Evaluating Sources

Karen Brown
Jennifer Crowther
LIS 665
Fall 2008
Dr. Diane Nahl
# Table of Contents

Purpose & Goals........................................................................................................ 3  
Students' Skills ...................................................................................................... 4  
Instructional Sequence .......................................................................................... 4  
Handouts & Test Items ......................................................................................... 6  
Test/Exercise Response ....................................................................................... 6  
Session Evaluation Form ..................................................................................... 6  
Memo to Administration ....................................................................................... 7  
Appendix A ........................................................................................................... 8  
References ............................................................................................................ 9  
Purpose & Goals

Our teaching theme was: “Good, Better, Best: We know you’re good, we know you’re smart, but we’re going to give you better tools, so you can get the best information.” The purpose or goal of the lesson was to help students critically evaluate the information sources they have found for their literature review and find credible sources through the aid of databases and activities with hands-on discovery. After having looked over the needs assessment results, the students showed a lack of knowledge about how to evaluate sources, and what “evaluate” entailed. This was a critical need for them as one assignment specifically targeted a literature review in which students needed to find the best sources possible for their topic. The goals, performance indicators, and outcomes for this assignment are listed below, along with the ACRL competencies that they are keyed to. Also present are the affective, cognitive and sensorimotor outcomes.

Teaching Goal: Help students critically evaluate the information sources they have found for their literature review and find credible sources through the aid of databases and activities with hands-on discovery.

ACRL STANDARD III: The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.

Performance Indicator (ACRL #7):
Students will determine whether the initial query should be revised.

Outcome 1 [ACRL A]: Faced with results, students will determine [C] if the original information need has been satisfied or if additional information is needed [A] and will write their analysis [S] with 90% accuracy.

Performance Indicator (ACRL #2): Students will articulate and apply initial criteria for evaluating both the information and its sources.

Outcome 2 [ACRL A]: When students want to become [A] proficient at examining and comparing information from various sources, they will learn to evaluate the differences [C] in reliability/authority, timeliness, and point of view or bias, and apply this understanding to their research activities by matching [S] which items to choose, with 90% accuracy.

Outcome 3 [ACRL D]: When looking at a particular source, students will show awareness [A] of the variety of cultural, physical, or other context within which information was created, and will evaluate sources [C] and explains instances of bias [S] with 90% accuracy.

ACRL STANDARD IV: The information literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.

Performance Indicator (ACRL #1): Students will successfully apply skills to better find reliable sources of information.

Outcome 4 [ACRL D]: When looking at a particular source, students will be willing to [A] and explain [S] how to differentiate [C] relevant and authoritative items with 90% accuracy.

Students’ Skills

We assumed the students would have a basic knowledge of how to access databases, how to do simple Boolean searches in databases, and how to navigate from the UH Library home page to find resources (focusing on the Quick Links side bar). This skill set was acquired through our colleagues’ previous lessons.

They would also be skilled in how to access Voyager, the ERIC database, and Google, and how to search for items in all three, as well as understanding the general difference between the three. We know this because of the session we sat in on, in which groups presented findings on this material.

We could see from the needs assessment that they were basic searchers, and needed help discerning credible information. The needs assessment from early on in the course showed students had a vague understanding of “evaluation”, with students saying: “If most of the sources say the same thing, I go with that” or “I took the easiest to understand.”

Instructional Sequence

12:12:06 [6 minutes]
Hook: Draw students into a discussion about their needs versus someone else’s needs and how that plays into academic work.

12:06-12:11 [5 minutes]
One minute paper: Students will write a one minute paper that will help them begin to think about evaluating their sources.
[ASSESSMENT, Outcome #1: One Minute Paper: “How satisfied are you with your current source list? If there are gaps for material in your source list, what are the gaps?”]

12:11-12:31 [15-20 minutes]
Magazine vs. journal: In groups, students will examine magazines and journals and engage in a discussion about what makes them different from each other, how each is useful and how that ties into relevance, authority, etc.
[ASSESSMENT, Outcome #2: Use clickers to let them choose which items they think make a source reliable/authoritative, timely, and biased.]

[4 minutes]
Show YouTube video on discerning between scholarly and popular sources. [backup only if there’s time]

12:31-12:41 [8-10 minutes]
Timeliness: Students will look at snippets from different reviews on The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie and determine how timeliness plays into evaluating sources.

[4-6 minutes]
Timeliness: Show news story on United and ask students if they heard the story about shares tanking based on a 2002 story that ran 2 weeks ago. [backup only if there’s time]

12:41-12:53 [10-12 minutes]
Bias: Students will respond to questions about popular culture as to whether they enjoy certain art or movies. This will lead into a discussion about bias and how that ties into evaluating sources.
[ASSESSMENT, Outcome #3: Small Group: Show them again the different magazines/journals.]
Name two reasons why recognizing bias might be important for your paper. What ways could you recognize bias?

12:53-1:03 [10 minutes]
**Literature Review Revision:** Students will use this time to work on revising their literature review sources based on the information in the session and their one-minute papers. This ties the session together and helps the students come away with a very relevant and useful piece of knowledge. Collect one-minute papers when finished.

[8-10 minutes]
**Linking by cited references:** This will show students how to link through cited references so that they can more fully utilize their resources. *(backup only if there’s time)*

1:03-1:08 [5 minutes]
**Facebook:** Our Facebook information will be put up so that they can take it down and students will be asked for a final piece of information as they are leaving as an assessment.

**[ASSESSMENT, Outcome #4]**: As they’re walking out the door, they have to tell us one thing to look for when determining the difference between a magazine and a journal or what determines reliability for a source.

**What we need to bring/get:**
- Laptop w/ TurningPoint
- TurningPoint Questions Saved
- Contact Information
- Clicker Set
- Magazines
- Journals
- Copies of reviews of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* to pass out

**Students should have:**
- Pens/pencils
- Paper
- Lit review sources that can be marked up
Handouts & Test Items

See Appendix A for all handouts, visual aids, and test items.

Test/Exercise Response

1. ASSESSMENT, Outcome #1 (See page 3 for details): One Minute Paper: “How satisfied are you with your current source list? If there are gaps for material in your source list, what are the gaps?”

We had to change these questions on the fly, because students didn’t have their source list with them, as we were promised. So, we changed the questions to: “How prepared do you feel to find information about your topic? What angle do you think you will write your literature review on?”

2. ASSESSMENT, Outcome #2 (See page 3 for details): Use clickers to let them choose which items they think make a source reliable/authoritative, timely, and biased. Note: See Attachment 2 for a list of the questions.

3. ASSESSMENT, Outcome #3 (See page 3 for details): Small Group: Show them again the different magazines/journals. Name two reasons why recognizing bias might be important for your paper. What ways could you recognize bias? Note: See Attachment 2 for a list of questions.

4. ASSESSMENT, Outcome #4 (See page 3 for details): As they’re walking out the door, they have to tell us one thing to look for when determining the difference between a magazine and a journal or what determines reliability for a source.

Session Evaluation Form

At this time, we aren’t sure that we will be receiving any type of evaluation from the learner’s, due to the instructor’s absence. We asked students after the discussion if they would keep in mind that we might be evaluated and to write down a few things in case, so we shall see.
Memo to Administration

The ability to evaluate sources is essential to any scholarly or academic work that will be done on the University of Hawaii at Manoa campus. In 2008, if an institution doesn't support the critical evaluation of sources, applying to print and digital formats, then the credibility of the institution in the eyes academic world will certainly be tainted, for it is at the very core of academic integrity.

Teaching undergraduates about evaluating sources with regards to information literacy directly supports many of the goals set by the University. The UH Foundation’s writing requirement, Written Communication, that serves as a General Education Hallmark states that, “students [will] develop information literacy by … critical evaluation of information and sources, and effective selection of information for specific purposes and audiences.” This was a major force in our lesson, the idea that evaluating sources includes not only looking at authority, bias, timeliness, and reliability, but that each individual has a unique perspective, and that this must be kept in mind throughout the entire process of selecting materials.

According to the outcomes from the Foundation in 2000, the Learning Goals for the students include: “a) Read for main points, perspective, and purpose; evaluate the quality of evidence, negotiate conflicting positions, and their writing; and b) […] analyze and evaluate their research for reliability, bias, and relevance.” Our lesson aligned impeccably with these outcomes.

In developing and implementing this lesson, the University of Hawaii Strategic Plan goals were also incorporated in that the lesson “engage[d] all undergraduates in research and creative scholarship.” This was specifically done with an assignment in mind that would tie to other academic departments and scholarship, which in turn ties into the Hamilton Library Strategic Plan to “increase contacts between librarians and academic units.” This would be accomplished through the students applying lessons learned from the session and further incorporating it into other academic areas in order to build upon their knowledge base. Increased cooperation between librarians and other academic units will be feasible and the student will benefit from this cooperation.

The success of the lesson can be proven by the assessments given throughout, which demonstrate that students had a better understanding of evaluating sources after the session. If all undergraduates could be given the opportunity of such instruction, the University as a whole would benefit from the increased level of quality scholarship. Additionally, students would be better prepared with skills needed when they enter the workforce. With such close alignment with objectives, as well as proven success, the need for this lesson for all undergraduates is very compelling.
Appendix A

*Attachment 1A: Copy of one-minute paper questions for Outcome 1

*Attachment 1B: Copy of points we projected to aid in considering how to discern between sources for their literature review

*Attachment 1C: Copy of Facebook information

*Attachment 2: Copy of clicker questions for Outcomes 2 and 3

*Attachment 3: Copy of reviews of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*

*List of journals and magazines used for exercise in stating the differences between journals and magazines: College of Research & Libraries (J), Systematic Botany (J), Science (J), National Geographic (M), The New Yorker (M), Ultimate Players Association (M), People (M)

*YouTube Video Link: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeyR30Yq1tA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeyR30Yq1tA)
References


“How prepared do you feel to find information about your topic? What angle do you think you will write your literature review on?”

**Attachment 1A:** One Minute Paper Questions. This activity is tied to Performance Indicator ACRL 7, Outcome 1.

**Attachment 1B:** Copy of points we projected to aid in considering how to discern between sources for their literature review. This activity is tied to Performance Indicator ACRL 1, Outcome 4.

**Attachment 1C:** Contact information to facilitate ongoing student interaction. This supports students for all Performance Indicators and Outcomes.

**WE ARE ON FACEBOOK**

Karen Brown:  
[brownke@hawaii.edu](mailto:brownke@hawaii.edu)

Jennifer Crowther:  
[jennifer.crowther@gmail.com](mailto:jennifer.crowther@gmail.com)
1. Which source would be the best for you if you were writing a lit review on the books of Stephen King?
   A. Smithsonian Magazine  B. People  C. Booklist  D. Southern Living

2. What makes that magazine the most reliable source?
   A. It relates to the topic  B. I’m familiar with the content of all the magazines, and made the best choice based on content  C. I have no idea!

3. Would you use *Journal of Teacher Education* as a source when looking for information on effective teaching methods?
   A. Yes  B. No

4. How could you know that *Journal of Teacher Education* is a reliable journal to use?
   A. It has “teacher” in the name  B. The articles quote people and there are references at the end of the article  C. The articles build on previous research studies and refers to them  D. Both B & C

5. How can you tell if a magazine is reliable?
   A. It has been in circulation a long time  B. It looks well made and is expensive  C. It uses facts in the articles that can be backed up  D. Because it satisfies what I want out of it

6. What are some ways to tell between a professional magazine and a non-professional one?
   a. Professionals in a particular field write articles about up-to-date information  b. The sources are often referenced  c. If I can’t understand the words, it must be a specialized magazine  d. All of the above

7. Is a longer article with difficult words automatically better than a shorter article in easy-to-read language?
   a. Yes  b. No  c. Maybe

8. Does the type of material selected for print depend on who publishes the journal/magazine?
   a. Yes  b. No  c. Maybe

9. Do you think bias and point of view play a larger role in celebrity magazines or science journals?

10. Is bias or point of view bad if there are some substantial facts and research to back up statements?
    a. Yes, you should always write as objectively as possible  b. No, you can offer your opinion if you also explain the research and where its shortcomings are  c. It depends

*All answers for art questions 1-3: A: Definitely  B: It’s OK  C: That’s Art?
*All answers for movie questions 4-6: A: Definitely  B: It’s OK  C: It Stunk  D: Didn’t See It
1. Do you like this piece of art? (Picasso’s Guernica)
2. Do you like this piece of art? (Michaelangelo’s David)
3. Do you like this piece of art? (Marcel DuChamp’s Urinal)
4. Do you like this movie? (Mulan)
5. Do you like this movie? (Prime of Miss Jean Brodie)
6. Do you like this movie? (Saw)
7. Is this class your favorite this semester?
Another would be The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie. In both cases, the teachers fill a loco parentis role, referring to their pupils as "my boys" or "my girls". As inspiring as these charismatic figures are, both go too far and the films end in resignation and tragedy. The final portrayal is of eccentric teachers who are imbued with a sense of comedy and pathos. In the early films, there is no national curriculum, no target culture and no endless exam preparation. Maggie Smith, for instance, educates her pupils with her holiday slides from Italy.

**Times Educational Supplement, 2008**

And, of course, she is still a fine actress. Her performance of Miss Mackay, the headmistress, has dignity without pomp and a patient self-reliance even when she seems to be utterly in the wrong. It was a bright stroke of casting to put her in the role. All through the film, sympathy runs for Miss Brodie and against the head mistress. Finally, it is clear that, despite her seeming stodginess, Miss Mackay was the sounder of the two. And Miss Johnson’s quiet tenacity works retroactively at the end.

**The New Republic, v.160 iss.9, March 1969**

Her favorites at school are known as “The Brodie Set,” and in the film they grow from awkward, undiscriminating acolytes to a kind of poise and independence from their overbearing teacher, and even in one case to a betrayal of her that leads to her downfall. Miss Brodie indirectly brings about the meaningless death of one of her more gullible girls, as she stuffs her favorites with a contradictory, romantic, feminist, Fascist, naïve concoction of politics, art, music, buttered buns, and soupy sentimentalism.

**Atlantic Monthly, v.224 iss.3, 1969**

Spark’s satire of the sexually obsessed Catholic art teacher could not have been more biting. Teddy Lloyd was a breeder whose "unfortunate affiliation with the Church of Rome" (Jean Brodie's words) led him to sire masses of kids with Mrs.Lloyd, while not-so-secretly lusting after the radiant Jean Brodie. And when she wearied of the dance, she actually selected a successor from among her young students to replace her in his bed. Lloyd & one of her other students had other ideas; a reality that would present "The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie" with its gravest threat.

**Online, Movie Magazine International, April 2002**