

**Faculty/Librarian Collaboration
for
Productive Library Assignments**

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What are the reasons for assigning a paper that requires library research?

- To promote information literacy in students.
- To prepare students to be lifelong learners in an information economy.
- To provide students with an opportunity to navigate various types of information sources, in various formats.
- To teach students how to evaluate, think critically about, and apply the content that they find in these information sources.
- Other reasons:
 - To reinforce and supplement course content?
 - To cause students to engage with ideas and construct their own learning?
 - What else? _____

Librarians are your colleagues and partners in education.

- Library Science is a discipline in its own right!
- Another name for our discipline is "Information Literacy." Librarians know how information is produced and packaged, and where to find it.
- Librarians are trained to connect information seekers with the material they want or need. We know "where the good stuff is," and we can help you find it!
- Librarians want to work with you, and to help your students succeed.

Schedule a library orientation session for your class.

- Work with the librarian to make the session assignment-specific.
- Assign your students a graded task that will require them to immediately use the knowledge and skills learned, i.e. finding a source that they will use in their paper, and justifying their selection of that source.
- Prepare the class--tell your students that they will be going to the library. Explain the research assignment to them before the session. They will be more "primed" to pay attention during the session.
- One 50-minute session is barely enough time to skim over the basics of where things are located in the library, or the mechanics of accessing a database. If you can, work with the librarian to schedule more than one session, to cover different resources, topics and skills.
- **Be there!** More of your students will attend the library session, and they will get more out of it, if you are present.
 - Students are accountable to you, not to the librarian, for their grade.
 - You can provide course-related context to a principle or skill covered by the librarian.
 - Your presence validates the importance of information literacy (conversely, your absence sends the opposite message).

Avoid scavenger hunts.

- This is a common assignment, but it is an exercise in futility. Students learn little from it, and mostly become frustrated and more averse to the library and “real” research than they may already be. Library staff often end up doing most of the work.
 - Quotable Quote: “Roaming around the library looking for trivia is not research and tends to promote learned helplessness.”--Lane Community College Library, <http://www.lanec.edu/library/assign.htm>.

When giving a library research assignment:

- Plan it well to achieve specific learning objectives—as you do with any other component of your lesson plan. Your students will better learn course content, and improve their information literacy skills, if you try the following:
 - “Test-drive” your assignment. Is it doable? Is the information really there? Try these strategies to encourage real learning:
 - Refer your students to specific websites, providing navigating instructions, so that they can find information that you **know** is there. An open-ended assignment, in which students are told to simply “go on the Internet and find,” usually causes them to waste time, learn little, and become frustrated. Remember that web-based information can often change or go away--check your sources often!
 - Assign a task referring students to one or more specific reference sources that you know are in the library, with instructions to look up a topic that you know is in the index, e.g. “Source: ENCYCLOPEDIA OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN CULTURE AND HISTORY. Call #: REF E185.E54 1995. Topic: JIM CROW.”
 - Similarly, if your assignment calls for students to look up articles in specific journals related to your discipline, consult with the librarian about which of these journals are available in full-text in the library’s databases, and indicate this in your assignment, e.g. “YOU MAY ACCESS FULL-TEXT ARTICLES FROM THESE JOURNALS IN THE XXX DATABASE, AVAILABLE THROUGH THE LIBRARY’S WEB SITE, [HTTP://XXX](http://xxx). SEE A LIBRARIAN FOR HELP,” (or some other effective instruction that you and the librarian devise)!
 - See below for more about databases.

Ask the librarian to review with you what sources are available.

- There may not be a sufficient number of circulating books available for everyone in the class to check out.
- Consider placing items on reserve.
- Discuss with the librarian reference books, e-books, databases, and other useful sources besides circulating books that may be available.
- You may be surprised to learn a thing or two about sources. There is more to the “online” world than just the free Web. For example, instructors often give their students the URL for a newspaper or magazine web site, with the instruction to locate articles there. What the instructors don’t realize is:
 - These sites usually allow users to search for articles--but the articles themselves, or most of them, are not available for free.
 - The library subscribes to databases that provide full-text access to articles from many different periodicals. These databases are accessible to students and faculty with current college I.D.s.
 - The librarian may be able to suggest quality web sites that relate to your curriculum, or a specialized topic, i.e. plagiarism, that you can share with your students. Again, we know “where the good stuff is.”

Suggest items for purchase.

- It may not help for the current assignment, but your library colleagues want to hear from you—the subject expert—any suggestions for books (except textbooks!), DVDs, videos, journal subscriptions, and other materials that the library should consider purchasing to support your curriculum.