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Embedding Information Literacy Skills in Undergraduate Research Studies

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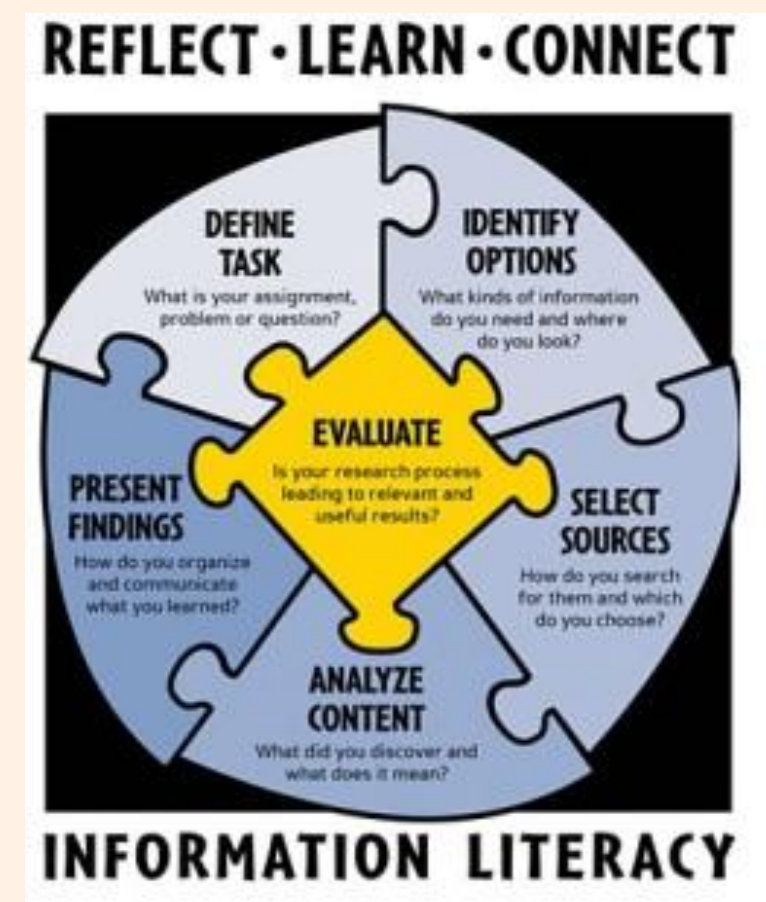
Embedding Information Literacy Skills in Undergraduate Research Studies

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http://saraeffron.wordpress.com/tag/information-learning-activity/

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 students apply each step, building their research work in stages. In this process we developed a roadmap for students.

Liberal Studies Students from the left
Kimberly Harris
Alejandra Vasquez
Alexandra Rovira
Talyha Romo
Kristen Ozorio
Heidi Samayoa
Atria Rondone

Methods

Students need to:
- Acquire academic and information literacy skills
- Understand the process of becoming informed on a research topic
- Demonstrate how to navigate the databases using keywords, subject headings and limiters.
- Create a conceptual overview of the topic while expanding their schema
- Cite sources accurately and avoid plagiarism
- Apply hands on training and instruction in a computer lab with access to databases and RefWorks
- Practice becoming familiar and comfortable with finding articles on their topic and then exporting the citations to RefWorks.
- Differentiate between the reliable, good websites and those masquerading as attempts at an authoritative website

At the conclusion of the lab students have the following: a topic, research articles, and a bibliography created from RefWorks.

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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 initial 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 encyclopedia sources 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 sites and educational/university sites.
  - Use site:edu 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 see it in perspective.

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Basic Skill Set:
1. Knowing how to use search terms to focus on one's topic
2. Knowing how to be tenacious in searching for information
3. Knowing how to use the university's library website to find books and databases
4. Understanding how to search the databases-techniques
   - knowing how to locate research articles in professional journals
   - learning how to identify peer reviewed/scholarly articles in professional journals
5. Learning how to evaluate the authenticity and the effectiveness in light of one's research focus
6. Understanding the focus of the information one has found-i.e read an article to understand the focus the author is trying to convey, assessing what the author is trying to say, compare the focus of one's own research, and then thinking critically, and developing a written reflection on the information
7. Using the Internet effectively: finding reliable, objective and authoritative information
8. Understanding the techniques of academic searching in order to teach others how to acquire focused and reliable information.
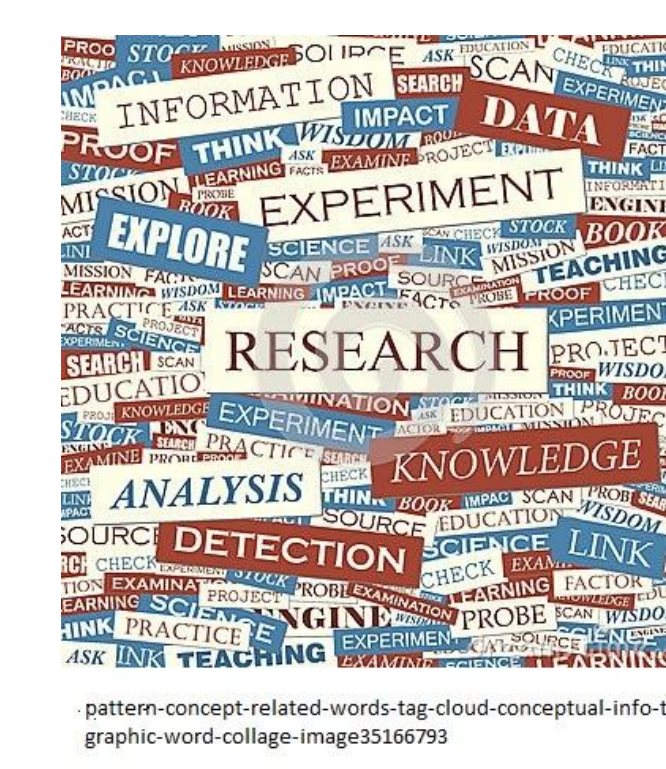9. Understanding and learning citation styles

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Strategies

- Form 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
- Understand and look at the LibGuides produced 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 peruse 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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For further information

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