

Recommended Sequence for Library Instruction for Group Research Projects



1. Brainstorm Questions

Invite the librarian to your classroom shortly after you introduce the assignment. Co-facilitate a brainstorming session in which you model how to come up with a “researchable” topic and specific questions to guide inquiry and research. Our basic model includes the following questions:

- a. What do you already know about this topic, issue, or problem?
- b. What do you need to know about this topic, issue, or problem in order to understand it better, explain it to someone else, and/or propose a solution?
- c. Where can you find information to your questions? (Hint: You might need a librarian to help you figure this one out).

We have worksheets with this model outlined in case you want to have students record their question development before they come to the library for research:

<http://library.usu.edu/instruct/handouts/researchplan.pdf>

2. Library Research Day

Come to the library as soon as possible after the brainstorming session. The librarian can do a very, very quick demonstration of how to locate articles via the library. The rest of the time can be spent assisting groups and students individually.

3. Work-in-Progress Reports

After the first library research day, have students bring one source to class and be ready to summarize it to their group. They should briefly summarize the contents and explain how it will be useful to the group’s final project:

- what new information does it add?
- how does it help focus our topic?
- what new questions does it raise?
- does it lead to any other sources of information that might provide more details or better information?

After each individual reports on their source to the group, have the entire group reflect on the strength of their sources and what they still need to discover. If time allows, have each group summarize this for the rest of the class. If your librarian can attend the class session, s/he can make recommendations on where to find the missing pieces. Students can also make suggestions based on information sources, tools, and research strategies that they have found useful. This activity can also be conducted online through Syllabase, Blackboard, or other online discussion tool, such as a blog.

4. Additional Library Research Day

After the Work-in-Progress Reports, you can schedule an additional library research day that will focus on helping students fill in any gaps identified during the work-in-progress discussions. You can also have groups make appointments with your librarian for additional one-on-one help.

This sequence can also be adapted for individual research projects. For the Work-in-Progress Reports, students can simply report on their own progress in small group discussions, with a whole-class discussion focusing on identifying common research gaps and tips to find more and better information from students, instructors, and your librarian.

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