Embedding Information Literacy Skills in Undergraduate Research Studies

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Introduction
At the beginning of this research students worked with both the teacher and the librarian to identify an educational problem that was important personally.

The purpose of our Information Literacy classes was to engage students in scholarly work and teach them basic concepts.

1. To scaffold their thinking process using the scientific method
2. To assist them in describing their own research

Engaged Learning is both a process and a product involving students and faculty. This refers to building meaning around a researchable topic and teaching students how to develop focused research that includes academic literature, using full-text, peer-reviewed articles.

The goal is to describe the steps and have student apply each step, building their research work in stages. In this process we developed a roadmap for students.

Instructional Process
Steps in Developing a Topic into a Viable Research Focus

Building a Review of the Literature:
• Start with a topic. Consider this topic as a starting point. The visual equivalent is that the radical topic is a 100 pound block of wood. The goal is to whittle it down to the size of a toothpick.
• Look at a topic, focus in describing it specifically, narrowing down concepts to something manageable.
• Look at an encyclopedia source for “keywords” and focusing topic, not for information
• Explore the Databases
• Look at articles. Within articles, examine subject headings to lead to new articles.
• Look at the references at the end of the article to lead to deeper research and further exploration
• Examine multiple databases
• Gather, review and select articles to further develop the research focus

Explore reliable websites such as government statistics and educational sources.
• Use size-url OR site:gov for this purpose
• Internet exploration makes it seem simple for students to locate what they may believe is credible information on a research question. However, they may locate specific information that limits their view of the scope of their question especially in regards to bias. Setting the research question in historical context is another step in getting the students to step back from their topic and use it in perspective.

Basic Skill Set:
1. Knowing how to use search terms to focus on one’s topic
2. Knowing how to use the university’s library website to find books and databases
3. Understanding how to search the databases: search for “keywords” knowing how to locate research articles in professional journals
4. Learning how to evaluate the authority and effectiveness in light of one’s research focus

Strategies
• From a well-stated thesis statement
• Identify your topic
• Use subject headings
• Utilize wikipedia for keywords ONLY
• Use scholarly peer-reviewed articles
• Find primary sources such as studies
• Observe the content, objectivity, bias and date published
• Critically analyze and evaluate information retrieved

Research and look at the LibGuides provided by the library

Know your limits and ask for assistance as needed

Create a precise bibliography using RefWorks

Utilize an annotated bibliography for literature review

Understand the nuances and methods for using reliable websites

Locate a professional organization that pertains to your topic and pursue the website, journal, professional conferences and workshops for information pertaining to the research

Interview an Expert

Students identify someone within their community of professionals who will offer them information from their seasoned perspective.

• Synthesize: Organize your research information according to categories/themes

• Review and Reflect on your paper developing thoughts that include key points from sources, strengths and weaknesses.

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The city site in full-size images from various websites

For further information
For information on the Dominican University School of Education and Counseling Psychology, see the link at http://www.dominican.edu/education