LESSON PLAN

FOR A ONE-HOUR WORKSHOP

Title

Search Strategies

Contact Information

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Research & User Experience Intern at Fondren Library

Location and Time

Fondren Library, Room 323

Tuesday, September 28, 2021, 4:30 – 5:30 p.m.

Learning Prerequisites

None; this workshop has been created with the first-year university student in mind, but it can also be applicable for older students or even faculty who want to hone their searching skills.

Technology Prerequisites

Attendees will need to bring their own laptop to the workshop and be familiar with browsing basics – how to open a new tab in the browser of their choice, or how to navigate to Google.com and the library website.

Learning Objectives

- Given a sample assignment prompt, attendees will be able to identify three possible publications or websites to use as a source.
- Given a sample topic, attendees will be able to construct a Boolean search.
- With the above Boolean search, attendees will be able to write down three other search terms that would be applicable for the sample topic.

Description

Searching in a library catalog or research database can be overwhelming when one has not used such resources before. If you have tried to find resources for a class assignment and felt overwhelmed by the variety of options you found in a library search, come to this workshop to learn some ways to consider the best place to search, construct better keywords and search phrases, and to rework search terms if that initial search does not bring the results you were hoping for. This workshop has been created for first-year students but is open to anyone from freshmen to faculty who want to improve their search skills when looking for research resources.

Content Covered

- Overview of library catalog website, including how to filter to limit results. Review of what information can be found in resource listings, including how to access online resources and subject headers to expand searches. Introduction of Advanced Search, within a discussion of what is easy to find in the library catalog (a specific title) and what's more challenging (books on a general topic.)
- Discussion of how to frame search terms to make your search results more pertinent to what you need. Introduce the concept of a Boolean search – AND/OR/NOT – and discuss synonyms, both in a scholarly sense (how would a scholar define this topic?) and that some authors will use different phrases to describe the same topic. Demonstrate that searching on a website like Google is not the same as searching in a library catalog or database. Explain that brainstorming or Googling can lead to more specific keywords and better search results.
- Introduction to the idea of research guides, where librarians have gathered databases by topic. allowing searches to be more targeted. Show how a search here for the same keywords gives much fewer – but more pertinent – results.

Activities

Slides and lecture

Demonstrations of library catalog and databases, as well as guided searches in both

Instructional strategies:

The workshop would be driven by the principles behind constructivism: Asking participants to determine where we might look and how we might construct searches allows them to take an active part in learning, which is particularly fitting for reference and information literacy instruction (Korber & Shepherd, 2019; Oakleaf & VanScoy, 2010). Slides and lecture will help to introduce concepts, but the demonstrations and searches will be guided by student suggestions and participation.

Assessment

All workshops have a follow-up assessment sent by email after the workshop is complete. This will include use satisfaction questions, as well as a prompt to ask for two things they learned during the workshop, and one thing they still have a question about. This will allow me to follow up with each person individually, to answer the question and continue to build a relationship with the student. Given that the instruction is not affiliated with a class and optional for students, a low-key assessment that primarily measures satisfaction would be fitting here (Turnbow & Zeidman-Karpinski, 2016).

REFERENCES

Korber, I., & Shepherd, J. (2019). Teaching the information literacy Framework. *Reference Services Review, 47*(4), 461-475. https://doi.org/10.1108/RSR-05-2019-0033

Oakleaf, M., & VanScoy, A. (2010). Instructional strategies for digital reference: Methods to facilitate student learning. *Reference & User Services Quarterly, 49*(4), 380-390.

Turnbow, D., & Zeidman-Karpinski, A. (2016). Don't use a hammer when you need a screwdriver: How to use the right tools to create assessment that matters. *Communications in Information Literacy, 10*(2), 143-162.