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Ideas, Hints, and Tips - RSIG

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Ideas, Hints & TIPS

Here at Clayton State University, the librarians have recently completed a marathon of library orientation sessions for the on-campus English 1102 classes. While similar orientation sessions are happening in colleges and universities across the state, the emphasis for the Clayton State University Library has taken on four focus points: "Assessment," "SACS," "library course for credit", and "survey." These areas of focus have become a permanent part of our work conversation. In addition to completing those orientation classes, we are listening to the class members through comments and questions, reading their survey results, and planning adjustments. The goal is to help them understand the resource choices available, recognize the differences of those resources, and use a successful formula to complete research and refine their assignment topics.

In the past, we have looked at segments, but now we are connecting each of the four focus areas listed above, as we prepare for future work assigned activities and meet mandated university wide goals. All of these factors are impacting on how we approach the library orientation for traditional English composition classes and for the university foundations classes for freshmen.

To get a good snapshot for informal sampling, we decided to use each of the sections of classes from English 1102, "English Composition II" and CSU 1022, "University Foundations." This provided us with a sizeable freshman population for assessment.

CSU 1022 is a required course for all Clayton State University traditional full time freshmen. It is designed to introduce students to college, study skills, issues, relationships, decision making, time management, and career exploration. Sections are divided into learning communities based on career/major interests of the students. Each CSU 1022 schedules a class session at the library. For the past three years we have used a game format with students divided into teams who search for statements about the library through the use of clues. Students are introduced to points of service within the library, required items for library resource usage, and other details relating to rules and services.

The English 1102 course is designed to give a more detailed introduction for the students to library resources so that students will know how to find books, find articles, and identify search strategies. The earlier version of the English 1102 class, prior to 2008, included some introduction to literary research and criticism resources. When the English curriculum changed to an emphasis on writing for both English 1101 and English 1102, we adjusted our library session coverage accordingly.

In the fall of 2011, we introduced the use of a clicker response system to quickly retrieve interactive feedback from students during class sessions. The choices in the software allow "student paced" or "presenter paced" quiz questions. During fall semester we used the "presenter paced" format for English 1102 classes. A few pitfalls occurred when the software froze or batteries refused to work in some of the clickers. The other issue that most faculty face at some point is complications of late-arriving students who miss directions and miss part of the presentation and interactive quiz.

During our current semester English 1102 sessions, we changed our presentation to be one of "student paced" rather than "presenter paced." This alleviated some of the anxiety of watching the clock while awaiting all students to finish their quiz questions at the presenter's speed. The CSU 1022 course has a True/False and matching response quiz question format that is also "student paced."

So what are some thoughts about our experiences with library orientations instruction? It will continue to change with each semester as better ideas and methods emerge. We are using the survey feedback from students, from faculty, and from each other to help us in developing course content for a semester long library course. Some of the areas that confuse students in a short session will be developed into multiple sessions. Hopefully, this will provide more "hands on" practice for them through the use of a relevant assignment activity.

The library course lesson plans are in the planning stages as each librarian works on segments. This will result in a proposal of a new library course elective to be presented to the university wide committee, administration, and ultimately to the University System of Georgia level for steps to the approval process.

It is very important to have good communication among all involved, to have some type of team or group effort in working with assessment, course development, and for well-informed individuals to be a part of gathering the required materials to document all the hard work for any SACS review! Remember to identify and use the strengths of each individual. Some individuals have better technology skills, while other are more adept at writing succinct documents, and the third type of individual may be best at gathering and crunching the numbers to provide an accurate snapshot of the outcome of work and instruction activity.

The process is not complete, but we are continuing to be flexible, seeking and listening to the comments and responses of our faculty and students as we develop quality library instruction sessions.

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