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## Instruction @ the URI Libraries - August 2011

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# Instruction @ the URI Libraries



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## Encouraging Critical Thinking in Library Research Assignments

A recent study explores the content of research assignment handouts.

Alison Head, Ph.D. and Mike Eisenberg, Ph.D. of the University of Washington report the results of their recent study in “Assigning Inquiry: How Handouts for Research Assignments Guide Today’s College Students” (Project Information Literacy, July 2010) [http://projectinfoilit.org/pdfs/PIL\\_Handout\\_Study\\_finalvJuly\\_2010.pdf](http://projectinfoilit.org/pdfs/PIL_Handout_Study_finalvJuly_2010.pdf)

The report explains that “The majority of [library research assignment] handouts in our sample placed more attention on the mechanics of preparing a research assignment than on conveying substantive information that students also needed, such as how to define and focus a research strategy within the complex information landscape that most college students inhabit today.” Furthermore, “we have also found something revealing about the handouts: In most handouts, there was a paucity of specific guidance about which information sources to use and where to begin finding them.”

As you design this semester’s library research assignments - whether they’re papers, projects, or presentations - consider providing information that will help students achieve the goals of your assignment. Between topic selection and final formatting come the all-important *finding*, *evaluating*, and *analyzing* of the information that students will use to support their work.

In particular, evaluating sources can be difficult for students. Here then, are two easy methods of evaluation that students might use to select sources. Librarians suggest that for an individual assignment you might select the two most relevant criteria for the topic at hand. Trying to use all at once is challenging for beginning researchers!

**CRAAP**  
Currency  
Relevance  
Authority  
Accuracy  
Purpose

**START**  
Scope  
Treatment  
Authority  
Relevance  
Timeliness

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## Links to Use and Share

### Evaluating Information

<http://uri.libguides.com/evalinfo>

This guide offers some general rules of thumb for evaluating information - both in print and online.

### Creating Effective Library Research Assignments

[http://www.uri.edu/library/instruction\\_services/effective.html](http://www.uri.edu/library/instruction_services/effective.html)

This guide for instructors contains tips and ideas for developing successful library and online research projects.

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## Library link in Sakai course shells

If you're designing a course in Sakai this fall, you may notice a new link on the left. The Library link on the left takes users to our LibGuides system, and you can see our list of subject guides and research tools listed on the left hand side. On the right, you'll see easy access to research assistance by phone or via a widget where you and your students can IM the Reference Librarian on duty. While we have many general subject guides, we can also design a guide specifically for your course. For more information on using or creating LibGuides to support student research, please contact your Subject Selector. A list of selectors is available at <http://www.uri.edu/library/selectors.html>.

If you have any questions about additional instruction services including scheduling library instruction sessions, please contact Chair of Public Services Deborah Mongeau or Information Literacy Librarian Mary MacDonald. Deborah can be reached by e-mail at [dmongeau@uri.edu](mailto:dmongeau@uri.edu) or by telephone at (401) 874-4610. Mary can be reached by e-mail at [marymac@uri.edu](mailto:marymac@uri.edu) or by telephone at (401) 874-4635.

### By the Numbers

360 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.

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

9,482 students attended a library instruction session from September 2010 to July 2011.

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## Related Updates

### Renovation is underway

The first floor of the Robert L. Carothers Library and Learning Commons is getting a fantastic update that will offer an improved Reference Desk as well as more and better group work spaces for students. During the renovation, we are losing access to one library lab, so we may have some delay in scheduling library instruction classes, but all services will be available. Contact the Reference Desk at 874-2653 if you have any questions about library services during this time.

### The HELIN Library Catalog changes, as well

On the main library home page, you'll see two links that say "Books & More." One takes you to the "Classic" catalog, while the other takes you to the new version, called "Synergy," which has some additional features and functionality, including article integration, easier emailing, and ways to limit and focus searching using facets similar to those in many article databases. We welcome your feedback about the catalogs. If you have any comments or questions, please contact Amanda Izenstark at [amanda@uri.edu](mailto:amanda@uri.edu) or 874-4582.

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*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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