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A Source for a Source - Reaching Out to Students

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JOHNSON & WALES UNIVERSITY

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Background

Since becoming the Instruction Librarian in 2008 at Johnson & Wales, I have taught over four hundred "one-shot" library instruction sessions, the majority of them lasting fifty minutes.

Initially, the session content consisted of overviews of library databases and the catalog with a touch of citation pointers. It soon became obvious that this method did not engage students, but more importantly, it was not clear that the students were using this information or library resources for their papers and projects.

Working with faculty, it was decided that a good activity would be to get students involved by completing Information Literacy assignments. These assignments prompt students to find information (ACRL IL Standard Two) and evaluate information (ACRL IL Standard Three).

Method

Through assignments the students are given the opportunity to send me information they have found and their evaluation of sources. I then provide them feedback on their responses and notify the instructor of their participation.

Demonstration Speech – Resources

Finding good, solid research sources about your topic is an important way to provide information to your audience about your topic.

As part of your research, you will need three sources to support the information you present. You will need to e-mail one of the resources (or a link to it) plus the following information <u>to</u> the Librarian who taught your session, Joe Eshleman (**joe.eshleman@jwu.edu**) The information needs to be e-mailed during the class. You will receive confirmation and feedback on your source and citation. In the subject line of your e-mail, add one of these four, depending on when you attend class – MW 935, MW 1140, MW 350, TR 730, TR 935

1 -Topic
2-Source
Remember that your source needs to be reliable. AN article from a library database would qualify, an article from Wikipedia or an unreliable website would not.
3-Citation for your Source

Correspondence Example

Student Evaluation Submission

Accuracy:
The information is free of errors and is properly cited.

Authority:
The author of the book created the website and his contact information is listed.

Currency:
The website was created in 2010 but the book was copyrighted in 2003. There could be more current information available.

Objectivity:
The purpose of the website is to provide factual and non-biased information about paranormal activities. No, I do not think that they author has any biases.

Relevance:
There could be better information available about the subject but I have not found any. The information that I found is factual and that can be used well in my paper.

Librarian Feedback

Thank you for submitting this. I think you did a good job looking at the Currency and Relevance here.

However, where do you see that this information is cited How would you contact Dr. Swanson? Do you know his first name? Why do you think " The purpose of the website is to provide factual and non-biased information about paranormal activities. No, I do not think that they author has any biases."

This site reminds me of the one I showed in class which was the personal website about the Social Costs of Smoking. Can you take a little more time to re-evaluate this and resubmit? Remember that the information does not have to meet all of the criteria, you just need to evaluate it correctly.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Lessons Learned and Take- Home Tips

➤ Make sure that all of the assignment requirements are given out in written form and review them during the library instruction class.

➤ It is good practice to start slow with this type of assignment because it is work intensive. There are a number of e-mails that need to be answered and it takes time, especially if high level feedback is given. Perhaps just one class would be a good start.

➤ If you need to, you can ask other librarians to help give feedback on the sources.

➤ Variations on this idea can also be considered. In some cases, a citation of the source can be requested. Or perhaps two sources.

Results and Benefits

These assignments have been use for two academic years in eighty one-shot sessions to over 1500 students. While there has not been any formal assessment of this activity, one of the unforeseen benefits has been that students know the librarian by name and appear to feel more comfortable communicating with a librarian.

Instructor and student response has been favorable and students in their e-mail communication often respond with appreciation about the personal help they receive.

Student Feedback

Thank you! You really taught me something. Before the presentation and this assignment I didn't know what to look for when evaluating a website.

Thank you for your constructive criticism.

Thank you so so so very much for explaining to me how to do the sourcing. I will gladly email you if I need anymore help with the paper.

Thank you for taking the time to do this and for the information about the sources