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Encouraging Quality Information Research Habits

Our May 2012 newsletter included an article titled "Encouraging Critical Thinking in Library Research Assignments" that ends with the following quote:

> *University students may appear to be more comfortable in technology intensive environments than are their professors, but it does not necessarily follow that they have the knowledge and critical thinking skills to effectively locate, filter, and evaluate information found online.* (Kingsley & Kingsley, 2009, p. 2)

URI's first-year students attend a library orientation session with their URI 101 class to familiarize them with basic logistics of the library. This is a good beginning, but it is only a basic step. To develop students' abilities to "locate, filter, and evaluate information" beyond what's needed their first semester, instructors can also do the following:

- Schedule a library instruction session where students can gain experience in preparation for specific course assignments.
- Build information research tasks into assignments, starting by scaffolding simple foundational skills and building to more difficult tasks at the end of semester.
- Direct students to visit the new Info & Research Help desk in the Library's Learning Commons where they can consult the librarians for guidance in their information searches.
- Include links to the following resources in the course syllabus
  - Getting Started @ The Libraries
  - Citing Correctly & Avoiding Plagiarism

Following these simple steps will go a long way to helping students develop information literacy skills that will improve their overall work in any course.

Kingsley, K. V. & Kingsley, K. (2009). A case study for teaching information literacy skills. *BMC Medical Education, 9*(7), 1-6. doi:10.1186/1472-6920-9-7 http://www.biomedcentral.com/1472-6920/9/7

Additional Tips

- **Test your assignment in advance** - databases and interfaces change, so make sure your instructions are consistent.
- **Remind students that good research takes time.**
- **Provide a list of recommended research tools and their strengths** - for example, use the HELIN catalog to find books, use Academic Search Complete to find scholarly articles.
- **Clearly describe the type, format and number of information sources** you expect students to use.
- **Assess your students' skills and knowledge.** Have students include the permanent links to their resources that the databases and catalog provide in their bibliographies.

Plagiarism detection: Why not *Turnitin*?

Many institutions have turned to plagiarism detection services such as Turnitin to review student projects and papers for potential instances of plagiarism. Commercially offered systems may not be the panacea for plagiarism that they purport to be, however. While these programs are simple to use - just upload a paper or project and wait for the results - some students have complained and brought lawsuits about the programs. One problem with these systems is that they create an environment that assumes students are guilty until the program proves them innocent. Another issue is that these programs retain the student projects and add the material to their proprietary databases of information, and students are not reimbursed for the re-use of their intellectual property by for-profit companies. Finally, commercial products may not be able to find obscure sources obtained from article databases or institutional repositories.

It's easy to protect your students' intellectual property and detect plagiarism, while fostering an atmosphere of academic integrity. Here are some tips:

- Provide clear expectations of how and when materials should be cited. Some students mistakenly believe that anything on the internet is in the public domain or can be used without attribution.
- Get a sense of each student's writing style through annotated bibliographies, discussion postings, and short writing assignments.
- Model good citation habits by citing sources in your handouts and images in your presentations.
- Use tools you already have to locate the source of suspect passages. A quick search in Google or an article database is likely to turn up a match.

For more information you can use to help your students cite responsibly, please see the guide "Citing Correctly and Avoiding Plagiarism" at http://uri.libguides.com/cite.

By the Numbers

375 Talent Development students learned the basics of using the HELIN Catalog and finding articles in Library orientation sessions during their first week on campus in June.

51 students took LIB 120 Introduction to Information Literacy this summer, which was offered in two face-to-face sections and one online section.

9,482 students attended a library instruction session from September 2011 to July 2012.

Related Updates

New Databases for Fall 2012

The Libraries have just added access to a number of online resources that may be helpful for your classes including Oxford Reference Online Premium and the Chicago Manual of Style. You can see the full list of new resources at http://uri.libguides.com/neweresources.

Instruction @ the URI Libraries provides updates and tips related to the URI Libraries' instruction programs and offerings, and is distributed in January, May, and August.

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