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Making a Difference in One Shot

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Making a Difference in One Shot



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Many academic librarians have come to recognize that the vast majority of our students arrive on campus without the information literacy skills needed for college level research and writing. We usually only get “one shot” to reach our students with instruction that will help them navigate and evaluate library resources. My background as a high school teacher has provided the skills I need to create a valuable lesson for students as they attend a one shot session in the library with their university seminar class designed to help incoming Freshmen become acquainted with tools that lead to college success. As students do not have an assignment attached to this class, I had to be creative and figure out a way to reach them with information that I hope they will retain throughout their college careers.

After repeatedly hearing the phrase, “I don’t need the library, I can find all my sources on Google,” I decided that a comparison of library resources to Google resources might provide the valuable lesson I was looking for. I did not want to just tell students the information, but I wanted them to discover it for themselves. So, I devised a quick, attention-grabbing instructional session to help them discover the value of choosing the right resource.

I begin the lesson by breaking students into groups of 3-5 depending on the class size. Each group then must choose a scribe to write the answers, a browser to perform the search, and a speaker to present their answers; any remaining students assist to answer the questions provided on the handout.

A handout is given to each group asking questions pertaining to the search they are about to perform. Each group performs the same search through an assigned online resource (Google, Google Scholar, Library OneSearch, Education Research Complete, Wikipedia, or Reddit). Providing the questions with multiple choice answers ahead of time allows me to push the students to complete their answers in a short amount of time. The handout asks the following questions:

1. Number of results received _____

2. What types of information did you receive in your search?
 - a. Academic Journals
 - b. News Sources
 - c. Books and Book Reviews
 - d. Videos
 - e. Images
 - f. Social Media Links
 - g. Educational Websites (.edu)
 - h. Organizational Websites (.org)
 - i. Commercial Websites (.com)
 - j. Government Websites (.gov)
3. What could you use these results for in the future?
 - a. To gain background knowledge on my topic
 - b. To learn professional language
 - c. To cite quotes and statistics in my paper
 - d. To locate scholarly sources for a fee
 - e. To locate scholarly sources at no cost
4. List the pros and cons to using this browser for scholarly research:

Time is valuable in a one shot class that only lasts 50 minutes, so I push the students to answer as quickly as possible, giving them 5-7 minutes to answer the questions. Then, I begin the presentations by asking the questions from each group and demonstrating their search on the computer at the front of the room for the other groups to see. I begin the presentations with Google and slowly move down through the list with Wikipedia and Reddit going last. I navigate the flow of the presentations so that we can complete this part of the class in 10 minutes or less. If we don't have enough students for all the groups, I make sure that Google, Google Scholar, and the library OneSearch are covered first. These brief presentations allow the students to be the ones who present the information and demonstrate the difference between millions of results in Google down to a few thousand in the library OneSearch and even 1 result in Wikipedia.

The main point I try to drive home at the completion of this activity is that students all know they have choices in where they search, but they need to consider what type of information they are seeking. If they are searching for current events or very current topics in which their professors allow them to use non-scholarly sources, then Google will do the trick. However, if they need more scholarly sources, the library databases provide an easy way to locate these. This lesson can be completed in 15-20 minutes leaving time for a matching game on the qualities of scholarly articles versus popular resources, a game of Kahoot's with library terminology the students may not be familiar with, and a discussion of the appropriate time to use Google versus library resources. †