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Patch and PACT Writing: Engaging Students with the ACRL Framework, Research as Inquiry

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ACRL Information Literacy Frame: Research as Inquiry

Discipline: Arts & Humanities

Subject: English Composition and Rhetoric

Instructional Strategies: Reflective Learning; Learning Transfer

Special Populations: Undergraduate Students; First-Year Students

It is the middle of the semester and you are teaching a composition course required of all students at your university. Your students have just submitted rough drafts of a researched argument. As you start to respond to the drafts, you look forward to seeing what Kara, a very strong student whose long-term plans include law school, has discovered. She has chosen to write about the pros and cons of concealed weapons on college campuses. It is a topic that has been in the news lately and it interests her for both legal and personal reasons. She has told you that she has had no problem finding material.

As you start to read her draft, there is something about the phrasing in the second paragraph that does not sound like Kara's voice. The details in the paragraph are not common knowledge, yet you are not seeing any quotation marks or author attribution in the body of the paper. As you skim to the last page of the draft, you see with some relief that Kara has at least included a brief list of works cited. So, what is going on?

You find yourself wondering if you are seeing an example of what Rebecca Moore Howard would call "patchwriting."¹ Howard uses the term to describe the practice of copying and pasting sentences from multiple sources and patching them into a new document—sometimes without changing more than a word or two. If Kara has, in fact, patched in someone else's words, you do not think this is a deliberate attempt to deceive. Kara is normally a skilled and confident writer. Given the quality of work you have come to expect from Kara, did she just get pressed for time? Or do you share responsibility for the problem? You quickly skim a few more drafts and realize that you may not have conveyed your lessons on research and source evaluation and integration as clearly as you had hoped.

You find yourself thinking of an article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, where Kurt Schick makes the case that "the uneven quality of information available online makes it more important for writers to know how to evaluate . . . their sources." He goes on to suggest that we as teachers "abandon our fixation on the form rather than the function of source attribution."² Schick is not abandoning the need for source attribution, but he is reminding you that the best way to promote academic integrity is to help your students select, summarize, and analyze their sources in ways that will help them present their own ideas effectively and ethically.

Fortunately—for you and your students—this assignment is still in draft form. There is time for Kara and her classmates to improve their writing. And there is time for you to revise your lesson. Since you are team teaching this research course with one of the university librarians, you set up a time when the two of you can talk through the research challenges (for both teachers and students), set some realistic expectations (for both teachers and students), and design an activity to help students understand and practice good habits.

Your colleague points out that our first-year writing students seem to find sources readily enough but are less able to synthesize and interpret what they find. That is the piece to focus on: research as inquiry. Together,

you consider the skills that the students already possess. All sections of introductory composition at West Virginia University have been using four key questions to talk about writing challenges:³

1. Purpose: What exactly do I want to happen?
2. Audience: Who is reading, listening, or viewing?
3. Conventions: What is expected in this context?
4. Trouble spots: What could get in the way of my goals?

ACRL Information Literacy Frame: Research as Inquiry

Students remember the questions with the acronym PACT. Those questions, you decide, might also be used to help students understand the ACRL concept of Research as Inquiry. As the ACRL framework statement explains, “Research is iterative and depends upon asking increasingly complex or new questions whose answers in turn develop additional questions or lines of inquiry in any field.”⁴ Students are already familiar with PACT. Could they transfer their use of PACT questions for writing to guide their reading and evaluation of sources? After all, recent work on transfer suggests that language plays a large role in how writers connect old and new knowledge and practice.⁵

Instructional Strategies: Reflective Learning and Learning Transfer

You think a bit more about how transfer tends to work in education. Perkins and Salomon use the metaphors of hugging and bridging to describe two different types: “hugging” relies on a close connection where we take something we do almost automatically and adapt it to a similar situation;⁶ “bridging,” in contrast, requires a cognitive leap and asks us as learners to reflect back or project forward to make a connection. Perkins and Salomon advise instructors to (1) establish their goals, (2) shape their instruction to hug and bridge closer to the transfer desired, and (3) “deliberately provoke students to think about how they approach tasks.”⁷ Adapting PACT to the ACRL concept of Research as Inquiry can hug, bridge, and provoke reflection about what it means to reflection about what it means to contribute to a scholarly conversation.

With Kara and your other students in mind, your goal is clear: you want to help your students transfer their effective writing strategies into effective research strategies. You want to teach in ways that will promote this transfer. Thank goodness you are team-teaching this semester with one of the university librarians!

As the two of you work on some new lessons, you keep in mind that Perkins and Salomon suggest that transfer depends on explicit instruction, on analogies, on patterns and principles that organize knowledge, and on self-reflection.⁸ By shaping instruction to hug and bridge PACT and the Research as Inquiry framework closer to the transfer of written literacy to information literacy, the lesson comes together.

Explicit instruction will involve discussing the ACRL Research as Inquiry framework with our students to be sure they understand the goals, practices, and dispositions. It will also involve a brief lecture on the differences and similarities among peer-reviewed, trade, and popular journal articles.

Analogies may include Perkins and Salomon's concepts of hugging and bridging, but you also want to extend the analogy you see in the ACRL framework Research as *Exploration*. What set of documents might we explore together as a class so that we can collectively ask questions and develop new research, analysis, and evaluation strategies? We decided to create a sample set of peer-reviewed, trade, and popular journal articles that all center on the same topic.

We can also extend the metaphoric sense of PACT. As writers, your students have already practiced using simple questions about purpose, audience, conventions, and trouble spots. PACT can also work in the sense of brokering a relationship between writing and research. Writerly questions about purpose, audience, conventions, and trouble spots closely connect to source evaluation (i.e., hugging for transfer). Students can easily ask, "What is the *purpose* of each source?" As a teacher, you can help them bridge a little farther (for transfer to research) by asking them to notice *where* they find that sense of purpose as they read a source. You are equally certain that your students can ask, "Who is the intended *audience* for this source?" Again, you can bridge this question a little farther toward helping students look for audience clues within their sources. What, for instance, can they glean from the publication *conventions* for the source? You already have students keep track of their difficulties in finding or evaluating

sources. What if you also asked students to consider *trouble spots* in terms of when the source would be useful or inappropriate?

As students like Kara find answers to familiar PACT questions not only as writers but also as researchers, they will almost certainly find themselves asking new questions of their own. When Kara is able to ask questions based on information gaps or conflicting perspectives (one of the knowledge practices the ACRL frameworks associate with Research as Inquiry), she will have crossed a bridge. She will have traveled beyond her familiar research terrain. Rather than patching together random sources without fully understanding them, Kara will be developing the strategies she needs to transfer her abilities as a writer and reader to scholarly research. Extending the PACT questions to research will help students evaluate sources more fully while reflecting on their own research processes and goals; as a result, strong literacy practices will transfer to strong information literacy practices.

Lesson Plan

Learner Analysis

- This lesson works well with advanced first-year students and upper-division students. Advanced skills necessary for successful completion include the ability to quickly and accurately analyze articles from peer-reviewed, trade, and popular journals, examining not only content but also publication information and design, among other elements. Additional skills include categorizing publication types using this analysis as well as evaluating each article's purpose, audience, publication context, and potential research trouble spots.

Orienting Context and Prerequisites

Learner prerequisites

- Students should come to the session with potential research topics.

Instructional Context

- This session should be held in a room that enables students to

move their seating and to work comfortably in groups. The room should also have a whiteboard or chalkboard so that the instructor can create the PACT chart on it and allow students to fill it out.

- If the librarian is wrapping up the class with a database demonstration, a computer podium and projector is necessary.

Pre-instruction setup

- The teaching librarian needs to prepare a brief lecture on the differences and similarities among peer-reviewed, trade, and popular journal articles.
- The teaching librarian needs to find a peer-reviewed, trade, and popular journal article ideally about the same topic. Having articles from different publication types that focus on the same topic demonstrates to students how different publication genres present the same topic. Ideally, these articles should lend themselves to be scanned and analyzed quickly during a regular class session.
- The teaching librarian needs to make enough copies of each article for students in class or enough copies for each group.
- Before the class starts, the librarian creates the PACT chart on the board.

Learning Outcomes and Activities

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will understand the value in and the use of multiple perspectives available in differing publication types and implement this understanding during information gathering and assessment.
2. Students will explain the differences and similarities among popular, trade, and peer-reviewed journals in regard to each publication type's purpose, audience, publication conventions, and research trouble spots.

Learning Activities

Students will:

- Analyze sample articles for their purpose, audience, publication conventions, and potential trouble spots (PACT) for a researcher

- Categorize articles as either peer-reviewed, trade, or popular based on analysis for PACT.
 - Identify appropriate source types based on the scope and audience for their research plan.
1. Group Work/Discussion (*LO2, 50 minutes, essential*)
 - Show students definitions of peer-reviewed, trade, and popular sources on the board/screen and briefly discuss.
 - Put students in four groups.
 - Give each group either a sample peer-reviewed, trade, or popular article on the same topic.
 - Ask students to determine the following, using evidence from the articles to support their assertions:
 - a. Was the article published in a peer-reviewed, trade, and popular journal?
 - b. What is the *purpose* of the article?
 - c. Who is the *audience* for the article?
 - d. What are the publication *conventions* of the article? (Is the language formal, informal? Are there citations? Pictures?)
 - e. What about *trouble spots*? In what circumstances can each article be useful? When would the source be inappropriate?
 - Each group shares responses with the class and the librarian notes answers on the board or projects them on a screen from a computer.

Sample Articles for Group Work

- Weiss, Emily, Katherine Miller, Heather Mohan-Gibbons, and Carla Vela. "Why Did You Choose This Pet?: Adopters and Pet Selection Preferences in Five Animal Shelters in the United States." *Animals: An Open Access Journal from Mdpi* 2 (2) (2012): 144–59. doi:10.3390/ani2020144.
- Butcher, Sterry. "Cat Power." *Texas Monthly* (July 2014): 66–69. Available from <https://www.texasmonthly.com/the-culture/cat-power/>.
- Whitford, Ronald E. "A Solution for Decreased Feline Visits." *DVM Newsmagazine* (September 2011): 89.

2. Search Term Brainstorming and Database Demonstration/Workshop (*LO1, 15 minutes, essential*)
 - Students write down their working research plan, thinking about the types of information that they need. Briefly work on revising their list and where they can find that information, based on what they have learned from the activity.
 - Librarian picks two or three students to share revisions with class.

Assessment

Assessment goals

Students will successfully analyze articles as to their purpose, audience, conventions, and potential research trouble spots and use this information to accurately categorize three articles as popular, trade, or scholarly, but also understand the potential and contextual utility of each publication type. Students will see research questions and research resources as modes for further inquiry. As students work with resources, this activity should encourage them to critically engage with and interrogate each source as to its usefulness.

Assessment tool(s)

Formative assessment is utilized in class through the use of the PACT chart and the librarian-led and -facilitated discussion. As students discuss the articles and definitions, the librarian completes the PACT chart to track student understanding. S/he can reinforce correct analysis and categorization as well as rectify incorrect analysis and categorization through further discussion.

PACT Chart

	Publication Type?	Purpose?	Audience?	Publication Conventions?	Potential Trouble-Spots?
Article 1					
Article 2					
Article 3					

Summative assessment occurs when students apply what they have learned in the previous activity to create a research plan that includes not only research questions to be answered but also the types of sources in which that information might be found.

Authentic assessment can be provided using an evaluative rubric that measures the students' inclusion of performance criteria in the final research essay. Note that the following rubric assesses not only the students' evaluation of outside information but also whether they researched and addressed multiple perspectives surrounding their essay topics.

Evaluation Rubric (see Appendix 5A)

- A clear sense of audience and purpose
- Clear and focused assertion
- Accurate and clear synthesis of information in the texts as well as thoughtful and insightful evaluation of the differing perspectives. Supporting information is appropriate to the purpose(s) and audience(s)
- Effective use of rhetoric to establish credibility and authority of the writer for the chosen audience
- Strategic exploration of ideas, sources, and processes
- Careful consideration of the most appropriate genre (essay, letter, feature article, blog, etc.) and the conventions of form associated with that genre choice
- Control of stylistic conventions (including grammar and punctuation)
- Roughly ~2000 words, or eight pages plus references

Appendix 5A

PACT-based Rubric

EVALUATIVE RUBRIC FOR UNIT 4	
PURPOSE: Clearly conveys a central focus; accurately, clearly, and credibly synthesizes, evaluates, and employs information to support a thesis.	
Emerging ←	→ Mastering
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not identify a clear focus or structure, which results in a disorganized evaluation Does not provide sufficient or appropriate supporting details to persuade or educate readers Does not evaluate differing perspectives thoroughly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly and accurately supports assertion through evaluation of the sources as well as subsidiary, embedded, or implicit aspects Maintains a balance of primary and secondary details and issues without rambling or losing focus. Recognizes nuances of rhetoric that convey authority, and credibility
AUDIENCE: Identifies and considers others' perspectives and positions that are important to evaluating the issue effectively	
Emerging ←	→ Mastering
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses primarily on a single perspective and fails to establish credibility and authority. Does not consider readers' knowledge, needs, or assumptions (e.g., fails to establish context for the reader or fails to provide supporting details) —or does so superficially. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thoroughly addresses and evaluates multiple perspectives noted previously, and establishes additional credibility and accuracy from outside information. Identifies and addresses the readers' knowledge, needs, or assumptions in ways that fully engage the readers' interest.
CONVENTIONS: Conveys conclusions, implications, or and consequences (i.e., offers a clear and reasoned assertion through the synthesis and evaluation of different perspectives)	
Emerging ←	→ Mastering
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not follow the format/genre conventions for this situation, have chosen an inappropriate style or mode of delivery (too formal or informal) Has difficulty with the conventions of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and word usage for this situation Does not follow the conventions for citation or documentation in this situation Fails to convey conclusions, implications, or consequences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Genre conventions are used effectively. The information is well-organized and formatted. The style is clear, accurate, and well-suited to the intended purpose and audience. Conventions of mechanics and grammar are correct Any sources are accurately and ethically acknowledged. Identifies and discusses conclusions, implications, and consequences considering context, assumptions, data, and evidence. Objectively reflects upon his or her own assertions.
TROUBLE SPOTS: Anticipates obstacles that could get in the way of what the writer wants to achieve.	
Emerging ←	→ Mastering
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fails to anticipate obstacles in terms of audience, purpose, and/or conventions. The content may be inadequately developed, incomplete, or compromised by major errors that disrupt or distort meaning. Content may 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anticipates obstacles and questions Proofreads/rehearses to present a polished final project that is free of distractions or disruptions.

Notes

1. Rebecca Moore Howard, "A Plagiarism Pentimento," *Journal of Teaching Writing* 11, no. 3 (1993): 233–46.
2. Kurt Schick, "Citation Obsession? Get Over It," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Citation-Obsession-Get-Over/129575/>.
3. "PACT Questions," *SpeakWrite: Effective Communication across the Curriculum*, West Virginia University, <http://speakwrite.wvu.edu/>.
4. Association of College and Research Libraries Board, *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*, Association of Research and College Libraries, <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.
5. Kathleen Blake Yancey, Liane Robertson, and Kara Taczak, *Writing Across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2014).
6. David N. Perkins and Gavriel Salomon, "Teaching for Transfer," *Educational Leadership* 46, no.1: (1988): 28.
7. *Ibid.*, 30.
8. *Ibid.*, 30–31.

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- Association of College and Research Libraries Board. *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*. Association of Research and College Libraries. <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.
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