

# AMPLIFY THE ACTIVE LEARNING: REVAMPING COURSE-INTEGRATED LIBRARY INSTRUCTION TO BE STUDENT CENTERED

MALIA WILLEY

Course-integrated library instruction for Introduction to Music Industry Studies at Loyola University New Orleans was redesigned to be student centered. Based upon student feedback and student-centered pedagogy, the research sessions and accompanying assignments were revamped for more meaningful and active learning. Database demonstrations and lectures were transformed into hands-on research workshops and group activities. The content and number of assignments now better align with the students' semester project to allow for more authentic learning.

## BACKGROUND

Librarians at the J. Edgar and Louise S. Monroe Library provide course-integrated library instruction for Introduction to Music Industry Studies. The course is required and limited to students who major or minor in Business of Music or Music Industry Studies. There are typically one or two sections of the course offered each semester. Enrollment has been capped at either 25 or 50 students per section. A faculty member who teaches Introduction to Music Industry Studies became interested in integrating a librarian into the course because students were unfamiliar with basic research and technology skills. Students had relied heavily on unreliable sources and had intentionally and unintentionally plagiarized. The faculty member has seen an improvement in the quality of semester projects because of the incorporation of library instruction into the course.

A librarian acts as the instructor every Friday for the first 10 weeks of the semester. The assignments account for 20% of the students' final grade for the course. The goal of the research sessions is for students to learn the research and technology skills they need to complete their semester project and to succeed in their future coursework.

The semester project consists of a 10-page research paper and an accompanying PowerPoint presentation. Students can choose from a broad range of topics, such as the history of a musical genre or location, the history of sound recording or copyright in the United States, an analysis of music videos, a business plan for an artist or festival, or selecting an artist to sign for a record deal. With the approval of the faculty member, students also have the option of selecting a topic of their choice.

The learning outcomes for the research sessions include: Students will be able to:

- Identify and search relevant catalogs and databases in order to locate sources on a topic
- Evaluate websites in order to use reliable information from the Internet
- Cite sources appropriately in order to avoid plagiarism
- Use Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel in order to effectively and aesthetically present information

## FEEDBACK

Beginning in the fall of 2009, students were asked for their feedback at the end of the semester. Students were given

---

*Willey (Instruction Coordinator)*  
Loyola University New Orleans [New Orleans, LA]

a written questionnaire to fill out individually. They had the option to be anonymous or include their name. They were asked how they would improve the research sessions. Students shared their opinions in small groups, after which they related their conversations with the class. The forum was then opened to the entire group.

The librarians were able to identify student needs through the feedback. In the fall of 2009, the overwhelming response from students was for the in-class activities and assignments to relate more directly to their coursework, specifically the semester project. They suggested that the sequence of the research sessions coincide with the deadlines for the semester project. Students wanted hands-on time during class so that they could ask questions as they arose. They are required to have their semester project read by a Writing Across the Curriculum tutor. While students found the writing tutors helpful for correcting grammatical errors, they also wanted feedback on the content and quality of their research. Overall, students wanted more guidance throughout the process of completing their semester project.

### REVAMPED ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS

The content and delivery of the research sessions evolved to become more student centered over the subsequent three semesters. The librarians developed in-class activities and assignments that would meet the student needs identified through the feedback. The librarians incorporated active learning into their teaching in order to best fulfill the needs of the students. Active learning involves participatory activities that engage students in learning, such as hands-on instruction and group exercises (Grassian & Kaplowitz, 2009, p. 94). An effort was made to replace demonstration and lecture with active learning activities. The following description reflects the latest incarnation of the research sessions from the spring of 2011.

Several logistical modifications were made to accommodate change. Introduction to Music Industry Studies meets in a large multimedia classroom designed for lecturing. Access to a computer for each student was necessary to create a hands-on environment. Sections with enrollments over 36 were split into two research sections, which allowed multiple librarians to now work with the course. One research section met in the library instruction classroom, which features 20 PC desktop computers. The other research section remained in the course's regular classroom. These students were required to bring a laptop to every class. Many students preferred to work on a Mac platform, and they brought their personal laptops. Students also had the option of checking out a laptop from the library's Learning Commons. The smaller class size also better facilitated an interactive learning environment.

The sequence of assignments and topics presented in class were rearranged to correspond with the due dates for the semester project (Table 1). A preliminary description and bibliography of the students' proposed semester project topic is due to their Music Industry Studies professor by the fifth week of the semester. Research workshops and related assignments

now occur at the beginning in order for the librarians to give feedback to students before they turn in the initial requirement for their semester project. Instruction on the use of PowerPoint and Excel was shifted to the end of the semester. The research sessions now follow the students' process of finding, evaluating, citing, incorporating, and presenting information for their semester project.

**Table 1: Class Schedule for Research Sessions**

Week	Before	After
1	Introduction	Introduction
2	Excel introduction	Research workshop
3	PowerPoint introduction	Research workshop
4	Business resources demonstration	Peer evaluation of an Internet source
5	Citation style lecture	Plagiarism scenarios
6	Plagiarism lecture	PowerPoint best practices
7	Music resources demonstration	Research workshop
8	Marketing resources demonstration	Excel workshop
9	Internet accuracy discussion	Peer editing
10	Wrap up and evaluation	Wrap up and evaluation

Database demonstrations were replaced with online tutorials and research workshops. Originally there were three days devoted to showing students how to search business, music, and marketing resources. Using the screen-capture software Camtasia, the librarians created tutorials on searching a selection of catalogs and databases. The tutorials also covered how to create an effective search strategy and retrieve a known item. A handout describing the features and uses of the resources accompanied the tutorials. Students watched the tutorials in the course management system, Blackboard, before they came to class. They also looked over how to properly cite the particular materials that they would find using the resources. A feature in Blackboard allowed the librarians to track whether or not students had viewed the tutorials before class, which was then reflected in the students' participation grades. The online tutorials also enabled students to review the information as necessary.

Three full classes could now be spent performing hands-on research. Students searched for materials found in catalogs on the first day, and on the second day they searched for materials found in databases. The third research workshop occurred later in the semester as progress on the semester projects was advanced. Students had the opportunity to ask the librarian questions as they found materials on their semester project. General questions were answered at the beginning of class, and individual questions were addressed as the librarian roved for the remainder of the period. Questions typically pertained to refining a search strategy and locating the full text of an item.

Two new assignments were developed to accompany the research workshops. Previously students demonstrated their ability to find and cite relevant sources by completing a short paper on a topic of their choice and a letter to a club owner. Instead, research exercises were created for students to describe their process of finding books, articles, and Internet sources on their semester project topic. See the appendices for a sample of prompts and questions from "Research Exercise: Books" (Appendix A) and "Research Exercise: Articles and Internet Sources" (Appendix B).

The next class was devoted to evaluating Internet information. Using the Internet source students located in one of their research exercise assignments, students paired up to peer evaluate the sources they had found. Before proceeding, students agreed upon the criteria for evaluating the source. During the first half of the class, the pair determined if the sources were appropriate for their semester project. The pair spent the second half of the class locating alternative or additional materials for their partner's semester project. Each pair was asked to report their experience at the end of the class period. Students often decided not to use the Internet source that they had originally found. In the previous semester, the librarian had led a discussion on an article about the accuracy of information found on the web. Students had read and completed questions about the article in preparation for the class. The benefit of the peer evaluation over the article discussion was that all students were actively engaged in the process of evaluation.

Case-based and problem-based learning activities replaced a lecture on citation style and plagiarism. In preparation for class, students took an online quiz hosted by the School of Education at Indiana University Bloomington (Frick, 2008). Students had to correctly identify instances of word-for-word or paraphrasing plagiarism before they could print a certificate of completion. The librarian began the class period with a conversation about the quiz. Students regularly voiced that the quiz was surprisingly challenging, and some students discovered that they had unintentionally plagiarized in the past. Students were then given a worksheet with cases of in-text citations and a real-life plagiarism problem to evaluate. Useful examples can be drawn from *Teaching Information Literacy: 50 Standards-Based Exercises for College Students* (Burkhardt & MacDonald, 2010, pp. 46-47). Students worked in groups to decide if the scenarios involve plagiarism. The results of the group were shared with the class.

The classes and assignments on using PowerPoint and Excel were also retooled. The librarian gave a brief presentation that modeled PowerPoint best practices, and students critiqued the librarian's performance. The focus shifted away from the technical expertise needed to use the software to what makes an effective presentation. Students created a PowerPoint based upon their semester project topic in place of a topic of their choice. The exercise provided students the opportunity to think about the organization of their research. A rubric, which charts the expectations for the assignment, was given to students beforehand. The librarian gave additional feedback, which students could incorporate into the final PowerPoint that accompanies their semester projects. A general overview of Excel and a follow up assignment were eliminated. Guided by the librarian, students created tables and charts based upon highest-grossing concert tours. The Excel workshop provided students with the skills to make figures for their semester project paper and PowerPoint.

The revamped research sessions have a class period for peer review. Students exchanged the most current draft of their semester project with a classmate. The main task for the reviewer was to edit the content of paper. Students were also

tasked with examining the in-text and bibliographical citations for proper formatting and quality. They could comment upon the paper's organization, tone, and major grammatical errors. The peer review process gave students the opportunity to share expertise with their peers.

## FEEDBACK LOOP

The librarians continue to receive and act upon individual and group feedback from students each semester. In the semesters following the fall of 2009, students were asked:

- How did this course help you to prepare for your semester project?
- Which class(es) or assignments did you find most useful? Why?
- What suggestions do you have for future classes or assignments?

**Table 2: Assignments for Research Sessions**

Fall 2009		Spring 2011	
Assignment	Percentage of Grade	Assignment	Percentage of Grade
Attendance	10%	Participation	20%
Excel Exercise	10%	Research Exercise: Books	20%
PowerPoint Exercise	10%	Research Exercise: Articles and Internet Sources	30%
Short Paper	30%	PowerPoint Exercise	25%
Internet Accuracy Exercise	20%	Plagiarism Quiz	5%
Letter to a Club Owner	20%		

The feedback from students has been positive. Students have identified the research workshops and exercises as most valuable. Consequently, the research exercise assignments have been expanded. The number of assignments became fewer and typically worth a higher percentage of the total grade by the spring of 2011 (Table 2). Assignments not directly related to the semester project were dropped. The attendance grade morphed into a larger participation grade because of the emphasis on active learning in class. The librarians will continue to adapt the research sessions as the needs of the students change.

## CONCLUSION

Revamping the content and delivery of the research sessions for Introduction to Music Industry Studies to be student centered has provided students with a more active and holistic approach to the research process. The feedback from students indicates the in-class activities and assignments better support their coursework. Strengthening the connection between the research sessions and the semester project allows for more authentic learning because students directly apply what they learn.

## REFERENCES

- Burkhardt, J. M., & MacDonald, M. C. (2010). *Teaching information literacy: 50 standards-based exercises for college students* (2nd ed.). Chicago: American Library Association.
- Frick, T. (2008, March 19). How to recognize plagiarism. In *Understanding plagiarism*. Retrieved from [https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/plagiarism\\_test.html](https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/plagiarism_test.html)
- Grassian, E. S., & Kaplowitz, J. R. (2009). *Information literacy instruction: Theory and practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Neal-Schuman.

## APPENDIX A

A sample of prompts and questions from “Research Exercise: Books” include:

- Search for books in the Monroe Library Catalog and WorldCat. Which catalog was most helpful, and why?
- Describe your search strategy for locating the books. Which search terms were most effective? How did you broaden or narrow your search?
- List a useful subject heading for your topic.
- Provide a proper citation for three books that you found.
- Write a few sentences about each of the three books that you found. What are they about? Why are they relevant to your research?

## APPENDIX B

A sample of prompts and questions from “Research Exercise: Articles and Internet Sources” include:

- What are potential databases for locating articles on your topic, and why?
- Search for articles in the potential databases you identified. Which databases were most helpful, and why?
- Describe your search strategy for locating the articles. Which search terms were most effective? How did you broaden or narrow your search?
- Provide a proper citation for three articles that you found.
- Write a few sentences about each of the three articles that you found. What are they about? Why are they relevant to your research?
- Search the Internet for materials on your topic. How was searching the Internet useful or not useful for researching your topic? What were the rewards or challenges?
- Evaluate an Internet source that you found. How do you know if it is a good source?
- Provide a proper citation for the Internet source that you found.
- Write a few sentences about the Internet source that you found. What is it about? Why is it relevant to your research?