

Library Integration in Institutional Learning Analytics (LIILA)

Syracuse University requests \$97,560 to prepare for and convene a National Forum to increase librarian awareness of and engagement in institutional learning analytics and develop a detailed plan to prepare academic libraries to engage in this emerging and important use of data to support student learning and success.

National Need – Because the foremost purpose of higher education is to educate students, academic librarians have addressed the challenge of learning assessment for many years. Early on, librarians used surveys to gauge students’ satisfaction, confidence, and self-efficacy. More than a decade ago, librarians invested heavily in a variety of homegrown, vendor-supplied, and IMLS-funded information literacy tests. In the last ten years, many librarians have embraced the use of rubrics to assess artifacts of students’ information literacy learning, due in large part to the IMLS-funded RAILS project. And since the 2010 publication of the ACRL *Value of Academic Libraries* report and subsequent IMLS-funded library value studies, library research correlating student library interactions with student learning surrogates has proliferated. Now, as institutions of higher education commence and commit to learning analytics initiatives, it is time for librarians to embrace the opportunity to engage with institutional learning analytics tools, systems, and strategies as well.

Learning analytics has been explained in a number of ways, but perhaps the clearest definition is this: “Learning analytics is the measurement, collection, analysis, and reporting of data about learners and their contexts, for the purposes of understanding and optimizing learning and the environments in which it occurs” (Conole, Gasevic, Long, & Siemens, 2011, para. 3). Essentially, learning analytics employ data to improve learning contexts and help learners succeed. Learning analytics help educators discover, diagnose, and predict challenges to learning and learner success and point the way to successful and active interventions that benefit all students, but especially those who are less familiar with the unwritten rules of higher education, including first-generation students, community college students, students of diverse backgrounds, students with disabilities, and veterans.

While academic librarians have increasingly monitored student success issues in higher education and engaged in the use of library data to study student success, they have not pursued institutional learning analytics initiatives. In order to facilitate learning, improve assessment, partner with other educational organizations, and become contributing and valued partners in the lives of their institutions, librarians must embrace the ethical and responsible use of learning analytics to improve student success outcomes. In this way, this project answers the IMLS call for academic libraries to become higher education Community Anchors.

Project Description, Plan, & Design – The goal of this National Forum project is to develop librarian awareness and engagement in learning analytics and develop a detailed plan for integrating academic libraries into learning analytics initiatives that support student learning and success. The project will be enacted by participants of four meetings; progress from the meetings will be shared with the academic library and higher education community via rapid informal means, a formal white paper, and the development of conference presentation proposals. Additional goals are 1) to develop sustaining partnerships and collaborations among academic librarians and learning analytics lynchpins, including EDUCAUSE, institutional and library systems professionals, and library vendor communities; and 2) to explore, design, and develop library data profiles that can be used with learning analytics standards to integrate library data with institutional data stores. Three phases comprise this project’s activities: 1) A literature and environmental scan will be performed to better understand the role of academic library data in institutional higher education learning analytics initiatives in preparation for four meetings. 2) A National Forum consisting of four meetings will be convened (described below). 3) Findings and conclusions from the meetings will be disseminated informally at the close of each meeting, in a formal white paper, and via follow-up conference presentations.

National Forum Meetings – Four full-day facilitated work meetings will be held at existing conference venues to take advantage of participants’ travel schedules. Participant invitations will be based on potential contributions and a desire to cultivate a diversity of experiences, perspectives, and institution types. Meetings will be facilitated by Dr. Oakleaf, the national advisory group (see below), and selected participants. **Meeting A:** Eight academic library administrators and association leaders will first attend EDUCAUSE conference

presentations on learning analytics, and then meet for a full day to discuss, envision, spearhead, and articulate: 1) the role of learning analytics in discovering, describing, analyzing, predicting, and ensuring student success; 2) the value that academic libraries can demonstrate by integrating library data in learning analytics; 3) and the active role librarians can play in maximizing student learning, intervening in learning trouble spots, and supporting the teaching role of faculty. Time/place: post-event at the EDUCAUSE Annual Conference in Philadelphia (2017). **Meeting B:** Eight systems librarians and IT administrators will attend a full day meeting to discuss, investigate, and plan the underlying technology and data structures (existing or to-be-developed) necessary for integrating library data into institutional learning analytics initiatives. Time/place: pre/post-event at the Coalition for Networked Information (CNI) Fall Meeting in Washington, D.C. (2017). **Meeting C:** Eight library technology administrators, learning analytics, and learning standards representatives will attend a full day meeting to discuss and find solutions for implementing and integrating existing educational technology interoperability standards into library systems. Time/place: ALA Midwinter Conference, Denver (2018). **Meeting D:** At this final meeting, eight representatives from large library vendor partner organizations and library representatives will discuss and articulate issues related to library data ownership and methods for sharing vendor data with libraries and institutions. Time/place: pre/post-event at the CNI Spring Meeting, San Diego (2018).

Outcomes – There are three expected outcomes from this forum: 1) Participants of Meeting A will develop awareness of institutional learning analytics initiatives and combine that awareness with their existing library leadership expertise to articulate a vision of academic library integration into institutional learning analytics and ignite a national dialogue amongst academic library leaders on the benefits and challenges of enacting that vision. 2) Participants of Meetings B–D will devise plans to collaborate on the inclusion of library data in institutional learning analytics initiatives and ways to ameliorate challenges (privacy, data ownership, etc.). 3) Publication of a project white paper including the recommendations or vignettes emerging from the forum will a) support librarians as they investigate learning analytics on their campuses, b) develop partnerships to integrate libraries in local learning analytics efforts, and c) pursue other ideas revealed by the project.

Impact – By jumpstarting academic library involvement in institutional learning analytics initiatives and initiating the integration of library data into learning analytics systems, this project will facilitate student learning and contribute to the development and assessment of higher education curricular and instructional improvements. It will also advance the role of libraries as anchors within their higher education communities that provide indispensable data and contribute to a complete picture of institutional student learning.

Project Team and Advisors – The project will be conducted by a team with complementary areas of expertise. Dr. Megan Oakleaf (PI) has researched and advocated for academic library assessment and learner support through the IMLS-funded RAILS grant and extensive work with the academic library value agenda. A national advisory group includes: Malcolm Brown, Director of EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative; Rob Abel, CEO of IMS Global Learning Consortium; Andrew K. Pace, Executive Director, Community Development at OCLC; and Joan Lippincott, Associate Executive Director of the Coalition of Networked Information.

Budget – This 1-year project’s budget totals \$97,560. The bulk of the budget is to support travel costs of eight participants to attend one of four work meetings (\$45,000), and this includes \$825 registration for those meeting at EDUCAUSE to attend the conference. The budget also includes \$18,752 for salary support for Dr. Oakleaf who will prepare and lead the forum, and prepare articles, reports and outreach materials, \$3488 in fringe benefits, \$4800 for Dr. Oakleaf to travel to the four planned meetings, \$6000 for meeting room rental and supporting technology, \$2000 to help cover publication costs, and \$17,520 in indirect costs. Project activities will be supported by iSchool graduate assistants through alternative funding streams.

Conole, G., Gasevic, D., Long, P., & Siemens, G. (2011, October). Message from the LAK 2011 general & program chairs. *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Learning Analytics and Knowledge, LAK 2011, Banff, AB, Canada.*