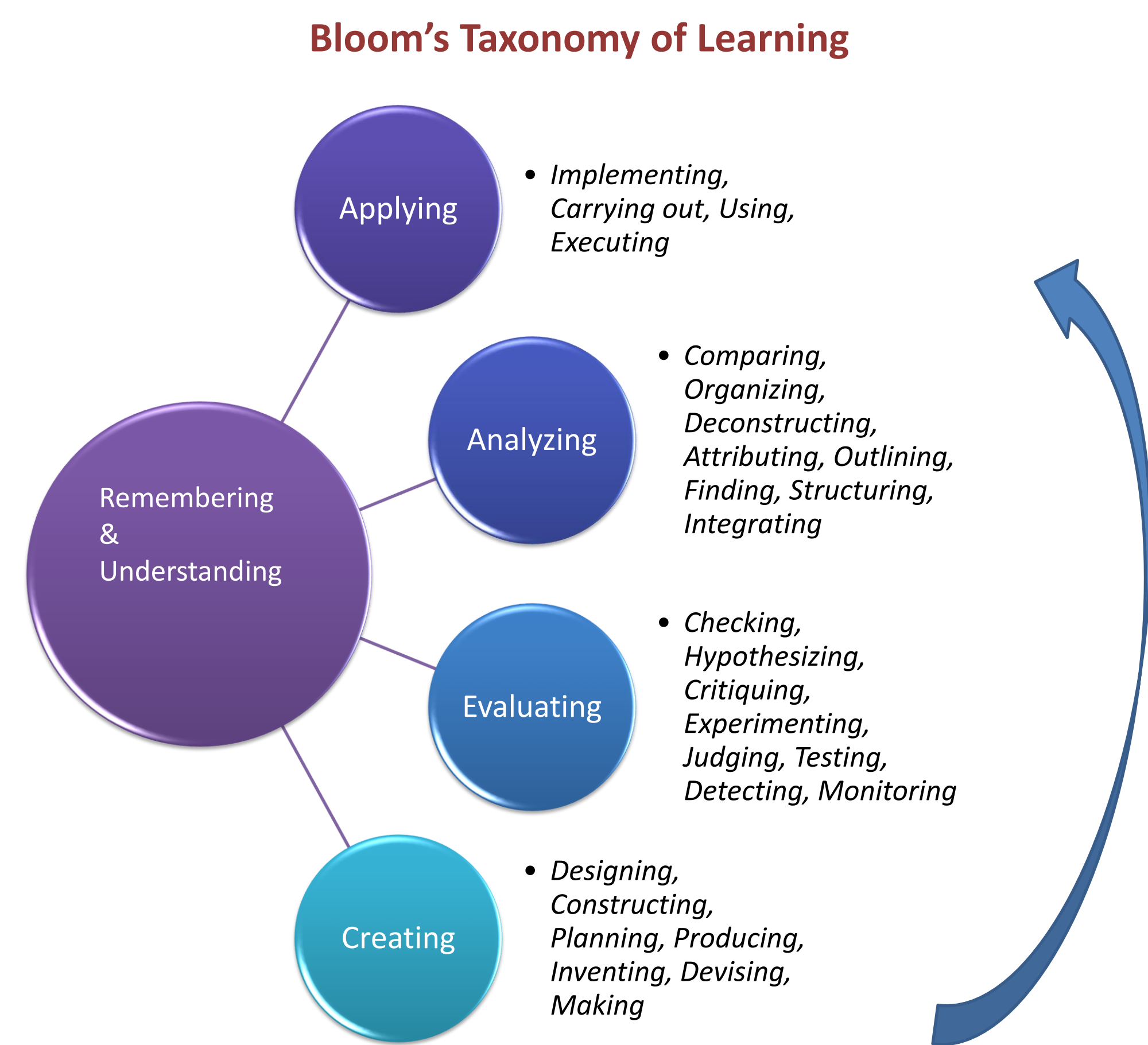
Gianna Gifford, Library Liaison to School of Social Work

## Background

The Simmons College School of Social Work has offered a comprehensive and integrated information literacy program at the Master's Level for 10 years. Over the past year, Gianna Gifford has worked with the faculty to review the program and rethink content and delivery formats to grow and improve the program in a sustainable way.

### Overall Goals:

- Maximize the librarian's face-to-face time with students
- Improve learning
- Provide both general and individualized support
- Create a program that is sustainable with existing staff



## Planning

The blended format achieves the program goals by designing the course around Bloom's taxonomy of learning (depicted above). The principles suggest that the basic skills of remembering and understanding underpin the more sophisticated competencies such as evaluating, analyzing, and creating.

### Scaffolding Learning:

- Front-load the more basic and task-oriented skills in an online format
- Students have time to acquire and practice these skills in a self-paced format
- Students reinforce the skills throughout the semester as they begin to develop and find literature on research topics
- In later f2f sessions, librarian can assume a certain level of background knowledge, and move on to more sophisticated content

## Online

The online portion of the instruction focuses on several IL areas:

- Introduction to the library and Simmons technology
- Searching databases and the Web
- Evaluating information
- Plagiarism

**SSW Information Literacy Orientation Program (ILOP)**  
Fall 2011  
Abbie K. Frost, SSW Faculty  
Gianna Gifford, SW Librarian; Research Service Librarian

On this site you will find some introductory information about the ILOP. There are 2 parts to the ILOP. Specific information about assignments that you need to complete and materials (e.g., PowerPoint slides, workshops & other resources) that we've designed to support your finishing these assignments. Unless you are planning to "waive out" of attending the second series of workshop, the final deadline to complete the ILOP assignments is 9/30, midnight.

**Introduction to ILOP**  
Introduction; Overview for quizzes & assignments; Frequently Asked Questions

**Part 1**  
Simmons specific technologies (e-learning, webmail, technology assistance & resources for students)  
Principles of Information Literacy  
Social Work Relevant websites  
Ethical use of electronic and paper sources

**Part 2**  
Simmons library resource - electronic databases, onsite library resources  
Searching techniques  
Using RefWorks, a bibliographic citation manager

**Student View**

**Tutorial: Orientation To Library Website**  
Library Resources  
Use this to prepare for the Library Resources Quiz

**How to Find Books**  
Library Resources  
Use this to prepare for the Library Resources Quiz

**Library Resources Quiz Questions**

**Fall 2011 Part 2: Library Resources Quiz**

**RefWorks**  
How to use RefWorks  
Use this to prepare for the RefWorks assignment

**RefWorks Assignment**

**Why Information Literacy?**  
We are living in an information age: more and more information is available on the web; increasingly more of the professional literature is available online. We have all experienced information overload. The challenge is no longer accessing information; rather, the challenge is evaluation the accuracy and fit for your informational needs. This is where the skills of *information literacy* can be useful. Information literacy is a set of competencies to "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information (American Library Association, 1989).

As we consider what practice decisions to make, what information can we use to inform our decisions? What are the best "go to" sources, who do we evaluate the information that we find? The following process of inquiry can address these needs:  
(1) identifying an information need & knowing key "go to" sources useful to you in your studies at SSW,  
(2) the ability to efficiently retrieve information,  
(3) the ability to evaluate and synthesize information, and  
(4) ethically using information.

Information Literacy is a lifelong learning process, one that begins (or is affirmed) here with the ILOP, continues through your coursework and field placements at SSW, and extends into your professional social work practice.

We will be using the CRAAP test (originally developed by folks at California State University at Chico) to provide the scaffolding at assess websites. There are 5 principles that drive the CRAAP test:

**CURRENCY:** The timeliness of the information  
**RELEVANCE/COVERAGE:** The depth & importance of the information  
**AUTHORITY:** The source of information  
**ACCURACY:** The reliability of the information  
**PURPOSE/OBJECTIVITY:** The possible bias present in the information

▪Students can work through the online assignments at their own pace, supported by f2f workshops.

▪The online tutorials must be finished within the first month of the semester.

▪The students are introduced to both general and Social Work specific resources, and learn basics for searching online, managing citations, and evaluating information.

▪Because it is so early in the semester, students have not yet begun individual research, and tutorials use canned examples that are relevant to the discipline. As they progress into the semester and are assigned research projects, they will practice and reinforce the skills learned in the tutorials. They continue to have access to the tutorials as a reference.

## Face to Face

At the f2f sessions, students are already beginning their course research project. This means they have been searching for literature, reinforcing the skills they learned in the online tutorials. By this time they have:

- Identified a research topic
- Begun a literature search
- Identified problem areas, obstacles, questions

Because the students are familiar and comfortable with the basics of search and evaluation, the librarian can focus on analyzing and synthesizing information for their project, as well as spend more time on individual questions and concerns.



## Assessments

Students are assessed in a variety of ways:

- Online Tutorial Assignments
- Feedback
- Course Evaluations
- Bibliography Reviews
- Exit Surveys

These assessment allow faculty and librarians to both evaluate the students' learning in information literacy outcomes as well as to assess the tutorials and workshops for continuous improvement.

## Next Steps

As the program moves forward, we are considering:

- Whether the online tutorials can be the sole method of delivery for introductory materials
- How best to format and deliver content relating to the evaluation and use of information
- Whether the SSW model can be adapted to other departments and/or an institution-wide information literacy program.