Précis Plus: A Collaborative Approach to Teaching Information Literacy

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Overview

- Context
- *Précis Plus*
- Library Workshop
- Assessment
- Discussion
Context is everything!
McGill University and the Library
Information literacy training in *Environmental Hydrology*

- Liaison librarian model
- Information literacy training
- *Environmental Hydrology* & the previous term assignment

Research paper:

**A critical review of literature** on a selected topic
Question

Is the research paper an appropriate assignment for students in Environmental Hydrology?
Instructor’s concerns

- Amount of reading and writing
- Quality of students’ assignments

- Understand the legacy of a research work
- Understand the continuum of research papers
- Ask meaningful research questions

Scaffolding is needed in the process!
Librarian’s concerns

- Teach students information literacy beyond database searching
- Integrate ACRL’s Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education

**ACRL’s Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education**

- Authority is constructed and contextual
- Information creation as a process
- Information has value
- Research as inquiry
- Scholarship as conversation
- Searching as strategic exploration
Précis Plus
What Précis Plus is

- Select one of the papers provided with this assignment and read and understand the paper in detail
- Write a 400 word précis of the selected paper
- Use a bibliographic search engine to find recent papers (last decade) that cite the selected paper. Select four that you think are the most interesting and relevant and provide a proper citation for each paper. With each citation, write a 100 word annotation explaining how original cited paper was relevant and/or useful to the paper
Learning objectives of *Précis Plus*

- How to write a concise, coherent, critical summary of a scientific paper
- Learn to use bibliographic search engine to assess the legacy of a scientific paper
- Select examples from the contemporary literature to demonstrate how that legacy has manifested itself and still relevant to research questions today
Learning objective mapping

- How to write a concise, coherent, critical summary of a scientific paper
- Learn to use bibliographic search engine to assess the legacy of a scientific paper
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ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education

- Research as inquiry
- Scholarship as conversation
- Searching as strategic exploration
Library workshop

A 80-minute in-class workshop consists of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part A</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10 mins</td>
<td></td>
<td>Instructor’s explanation of the assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Part B</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>20 mins</td>
<td></td>
<td>Use library resources to locate the full text for a known reference</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 mins</td>
<td></td>
<td>Activity #1: Find the full text of a journal article</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 mins</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trace articles that cite a given paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 mins</td>
<td></td>
<td>Activity #2: Compare the number of cites to an article between SCOPUS, Web of Science, and Google Scholar</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 mins</td>
<td></td>
<td>Organize references using EndNote</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 mins</td>
<td></td>
<td>Activity #3: Add a reference into EndNote</td>
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Assessment
Assessment question categories

1) Students’ perceptions on a research paper assignment

2) Techniques that they had used in searching for scholarly articles prior to this assignment

3) Students’ evaluation of the efficacy of the library workshop

4) Students’ evaluation of the efficacy of the Précis Plus assignment

5) Suggestions on the library workshop and the Précis Plus assignment
1) Students’ perceptions on a research paper assignment

- Had you previously written a research paper of at least 4 pages in length?

- Had written a research paper: 82%
- Had not written a research paper: 18%
1) Students’ perceptions on a research paper assignment (cont’d)

- How challenging was it for you to complete that research paper?

![Bar chart showing the distribution of responses.]

- Very challenging: 1
- Somewhat challenging: 10
- Neutral: 5
- Somewhat manageable: 6
- Very manageable: 9
1) Students’ perceptions on a research paper assignment (cont’d)

- What were the challenges?

- Using ideas from the literature to support my argument
- Interpreting important findings from academic articles
- Organizing the references that I used
- Locating the full text for the references found in the library databases
- Searching for relevant articles using library resources
- Selecting the topic
2) Techniques that they had used in searching for scholarly articles

- What techniques had you used to search for scholarly articles prior to this assignment?

- Use of bibliographies to find articles an author has cited
  - 20
- Searching for articles that cite a given paper
  - 10
- Use of subject headings or controlled terms
  - 17
- Applying limits to a search (e.g. peer-reviewed articles only, date ranges, ...)
  - 21
- Keyword searching in a database
  - 37
3) Student evaluation of library workshop

• What did you learn from the in-class library workshop that you had not known before?

- None of the above: 8
- Using EndNote to make notes: 22
- Using EndNote to organize references: 21
- Using EndNote to create a bibliography: 22
- Finding articles that cite a given paper: 21
- Retrieving a known article: 4
3) Student evaluation of library workshop (cont’d)

- Would you consider using EndNote in your future assignments?

- Yes: 27
- No: 10
- I don't know: 1
4) Student evaluation of *Précis Plus*

- What was the most valuable thing you learned from the completion of this Precis assignment?
5) Suggestions

- **Library workshop**
  - “No, it was of good quality”
  - “Double instruction period – spend much more time teaching EndNote.”
  - “More workshops”

- **Précis Plus**
  - “Have a discussion [...] on the links between the papers”
  - “[...] peer review component [...] could learn a bit more on some of the other covered topics completed by other students in their assignments.”
Discussion
Success of Précis Plus

• Very hard to do but also very rewarding.
• Very useful in reinforcing ideas from lectures.
• They learned how to read research articles on a topic and understand the legacy being developed.
• An improvement of the quality of completed assignments.
Success of library workshop

• Students learned new knowledge
  o Finding articles that cite a given paper
  o Using EndNote

• An exploration of implementing the ACRL’s information literacy concepts:
  o Searching as strategic exploration
  o Research as inquiry
  o Scholarship as conversation
Challenges: *Précis Plus*

- Make sure students understand the value of reading primary literature
- Make sure students understand what *Précis Plus* is and how to compete it
- Make sure students understand why it is important to write concisely and how to do so
Challenges: library workshop

• Work closely with the instructors
• Make the assignment a target for the library workshop

➤ Considerations for the future practice:
  o Lengthening the instruction of EndNote
  o Creating additional learning materials, e.g. videos, online guides, and handouts
  o Continuing to offer research assistance
Thank you!
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References

