



***Creating Effective Library  
Use Assignments in a  
GOOGLE World***

In-Service Workshop Presented by  
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# Workshop Goal

Help faculty create well-designed, effective course-related library assignments to build students' critical thinking and research skills.

The basic plan for this presentation was borrowed from the Notre Dame University Libraries  
(<http://www.library.nd.edu/instruction/Flash%20Paper/workshop1.swf>)



# Outline

- Creating assignments that encourage critical thinking
- Characteristics of effective library-use assignments
- Alternatives to the research paper
- Collaborating with librarians
- Improving research skills



# Challenges for Our Students

- Learning to conduct research does not come easily to many students.
- Today, with access to vast amounts of information, the challenges are greater than ever.
- Couple this with the knowledge that students operate on the Principle of *Least Effort*.



# Challenges for Our Students

- Inadequate/poor/undeveloped research/library skills
- Reluctance to ask for help
- Time constraints
- Technology challenges/limitations
- Miscommunication or misunderstandings about the assignment



# An Effective Library Assignment...

- Has a specific, clearly articulated and understood purpose
- Relates in some way to course subject matter
- Leads to increased understanding of a subject and/or the process of finding information on a subject



# An Effective Library Assignment...

- Makes students aware of the variety of information sources and formats available
- Encourages students to select and evaluate sources appropriate to their topics or needs
- Reinforces the practice of ethical scholarship



# Tips for Designing Effective Assignments

- Consult with a librarian
- Assume students have minimal library & subject knowledge
- Review and test the assignment yourself
- Write clear & complete instructions, avoiding library/academic jargon, and specifying assignment requirements



# Tips for Designing Effective Assignments

- Emphasize quality of resources rather than format



# Preparing Your Students

- Indicate the level of research expected (and general time expectations)
- For complex assignments, develop a schedule
- Teach/model research strategies
- Schedule library instruction
- Encourage students to ask questions and/or meet with a librarian
- Discuss plagiarism & citing sources



# What to Avoid...

- Assuming your students know where the library is (and other basics)
- The mob scene
- The needle in the haystack
- Most scavenger hunts
- An elusive topic or resource
- Catching the library staff unaware
- “Canned” assignments listed in the textbook



## What to Avoid...

- Assuming the Library has all, or none, of the resources that your students need
- Failing to distinguish between the “free Web” (Internet) and subscription web-based electronic resources provided by the library
- Forbidding use of *all* encyclopedias



# Term Paper Alternatives

- Compare treatment of a topic from different types of sources
- Evaluate/compare website(s) or information retrieved from the Internet
- Annotated bibliographies
- A research log or journal
- “Track Back” to original research
- Summarize an article from a trade publication or journal



# Term Paper Alternatives

- Create & present a poster or PowerPoint presentation on a topic
- Compare treatment of a topic or event from “liberal” & “conservative” sources
- Compare 2 or more core publications or reference sources from a discipline
- Write a “not quite” term paper
- Respond to a newspaper editorial using data gathered from research



Questions?



# Works Consulted

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