An Engaging, Hands-On Activity for Evaluating Sources through Problem-Based Learning

Elizabeth Dobbins | dobbinse@campbell.edu
Brooke Taxakis | taxakisb@campbell.edu

Campbell University | Wiggins Memorial Library

Slides & Resources: https://tinyurl.com/ILC2019-sources
Library-Related Learning Outcome:
Students will locate relevant information using technology and library resources.
Old Assignment - Annotated Bibliography worksheet

Assignment Part 1 - Selecting a Research Topic:

Selecting a research topic is probably the most difficult part of doing research. Is there too much information out there...is your topic too broad? Is there too little information out there...is your topic too narrow? Start by choosing a topic that you like or are curious about. You’re going to be working on it for quite a while, so try and find one that’s interesting and that you can reasonably cover in the time and space available.

See the CUFS 100 Research Guide (https://campbell.lib.campbell.edu/S10/100) for links provided on this worksheet and for other helpful tips.

Step 1: Watch the following two-minute video, “Developing a Research Topic”:
https://youtu.be/-yU_Mu2zBwa

Step 2: Choose a topic that is of interest to you and write it in the box labeled “TOPIC” in the chart below.

Step 3: Think of the 4 W’s (Who, What, When, Where) for your topic and fill in the appropriate spaces in the chart below.

TIP: If you are having trouble filling out the chart, the following “Library Research” guide from Bates College Library has a few examples:
http://bateslib.bates.edu/researchguide.php?sub=227008&sid=1881737

Assignment Part 2: Developing Keywords

To search for sources that will help you answer your research question, you’ll need to use keywords—core terms that will link up with words people use when they write about your topic.

Step 1: Write your research question and circle the most important 2-4 words. These are your keywords. Most answers will not be using the exact question you’re asking, but they may discuss the same major concepts. Choosing core ideas as keywords will let you find answers that are relevant.

Step 2: Help yourself find even more answers by giving synonyms for these keywords. People don’t always use the same words to talk about the same subject. Use background sources like encyclopedias, electronic reference sources, or the web to see what alternative terms might be out there.

Keywords:

Synonyms:

Step 3: Use your keywords or their synonyms to create three distinct search strings using Boolean operators that you’ll then use searching.

AND: finds both words exactly: college AND income OR: finds either of two concepts: college OR bachelor’s AND income QUOTES: look phrases together: college OR bachelor’s degree AND (“average income”) Search Option 1:

Search Option 2:

Search Option 3:
History

2017

Changes within FYE
Move to uniform syllabus across 25 sections
  - Impact on library instruction: old model v. new
Summer 2017 — Assignment redesign

2018

Spring 2018 — Piloted new assignment
Summer 2018 — Train the trainer for FYE instructors
Fall 2018 — New assignment implemented in all sections
Rationale

**Flipped Classroom**

Students prepare for activity before class — class time is engaging, requires critical thinking and discussion

**Problem-Based Learning**

Problem scenarios should:

- Have no “right” answer — instead, multiple possible answers
- Allow for structured exploration
- Be ill-structured and complex
- Be authentic and relevant
- Be collaborative
- Activate students’ prior knowledge

View slide notes for PBL resources
Lesson plan & pre-work videos
Activity

Scenario Handout

Source Cards
Debrief

Common Student Reflections

- “Focusing my question helped me decide what was most relevant.”
  RESEARCH AS INQUIRY | SEARCHING AS STRATEGIC EXPLORATION
- “Looking at the publication date helped me rule out some outdated articles.”
  INFORMATION CREATION AS A PROCESS
- “I chose these sources because the authors seemed credentialed, unbiased, and reliable.”
  AUTHORITY IS CONSTRUCTED AND CONTEXTUAL
- “I ruled out one article because it was published by an advocacy organization that seemed biased.”
  RESEARCH AS INQUIRY | SEARCHING AS STRATEGIC EXPLORATION
- “At first I thought this was a great source, but then I realized the study was done in Ohio and I wanted something more local.”
  AUTHORITY IS CONSTRUCTED AND CONTEXTUAL | RESEARCH AS INQUIRY
- “First thing I did was eliminate the student poll done at Starbucks.”
  AUTHORITY IS CONSTRUCTED AND CONTEXTUAL
Assessment

Formal assessment

Assessed pre-work (video quizzes) for:

- Evidence of comprehension
- Points of confusion
- Ideas for assignment modification
  - e.g. ‘How is Your Information Created’ video will be replaced with NCSU ‘Peer-Review in 3 Minutes’ video
Student feedback

“This session gave me a different perspective on how to spot legitimate sources.”

“I learned that there's no right or wrong way to doing research. However, the value and validity of the source and creator can greatly impact the outcome of your research.”

“I have less anxiety about research papers after this class.”
Final thoughts

Simple = Versatile

- Can be discipline-specific (e.g. NURS 100)
- Engaging and relevant for students
- Adaptable to local issues
- Adaptable to unique class settings
  - Military bases or prisons with limited internet access in classroom

Questions?
Credits

Special thanks to all the people who made and released these awesome resources for free.

- Presentation template by SlidesCarnival
- Photographs by Unsplash
- Learn more about slidedocs at duarte.com/slidedocs