



## Library Instruction: What Works

Within the past decade, many academic librarians have observed how services within their institutions have moved from a focus on the institution that provides them to the students who receive them. Traditional library rules and customs have given way to accommodating a variety of user habits; lattes and conversation now accompany students' research activities, creating a comfortable, collaborative, and productive atmosphere conducive to learning.

Library instruction may also benefit from a modified approach to student learning. The following elements can constitute a three-pronged approach toward successful one-shot instruction:

*Assignment-centered, personalized instruction within the one-shot format characterized by the following elements will produce results:*

- **Pre-class assignment-driven preparation**
  - Faculty collaboration to prepare according to class' discipline and students' research topics.
  - Identify *only* those web, print, reference, and database resources that will *directly* help students complete their assignment.
  - Generate an assignment specific handout and/or webpage with those resources listed. Also, construct handouts to support personal topic choices within the assignment. Match student names with their topic choices, if possible.
  - Include *your* contact information on all web pages and handouts, and designate a backup librarian to be contacted if you are not available.
  - Insist class instructor be present. Many libraries will not conduct instruction classes without the instructor present.
  - Ask instructor to have students generate keywords and synonyms for their particular topics for the hands-on segments of the class.
- **Personalized in-class instruction:**
  - Clearly display contact information and urge follow up
  - Hands-on experience interrupting with frequent recaps by librarian combined with class instructor browsing room with librarian to help with searching *will keep students on-task*.
  - Teach *one or two* databases only, emphasizing students to follow up for additional assistance with other resources.
  - Write down names and learn as many as you can. Matching research topics to names helps. Eventually you will recognize students as they come into your library. At best, you will end up with many "groupies"!
  - *Most important:* Have student leave with tangible research results. This could be citations with or without full text articles found when searching the databases and emailed into the students' accounts. Offer students the ability to print one or two articles found while still in the classroom, the library picking up the expense if printing is charged to the student at point



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- of need. These strategies will give students the ability to immediately pursue their research.
- Mention one more time that students should bang on your door, call you up, or email with it tagged as “High Priority” if they need more assistance. Then, *be available!* Have your backup ready if you cannot be contacted.
  - **Focused follow-up:**
    - Keep all handouts and web guide addresses in your outside office door box, or something that will substitute, for the entire semester.
    - When students come to see you, keep a file of their research questions and difficulties, taking down their contact information. Treat the contact as you would a reference interview.
    - Keep in touch with them, and email occasionally to ask if they need more assistance, or if you have found more resources for them. They will be very grateful for the attention!

It may not seem that the above-listed elements to a successful instruction class can be accomplished within the one-shot format and with the schedules librarians keep. In some libraries, resources are slim. However, the key is to view the one-shot instruction class as a way to connect with the student in the personal way libraries are now connecting with their constituents. Any student-centered, personalized instruction, however constructed, will produce good results. Libraries are becoming adept at interpreting the needs of their users, and similarly, we as library instructors can become adept at tailoring instruction to the individual, which will produce literate and invested students.

*The information in this handout is derived from a presentation proposal, “This One’s on Us!”: A Three-Pronged Approach to Productive, Student-Centered “One-Shot” Library Instruction” for the November 2006 CAL Conference “Libraries & Literature”.*

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