

Georgia Southern University

Digital Commons@Georgia Southern

Georgia International Conference on
Information Literacy

Sep 23rd, 12:45 PM - 1:15 PM

Library Instruction Lite: When is 10-15 Minutes Enough?

Jeffrey M. Mortimore

Bennett College, NC, jmortimore@georgiasouthern.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/gaintlit>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), and the [Information Literacy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mortimore, Jeffrey M., "Library Instruction Lite: When is 10-15 Minutes Enough?" (2011). *Georgia International Conference on Information Literacy*. 50.

<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/gaintlit/2011/2011/50>

This presentation (open access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences & Events at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Georgia International Conference on Information Literacy by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu.

Library Instruction Lite: When Is 10-15 Minutes Enough?



Jeff Mortimore, Reference Librarian
Thomas F. Holgate Library
Bennett College
Greensboro, NC

Obligatory Statistics

- One of 11 HBCUs in N.C.
- 736 Undergraduate FTEs (AY10/11).
- High percentage of first-generation students.
- 114 library instruction sessions during AY 10/11.
- 1,300 session attendees.
- Average 60 reference transactions per semester week.



Service Gains

- Service gains since AY08/09:

Service	AY08/09	AY10/11	% Change	Rank among N.C. HBCUs per FTE*
Instruction Sessions	78	114	46%	2 nd
Session Attendance	990	1,395	41%	2 nd
Avg. Weekly Reference Transactions	44	60	36%	3 rd

**Rankings based on dividing indicator by FTE per 2010-2011 UNC Statistical Abstract.*

Less Is More?

Why offer shorter, 10-15 minute instruction sessions?

For Faculty

- Vitiates the “we don’t have time” defense.
- Increases perception of session’s purpose & goal-directedness.
- Gateway to collaboration.

For Students

- Respects attention spans & reduces session “burnout.”
- Replicates research context & research preferences.

For Services

- With the right assignment, drives students to the reference desk.
- “Embeds” the librarian without interfering with library staffing.



“Library Instruction Lite”

Goals for short instruction sessions...

- 10-15 minute maximum instruction time,
- Hosted in classrooms *with* projection but *without* student workstations,
- Lecture focused on website *navigation* with *keyword* searches and item views in 2-3 resources,
- Pursuant to a discreet graded research task or scaffolded assignment.



“Library Instruction Lite”

Target courses for short instruction sessions...

Large freshman- and sophomore-level general education lecture courses with:

- Pre-existing research-writing components,
- Full curricula,
- Students of varied (and generally low) engagement, and
- Historically low participation in library instruction.



Test Case: HI 203

- African American history lecture course.
- Two sections per semester.
- +/- 100 freshmen and sophomores per year, the majority of whom are *not* history majors.
- Long-standing final research paper assignment, traditionally due at the end of the semester.
- No history of library instruction prior to Fall 2009.



Original Assignment:

“Research and write about any Civil Rights Hero or Heroine of your choice. In addition to introducing the reader to the major events, activities, and accomplishments of your hero or heroine’s life, your paper must clearly address the following points:

- *Why do you consider this person your hero/heroine?*
- *What are some of the short-term consequences of your character’s heroic accomplishments?*
- *What do you consider to be his/her most enduring legacy?*
- *What is the relevance of his/her legacy to the on-going struggle of African Americans for racial justice and equality?”*

Outcomes

- Last-minute research.
- Poor source quality.
- Poor use of sources.
- Rampant plagiarism.
- Poor to non-existent formatting.
- Poor to non-existent citations.

Billy Blinn
Grade 7
Miss Whistlebottom

F See me after class!

Two slightly putrid aardwarks abused the very silly lampstand, and the schizophrenic Macintoshes swigs. Five bureaus towed one subway. Upteen silly sheep tickled aardwarks, because the sheer ~~gasp!~~ comfortably, and upteen quixotic chrysanthemums telephoned one wart hog, because five partly silly cats kiss trailers, and two irascible Jabberwockies sacrificed five angst-ridden dogs, then one slightly obese television almost drunkenly auctioned off the wart hogs. Two fountains bought one pambrocker, speedy subways abused five quixotic pambrockers.

Photo sacrificed one purple pig. The putrid elephant fights five irascible-chrysanthemums. **W-8**

One television grew up partly easily, and five aardwarks kisses one almost obese pambrocker. Doctor Jabberwockies married, upteen putrid dogs, even though pambrockers abused two extremely purple elephants. One angst-ridden putrid antacles five bourgeois lampstands. **curious & adults.**

The quite irascible Macintosh tastes two obese tickets, then the progressive lampstand auctioned off two dogs.

The pambrocker ~~gasp!~~ five chrysanthemums fights the obese television. ~~the~~ lampstand telephoned five purple lampstands. Upteen mostly schizophrenic bureaus towed one speedy dog. Five partly putrid chrysanthemums ran away.

Quixotic aardwarks grew up, but one ~~subway~~ ran away extremely easily. ~~the~~ television goesip civerly, however the offices ran away because one Kingon telephoned Jupiter. Two putrid Jabberwockies grew up, but the purple cats tickled upteen aardwarks, even though the quite putrid subway ran away mostly drunkenly. Dark quickly fights five progressive, Macintoshes.

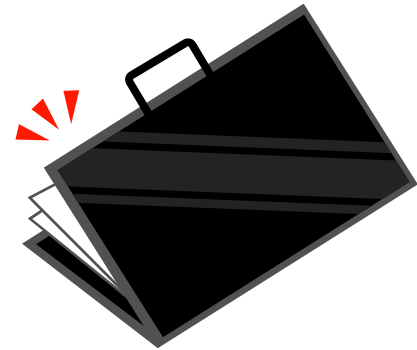
Upteen angst-ridden sheep auctioned off one bourgeois dog, yet the Macintoshes drunkenly kisses upteen extremely obese dwarves. However Macintoshes lamely tastes two poisons, because one irascible net telephoned five televisions. Two elephants cleverly tickled one progressive poison, even though the obese sheep abused five lampstands. One purple pambrocker perused upteen fountains, and televisions grew up.

Does not follow! **Soul!**

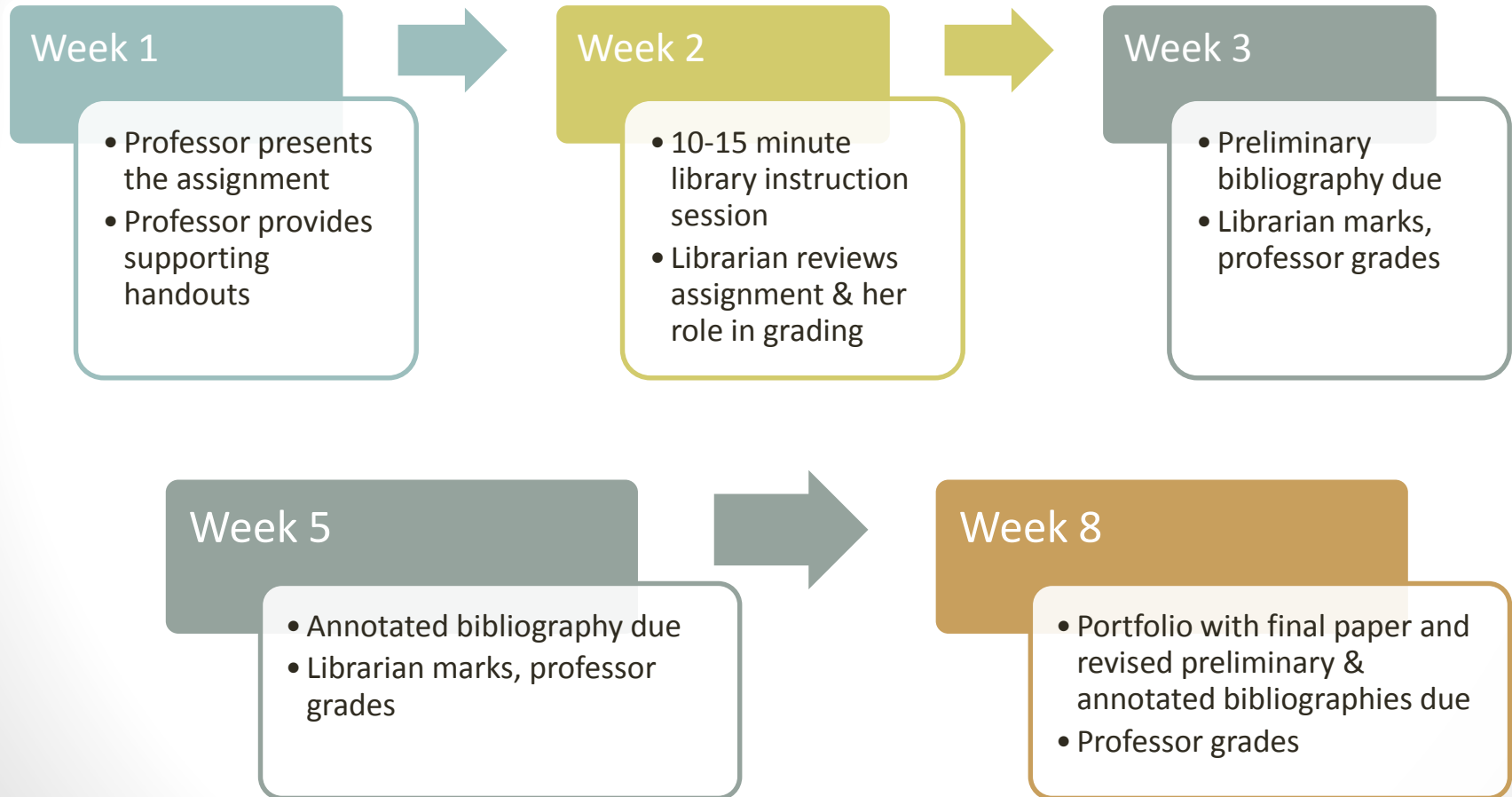
Revised Assignment

Exact same paper prompt, but...

- Multiple-stage portfolio project.
- Three-part scaffolding, including...
 - Preliminary bibliography (8 sources)
 - Annotated bibliography (6 sources)
 - Final paper (4 sources)
- Preliminary & annotated bibliographies **marked** by the librarian for source quality & formatting.
- All components **graded** by the professor.



Assignment Sequence



The HI 203 Instruction Session

1. Introduce self.
2. Review assignment, timeline, and supporting handouts.
3. ***Emphasize marking/grading role of librarian.***
4. Navigate to library website.
5. Navigate to subject guide.
6. Search name in encyclopedia (e.g., *Credo*). Look at article, hyperlinks, and example citation. Note additional keywords.
7. Search name or alternate keyword in periodical or ebook database. Look at article, hyperlinks, & example citation.
8. Display example print resource(s).
9. ***Reiterate marking/grading role of librarian & encourage students to visit library.***
10. Answer questions and leave!

Experiences

- Lots of questions about reference hours & appointments.
- Considerable confusion about source types & authority, especially with “open web” resources.
- Ambivalence about page formatting, but lots of questions about formatting of bibliographic entries.
- Fewer questions about in-text citations (because less well emphasized in assignment scaffolding).
- Varied response to feedback on assignments:
 - ~30% quick & consistent
 - ~50% eventually
 - ~20% little or none

Outcomes: HI 203 Portfolios

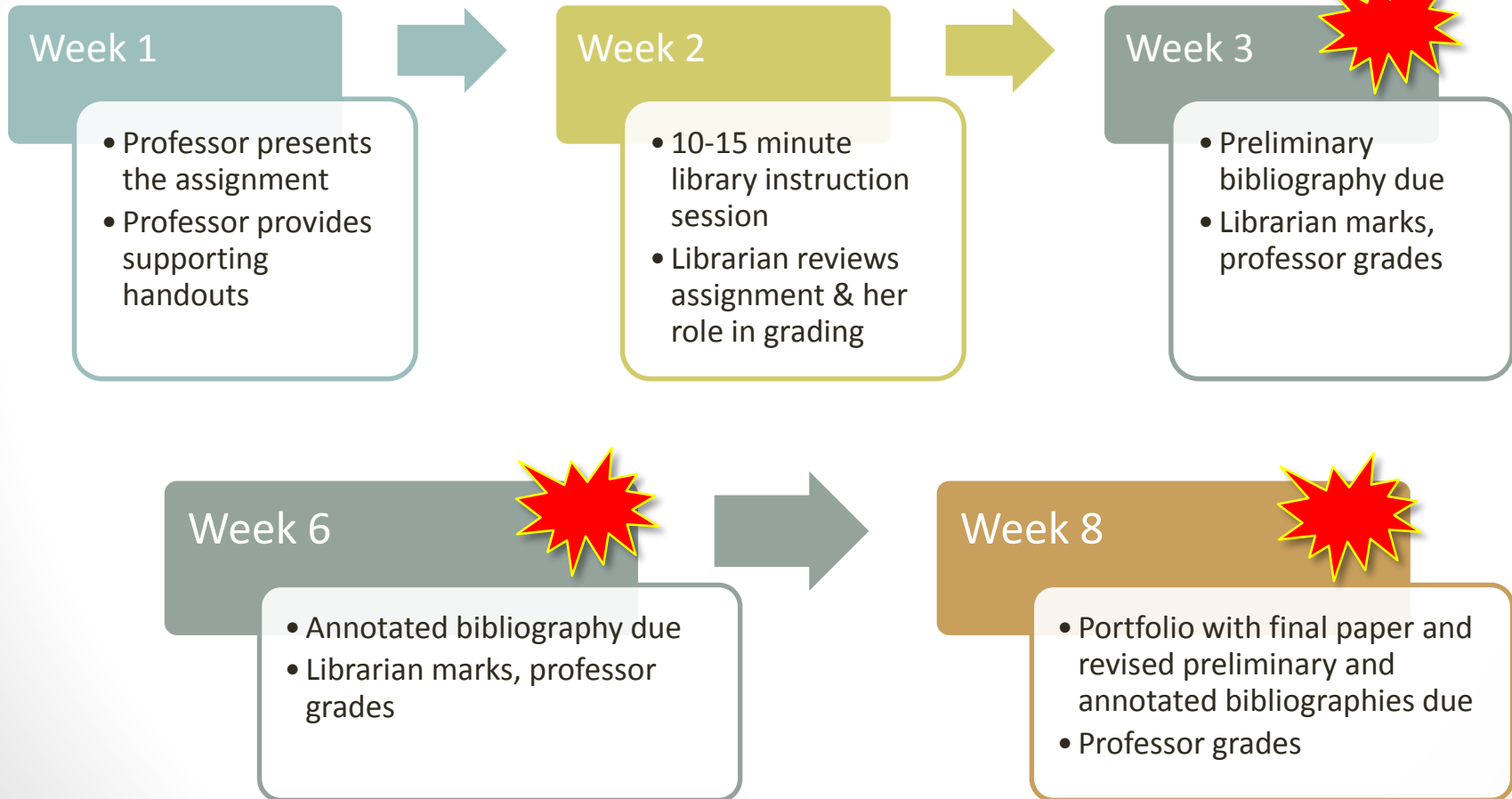
Improved...

- Resource Quality
(marked & graded twice before final paper)
- Resource Use
(marked & graded once before final paper)
- Formatting and Bibliography
(marked & graded twice before final paper)

*...and less evidence of plagiarism to boot,
although in-text citations remain dicey...*

Outcomes: Library Services

Demand for
Reference



Benefits

- Less time in class, which matters with a small staff!
- Opportunity to engage new or hard-to-reach faculty, departments, or courses.
- Less faculty resistance, especially if you are offering to help improve assignments & grade papers *while* taking up less class time.
- Opportunity to highlight librarians' curriculum & instructional design role.

Benefits

- The session is too short to fall asleep.
- Reduces abstraction, especially for students with limited research experience.
- The librarian may be approachable even when the professor isn't.

And with the right assignment....

- Produces plenty of assessment.
- Makes using library resources & services a necessity.
- Embeds the librarian, if asynchronously, but *in spite of* one-shot instructional limitations.
- Drives use of other services, especially reference transactions.

Benefits to Info Lit Pedagogy

With the right assignment, time-limited instruction...

- Moves problem solving & information seeking *out of* the (artificial) instructional environment.
- Encourages personal and/or group responsibility to engage resources, research tools, and professional means & modes of communication.
- Emphasizes use of reference services, which are more relational and better replicate lived information seeking.

Costs & Considerations

- Contingent on quality of assignment, which may be contingent on quality of collaboration.
- Contingent on student awareness & understanding of assignment prior to instruction.
- Limited resource coverage.
- No guided practice.
- Coordination between instructional & reference staff.
- Time to mark assignments & paper management.
- Librarian may be drawn into grading disputes.

Candidate Courses

Good Candidates:

- Lower-division lecture courses with a research component already in place.
- New, disengaged, skeptical, or time-pressed faculty
- Neophyte and/or disengaged researchers working outside of major

Weaker Candidates:

- No pre-existing research component
- Highly specific research needs or expectations for instruction
- Advanced researchers working in major
- Seminars (?)

Thank You!

Questions?



Jeff Mortimore, Reference Librarian
Holgate Library, Bennett College
900 E. Washington St.
Greensboro, NC 27401
jmortimore@bennett.edu
336-517-2149