Modular Information Literacy Instruction Proposal:

Updating the EN 101 and 102 Instructional Strategy for Fiscal Year 2018

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Introduction

In 2014, the Kreitzberg Library created a set of organizational priorities that were intended to guide the development of Library services and administrative goals in the near future. The first two Library priorities include enhancing the instruction program in order to foster critical information literacy skills as well as successfully engaging students on all levels.\(^1\) In terms of library instruction, the Kreitzberg Library intends to focus its curricular approach on student-centered learning techniques that encourage meaningful interactions with key information literacy concepts in a variety of contexts. As a first step in the Library’s long-term goal of creating and implementing student-centered learning environments, we propose a modular update to our existing instructional strategies for EN 101 and 102 information literacy classes.

This proposal contains background on the current EN 101 and 102 strategies, a rationale for updating our instructional approach, peer-reviewed evidence of the efficacy of active learning pedagogies, an implementation process, and an overview of the proposed modular instruction plan that reflects a student-centered approach to library instruction sessions.

Defining Concepts

It is essential to construct working definitions of key concepts related to information literacy in higher education before any meaningful discussion can take place on this topic. For the purposes of this project proposal, the concepts of “information literacy” and “active learning” will be examined based on the definitions outlined below.

What is Information Literacy?

The Association of College & Research Libraries’ (ACRL) groundbreaking document *The Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* defines information literacy as “the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating

\(^{1}\) Kreitzberg Library, “About the Kreitzberg Library,” http://academics.norwich.edu/library/about/aboutlibrary/ [accessed 7 April 2017].
new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.”2 Information literacy skills include (but are not limited to) recognizing and evaluating the authority of information creators, conceptualizing the value of information, giving attribution to others’ creative work, organizing information in meaningful ways, designing effective search strategies, and refining the scope of an inquiry.3 The Library considers information literacy skills to be an indispensable set of tools for 21st century learners who intend to navigate personal and professional challenges effectively. Ensuring that students develop information skills competencies has always been at the center of the Library’s instructional strategy, and this proposal’s move towards a student-centered instructional model will help ensure that our instructional strategy is kept current and consistent with the peer-reviewed evidence and best practices in place for academic libraries in the United States.

What is Active Learning?

The Library’s traditional instruction strategy has been to employ a lecture-based, “passive learning” approach in order to ensure that the broadest range of resources and skills could be taught in a typical 50–75-minute class session. Often known as “one-shot” instruction sessions, these short classes have frequently left academic librarians frustrated at the lack of authentic learning that appears to take place in students. Underscoring the fact that this is not a new problem for academic librarians, a fascinating article in a 1928 issue of Library Journal chronicles Syracuse University librarian Bessie Eldridge’s experimentation, failures, and eventual successes with library instruction for college freshmen.4 Interestingly, the instruction strategy that Eldridge eventually finds most successful (a worksheet of “true or false” questions that requires students to engage directly with library books and indices) is an excellent example of active learning.5

The essential premise of an active learning teaching strategy is that, rather than treat students as “passive empty vessels needing filling,” students are asked to engage in activities that require the

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3 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 987.
use of higher-order thinking skills. This methodology has been promoted by many professional societies for educators and has also been adopted by major universities in the form of large-scale institutional initiatives.

**Rationale for Updating EN 101 and 102 Library Instruction Plan**

**Redistribution of Instructional Workload**

The Kreitzberg Library currently utilizes the subject liaison model in order to serve all departments and faculty on campus. Each librarian is assigned a liaison area and is responsible for engagement with one of the following divisions of academic departments: College of Science and Mathematics; School of Architecture + Art and School of Nursing; English & Communications and Modern Languages; School of Business & Management and David Crawford School of Engineering; History, Political Science, Psychology, Education, and the School of Criminal Justice (Social Sciences); and the College of Graduate & Continuing Studies. Our liaisons are responsible for both collection development and library instruction duties for his or her subject area. By far, the two liaison areas that see the largest amount of instruction work are “English & Communications and Modern Languages” and the “Social Sciences.” Of the 184 total library instruction sessions that were taught this year, 169 (92%) came from these two liaison areas. Rather than only have the English & Communications and Modern Languages

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6 Detlor, Booker, Serenko, and Julien, “Student Perceptions of Information Literacy Instruction: The Importance of Active Learning,” 148.
12 Stanford University – Teaching Commons, “Promoting Active Learning,” [accessed 8 May 2017].
liaison librarian shoulder the instructional workload for most of the EN 101 and 102 classes, we propose to spread these sessions equally among the other subject liaison librarians (excepting the Social Sciences liaison due to her already-high instructional workload).

**Standardization of Information Literacy Learning Objectives & Assessment Data**

One of the Library’s larger objectives with this instruction proposal is to ensure that all EN 101 and 102 students receive standardized information literacy curriculum instruction so that they are able to cultivate a range of skills and competencies that are transferable throughout their college careers here at Norwich. A previous iteration of our instruction plan attempted to achieve this standardization by having librarians use a pre-designed PowerPoint presentation for all EN 101 and 102 classes. This prescriptive method of library instruction was not as successful as the Library had hoped because it left little room to customize library and information literacy skills to different classes and assignments. We propose a modular instructional methodology – where faculty and librarians collaborate to select an information literacy skill and hands-on learning activity for each class – with the hope of increasing instructional partnering opportunities, maximizing students’ knowledge acquisition and retention, and also utilizing effective active learning strategies. Since librarians and faculty will select pre-designed activities and assessment tools, the time needed to prepare for individual classes will be minimized and librarians can focus on delivering customized and engaging content to our EN 101 and 102 students instead of designing instructional sessions alone from the ground up.

**Implementation of More Active Learning Strategies in EN 101 & 102 Library Instruction**

Peer-reviewed journal articles validate the efficacy of an active learning pedagogy and encourage its application in a variety of educational fields and contexts.\(^{14}\) \(^{15}\) \(^{16}\) \(^{17}\) \(^{18}\) Likewise, academic

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\(^{14}\) Michael, “Where’s the Evidence that Active Learning Works?,” 159.
\(^{15}\) Miller and Metz, “A Comparison of Professional-Level Faculty and Student Perceptions of Active Learning: Its Current Use, Effectiveness, and Barriers,” 246.
\(^{16}\) Sjostedt, “Assessing a Broad Teaching Apporach: The Impact of Combining Active Learning Methods on Student Performance in Undergraduate Peace and Conflict Studies,” 216.
\(^{17}\) Daniel, “Impacts of Active Learning on Student Outcomes in Large-Lecture Biology Courses,” 651.
\(^{18}\) Maybee, Doan, and Flierl, “Information Literacy in the Active Learning Classroom,” 705.
librarians have kept pace with this research and considered how active learning approaches can be adapted and implemented in information literacy instruction. Applications of active learning strategies in library instruction include collaborating with university faculty to create student-centered learning outcomes and activities, assessing the effectiveness of active learning pedagogies in one-shot information literacy instruction, and designing active learning strategies for use in an asynchronous online classroom. Furthermore, a positive proportional relationship has been established between an increased amount of student-centered information literacy instruction and increased student success with learning outcomes for each session. Based on this literature, we propose to adopt the modular information literacy instruction model outlined below.

**Description of the Modular Information Literacy Instruction Plan for EN 101 and 102**

**Overview & Background Information**

Evidence presented in this proposal supports the assertion that typical one-shot library instruction sessions do not adequately train students to develop high-level information literacy competencies that are essential for success – both in their college years and also in their future professional careers. Although faculty and librarians always want to expose their students to as many useful library resources as possible, there is a consensus among cognitive scientists that there is a limit to the amount of new knowledge that the human brain can absorb and maintain at one time. By limiting the total number of learning outcomes per instruction session, instructors are able to help students focus on the acquisition of specific skills and also increase their overall retention of these skills. To further increase the potency of the information literacy instruction sessions in EN 101 and 102, we propose to pair selected active learning strategies with a focused set of

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19 Watson, Rex, Markgraf, Kishel, Jennings, and Hinnant, “Revising the ‘One-Shot’ through Lesson Study: Collaborating with Writing Faculty to Rebuild a Library Instruction Session,” 385.
21 Hawes and Adamson, “Flipping Out Over Online Library Instruction: A Case Study in Faculty-Librarian Collaboration,” 259.
22 Detlor, Booker, Serenko, and Julien, “Student Perceptions of Information Literacy Instruction: The Importance of Active Learning,” 149.
24 Ibid.
learning outcomes that will limit “information overload” and leave the students with a usable information literacy skill set that can be transferred across college curricula.

Organizing the Instructional Content

Our modular instruction approach is designed to include a maximum of two learning outcomes per class session, either one or two student-centered activities to reinforce information literacy skill acquisition, and a small assessment tool so that the Library can obtain data on whether or not students successfully completed the learning outcomes for each class session. Since one of our central goals is to encourage collaboration between faculty and librarians to design library instruction sessions, we think that utilizing a “menu” of learning outcomes, hands-on learning activities, and assessment tools is the easiest way to quickly tailor information literacy instruction sessions to each faculty member’s EN 101 or 102 section. We believe that this methodology will allow librarians and faculty to create the most relevant and engaging classroom experiences for our students.

The concept of organizing instructional content as a “menu” has been successfully implemented in many other colleges and universities across the United States.25 26 27 28 29 A quick Google search using the keywords “library instruction menu” yielded many relevant results even beyond 10 pages into the search. Although some of the academic libraries identified in this Google search do not use the words “instruction menu” to describe their instruction program’s offerings, the way that they have organized instructional options, content, and objectives remains consistent with a menu-style organizational format. Additionally, a 2009 study of 47 universities that used a menu-style format highlighted several positive outcomes of using this organizational method including enhanced collaboration between faculty and librarians, increased standardization of

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library instruction skills and concepts, and increasing the visibility of library instruction on
campus as an outreach tool. Our goal with this proposal is to capitalize on these positive
outcomes while increasing student engagement in library instruction via active learning
strategies and ensuring that EN 101 and 102 learning outcomes and information literacy frames
are reinforced in each class session.

Examples of Potential Modules Available on the “Instruction Menu”

In order to maximize the modular functionality of our EN 101 and 102 information literacy
instruction plan, we would like to offer a variety of information literacy topics that can be paired
in any combination to customize library instruction for each class section. Topics will vary in
their complexity and thus will require different amounts of class time. For example, the “MLA
Citation Workshop” module is estimated to take approximately 50-75 minutes while the
“Developing a Search Strategy” module would require approximately 20-30 minutes of class
time. Instructors and librarians will collaborate to select the most relevant combinations of
modules for each class section.

The table below outlines a preliminary list of information literacy skills and competencies that
would be available as a part of our proposed instruction plan. Modules that are marked as
“advanced” are appropriate for EN 102 sections or EN 101 sections that have already been
exposed to introductory-level modules.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Topics Covered</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing a Search Strategy</td>
<td>• Brainstorming a research topic&lt;br&gt;• Narrowing &amp; refining a research topic&lt;br&gt;• Identifying keywords &amp; synonyms</td>
<td>20 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating Information Sources</td>
<td>• Analyzing websites for credibility&lt;br&gt;• Discussing the peer-review process and its value&lt;br&gt;• Evaluating print books &amp; e-books as scholarly sources</td>
<td>50 min.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| MLA Citation Workshop | • Dissecting journal articles into citation components  
• Setting up a Word document in MLA Style  
• Creating & managing in-text citations  
• Using EasyBib EDU | 50 min. |
| Using the Library’s Catalog to Find Books & E-Books | • Finding books on a specific topic  
• Using e-books on different platforms  
• Utilizing key features of e-books (e.g. download books for offline use, saving PDF copies of chapters) | 15 min. |
| Basic Search Strategies in Library Databases | • Using databases like JSTOR and Academic Search Premier to find peer-reviewed journal articles on research topics  
• Discussing the peer-review process and its value  
• Obtaining journal articles through ILLiad  
• Utilizing database features such as downloading or saving PDF copies of articles, emailing a record, or finding the MLA citation for an article | 25 min. |
| Mining Bibliographies (advanced) | • Reading citations to determine a source’s key components  
• Distinguishing between book and article citations  
• Locating an article by using the “Find Journals or Newspapers by Title” tool | 30 min. |
| Finding & Using Literary Criticism (advanced) | • Understanding what literary criticism is and its value in research  
• Using databases like JSTOR, Academic Search Premier, or Literature Resource Center to find literary criticism on a topic or work | 30 min. |
| Advanced Search Strategies in Library Databases (advanced) | • Utilizing advanced search operations, including Boolean phrases & logic  
• Understanding how subject headings can be used to find other relevant source material  
• Searching in discipline-specific databases such as MLA International Bibliography and Literature Resource Center to find scholarly materials on a topic or work | 25 min. |
Examples of Active Learning Strategies Used in the Modules

The table below shows a few examples of student-centered activities that would be offered as part of the proposed modules. The list does not include activities for all modules yet because we would like to finalize the list of key competencies with English & Communications faculty before creating the handouts, learning objects, and strategies for each activity and module. If approved, the instruction “menu” would ideally include at least two activity choices for each module to allow maximum versatility and customization of our instruction sessions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Active Learning Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing a Search Strategy</td>
<td>• XYZ Method Worksheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(see Appendix 1 for description of activity &amp; worksheet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLA Citation Workshop</td>
<td>• Article Anatomy Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(see Appendix 2 for description of activity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Citation Relay Game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(see Appendix 3 for description of activity)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessing the Efficacy of Library Instruction in EN 101 and 102 Classes

Assessment is an essential component of any type of instruction, and it ensures that all learning outcomes and activities are effectively meeting the needs of our students. Additionally, assessment is most effective when it is deployed in multiple formats and contexts. The list below describes several potential assessment strategies for future EN 101 and 102 classes.

- Summative Assessment
  - Pre and Post Tests (contingent on approval of English & Communications faculty)
    - Pre and post tests would be conducted with every EN 101 and 102 class that receives library instruction

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Pretests will be conducted prior to students’ first library visit
Posttests will be conducted at the conclusion of the semester, after all library instruction is completed
This assessment method could be deployed during FY 2019 to allow for highly thoughtful design and implementation

Formative Assessment

- **Worksheets**
  - This method allows us to authentically measure learning as it occurs in the classroom
  - Worksheets will be based on pre-determined learning outcomes for each class session
  - Librarians will survey responses in-class and identify any learning outcomes that are obvious challenges for either individual students or the group as a whole. Review of content will be done immediately.

- Polling or Discussion Questions
  - This informal method allows us to check student engagement and comprehension during instruction sessions
  - Librarians will summarize results in an observational assessment after each class that uses this assessment tool

Assessing Teaching

- Librarians who provide instructional services to any class will have the option to engage in peer-reviewed teaching observation
- This assessment method is voluntary and is intended to be used for purposes of self-reflection and personal development of teaching skill
- Peer-review guidelines will be based on the University of Alabama’s “Peer-to-Peer Observation of Instruction Guidelines & Best Practices”

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• English & Communications Faculty Survey
  o A short survey will be sent via email to each EN 101 and 102 instructor who participates in a library instruction session
  o Potential topics in the brief survey include feedback on ease of booking and communication with librarians, suggestions to improve teaching methods, and overall satisfaction with instruction sessions

• Assessing the Instruction Program as a Whole
  o Pre and post test scores, worksheet results, observational assessments, and instruction statistics will be analyzed and assessed as a whole to determine potential areas of opportunity or revision

Mapping the Modules to EN 101 and 102 Competencies and the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy of Higher Education

A major goal of this curriculum revision is to ensure that all instructional content is mapped to both the EN 101 and 102 competencies identified by English faculty members and also to the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. We want to emphasize that the Library already shares many of the English Department’s learning goals, and we see this redesign of the library instruction model as an opportunity to more closely align our educational visions and strategies.

The table below lists each proposed information literacy instruction module and maps it to EN 101 and 102 “Basic Competencies” and the ACRL Framework. If modules are revised or added to the curricular content, this table will be updated to reflect those changes and ensure consistency with all standards. The abbreviation “WS” refers to the “Writing Skills” section of competencies outlined by the English Department; the abbreviation “IAS” refers to the “Interpretive and Analytic Skills” section of competencies outlined by the English Department.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>EN 101 or 102 Competency</th>
<th>ACRL Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing a Search Strategy</td>
<td>• (WS – D): Write a clear thesis statement</td>
<td>• Research as Inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (IAS – B): Locate a variety of research tools, including print, non-print, and electronic resources to find information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating Information Sources</td>
<td>• (WS – E): Recognize and avoid unsupported generalizations, employing critical thinking skills</td>
<td>• Authority is Constructed and Contextual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (IAS – A): Examine texts for the main ideas and understand the interplay between general and specific</td>
<td>• Information Has Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (IAS – C): Critically evaluate and use this information effectively in writing expository, analytic, and argumentative essays</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLA Citation Workshop</td>
<td>• (WS – B): Research, write, and document a scholarly paper</td>
<td>• Authority is Constructed and Contextual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (WS – E): Recognize and avoid unsupported generalizations, employing critical thinking skills</td>
<td>• Information Has Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (WS – G): Write an acceptable paraphrase</td>
<td>• Scholarship as Conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the Library’s Catalog to Find Books &amp; E-Books</td>
<td>• (WS – B): Research, write, and document a scholarly paper</td>
<td>• Research as Inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (IAS – B): Locate a variety of research tools, including print, non-print, and electronic resources to find information</td>
<td>• Authority is Constructed and Contextual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (IAS – C): Critically evaluate and use this information effectively in writing expository, analytic, and argumentative essays</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Search Strategies in Library Databases</td>
<td>• (WS – B): Research, write, and document a scholarly paper</td>
<td>• Research as Inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (IAS – B): Locate a variety of research tools, including print, non-print, and electronic resources to find information</td>
<td>• Authority is Constructed and Contextual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (IAS – C): Critically evaluate and use this information effectively in writing expository, analytic, and argumentative essays</td>
<td>• Searching as Strategic Exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining Bibliographies</td>
<td>• (WS – B): Research, write, and document a scholarly paper</td>
<td>• Research as Inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (WS – E): Recognize and avoid unsupported generalizations, employing critical thinking skills</td>
<td>• Authority is Constructed and Contextual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (IAS – B): Locate a variety of research tools, including print, non-print, and electronic resources to find information</td>
<td>• Searching as Strategic Exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (IAS – C): Critically evaluate and use this information effectively in writing expository, analytic, and argumentative essays</td>
<td>• Information Has Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding &amp; Using Literary Criticism</td>
<td>• (WS – B): Research, write, and document a scholarly paper</td>
<td>• Research as Inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (WS – E): Recognize and avoid unsupported generalizations, employing critical thinking skills</td>
<td>• Authority is Constructed and Contextual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(IAS – A): Examine texts for the main ideas and understand the interplay between general and specific</td>
<td>• Searching as Strategic Exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(IAS – B): Locate a variety of research tools, including print, non-print, and electronic resources to find information</td>
<td>• Scholarship as Conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(IAS – C): Critically evaluate and use this information effectively in writing expository, analytic, and argumentative essays</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advanced Search Strategies in Library Databases

- (WS – B): Research, write, and document a scholarly paper
- (WS – E): Recognize and avoid unsupported generalizations, employing critical thinking skills
- (IAS – A): Examine texts for the main ideas and understand the interplay between general and specific
- (IAS – B): Locate a variety of research tools, including print, non-print, and electronic resources to find information
- (IAS – C): Critically evaluate and use this information effectively in writing expository, analytic, and argumentative essays

- Research as Inquiry
- Authority is Constructed and Contextual
- Searching as Strategic Exploration
- Information Has Value

Anticipated Next Steps

If this proposal is approved by both our instruction librarians and the English Department, the following steps will be taken to deploy this instruction model by Fall 2017.

- Finalize all information literacy modules and concepts included in the modular instruction plan
- Update the EN 101 and 102 competencies based on the results from English & Communications faculty retreat in mid-May and map to each module and the ACRL Framework
- Design a LibGuide to serve as the hub for all modular instruction plan content, curriculum, and communication between the faculty and instruction librarians
  - Create a form that will be used for instruction session requests
- Finalize all active-learning strategies for each module
- Create worksheets, learning objects (digital and physical) and prepare needed materials for Fall 2017 EN 101 and 102 classes
- Host multiple instruction workshops throughout the summer for the instruction librarians in order to introduce the modular instruction plan and its curriculum
- Create promotional materials (including a link to the newly-developed LibGuide) to deliver to all English Department faculty
Conclusion

The Kreitzberg Library’s modular information literacy instruction proposal for the EN 101 and 102 classes is the product of careful consideration, exhaustive research, and assimilation of best practices for instruction programs at academic libraries across the United States. We believe that this proposal is an opportunity to more closely align departmental and library learning outcomes, engage students more effectively by utilizing active learning strategies, increase instructional accountability through multiple assessment methodologies, standardize information literacy curriculum, and also to foster personal growth and development of our instructional librarians. We welcome all feedback from the English & Communications faculty and anticipate that partnering with faculty members to successfully deploy this instruction plan will forge new partnerships focused on enhancing Norwich students’ educational experiences.
Bibliography


Kreitzberg Library (Norwich University). “About the Kreitzberg Library.” http://academics.norwich.edu/library/about/aboutlibrary/ [accessed 7 Apr 2017].


APPENDIX 1

XYZ Method Worksheet

In this activity adapted from Kate Turabian’s book entitled A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, students are asked to read the directions of the below worksheet (Figure 1) in order to prepare them to think through their own research topics in a critical and focused way. This exercise teaches students how to narrow and refine the scope of a topic (“Y”) and also encourages them to think of the potential implications of their research to other people (“Z”). After reading the front page of the worksheet, students are given approximately 5 minutes to fill in their own answers on the back page (Figure 2). I have found that it works best if students are walked through an example topic that I create on my own (Figure 3) so that they get a sense of how this exercise works.

The librarian collects all the worksheets at the end of class and then scores students’ supplied topic, keywords, and synonyms according to a rubric (Figure 4). The scored worksheet is then emailed back to the student and the instructor with feedback or an additional information source as an easy way to begin his or her research. I also supply links to key Library databases, course guides, and citation guides for students. An example of a student’s worksheet is shown (Figure 5).

![Figure 1](image1.png)  ![Figure 2](image2.png)

### Developing a Research Topic

Adapted from Kate Turabian’s book A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email Address:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Topic:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Selecting an appropriate topic is often one of the most challenging pieces of a student’s research project. The following chart is designed to help you think through your topic in order to create a broad and researchable research question.

The XYZ Method

"I am working on the topic of X because I want to understand Y so that I can help others understand Z."

The X should refer to your basic topic. Examples include:

- The Battle of Stalingrad in World War II
- Solitary confinement in the U.S. prison system
- Common Core State Standards Initiative

The Y should refer to your basic topic but also include a narrower, more specific element of the topic, such as:

- How Russian citizens’ morale was affected by their victory
- What psychological effects does solitary confinement have on inmates
- Are skills transfers prioritized over content knowledge comprehension

The Z should answer the “So what?” question. Why should readers care about your topic and research assignment? For instance:

- Understanding the origins of Stalin’s rise to power can help us to engage in a meaningful discussion of communism’s role in Russian and world history
- Legal and ethical concerns should be addressed to ensure humane treatment of inmates in the U.S. prison system
- Determining the most successful and practical ways for children to learn and develop will help them gain key competencies for lifelong learning

Remember that you are always welcome to email our librarians with any questions you may have!

Library hours the following email 7 days a week (including weekends and evenings):

library@norwich.edu

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Figure 1  Figure 2

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a. Write your own topic in XYZ Format:

I am working on the topic of (X) **solitary confinement in the U.S.** because I want to understand (Y) **how this practice affects mental health & brain functionality** so that I can help others understand (Z) **how inmates can be controlled in healthy, non-damaging ways**

b. List some keywords that you will use to start your research in the library's resources.

"solitary confinement" inmates "Ganser Syndrome"
"mental health" "legal precedent" United States
efficacy "mental illness" "cruel & unusual"

c. Write synonyms (words that mean the same thing) that you can use in place of some of your keywords.

"prison abolition movement" prisoners "prison psychosis"
"mental status" "Angola Three" America
effectiveness violence torture

Remember that you are always welcome to email our librarians with any questions you may have!

Librarians monitor the following email 7 days a week (including weekends and evenings).

library@norwich.edu

Figure 3
**Topic Development & Keyword Selection Activity**
Research Skills Workshop, CI 410 – Senior Seminar
Adapted from the ACRL’s VALUE Information Literacy Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Skill</th>
<th>Advanced - 4</th>
<th>Intermediate - 3</th>
<th>Basic - 2</th>
<th>Insufficient - 1</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Define the scope of the research</td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>Defer the scope</td>
<td>Defines</td>
<td>Has difficulty</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question or thesis</td>
<td>definition</td>
<td>of the research</td>
<td>of the</td>
<td>defining the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of the</td>
<td>research question</td>
<td>research</td>
<td>scope of the</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>narrow, too</td>
<td>narrow, etc.)</td>
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**Librarian’s Feedback:** Your topic seems to have a lot of potential, and it’s clear to me that you’ve spent some time thinking about this topic. In my experience, some of the best research topics offer solutions to problems, and that’s what you’re doing here. One suggestion that I have is to specify the Z part of your XYZ Statement and include specific ways that policing can be improved in the United States. For instance, focusing on fewer police-involved shootings would yield much more specific results than a general search on improved policing in the United States would. I’ve read about police forces involved in meditation, and the results are incredible! I also like the comparison of U.S. and U.K. police forces – there could be a good parallel to make there. Please do reach out to me if you’d like to work on this together – I am always happy to help! (croesch@cornell.edu) ☺️

Figure 4

![Figure 4](example.png)

Figure 5
APPENDIX 2

Article Anatomy Activity

This exercise was designed after I noticed how much students seemed to struggle with identifying component parts of journal articles. If students aren’t able to recognize key features of an article’s citation information, then they aren’t usually able to create a correct citation on their own. This activity has been successful in many classes that I’ve worked with this year, primarily because it taps into students’ inherent drive for competition.

“Article Anatomy” works best when students are divided into small groups (no more than four per group) because it forces all members to participate. Pairs are ideal but are not realistic in many cases due to large class sizes.

To begin, I review a journal article from a database in both the “detailed record” form in a database and also in PDF form to show students that a PDF copy may not always have the complete citation information that they will need. Then I pass out at least three journal articles for each group that I copied and assembled of ahead of time. I label each article (#1, #2, #3, and so on) before class so that students know which article to work on at a given time. Finally, I pass out worksheets that prompt students to fill in key pieces of citation data (Figure 1). Students compete with other groups in rounds (one round per journal article), and the first group to “ring in” with the correct answers scores a point. The group with the most points at the end of all round wins! I usually bring in a small prize such as a Kreitzberg Library-branded pen or highlighter to award the winning group’s members.
Article Anatomy – MLA Citation Skills Workshop

Article #1

- Article Title:
- Author(s):
- Journal Title:
- Volume:
- Issue:
- Year Published:
- Page Numbers:

Article #2

- Article Title:
- Author(s):
- Journal Title:
- Volume:
- Issue:
- Year Published:
- Page Numbers:

Figure 1
APPENDIX 3

Citation Relay

This exercise is challenging and exciting once students start competing with one another! It was developed by University of North Colorado Libraries and presented at the 2014 LOEX Conference. Complete details of the activity, worksheets, and videos of students in action playing the Citation Relay can be found at the following link: http://libguides.unco.edu/citerelay.

Essentially, the class is divided into two teams and each team is responsible for creating correct citations in a specific format (APA, MLA, Chicago Manual of Style, and AMA are common examples) for several information sources. The sources that I usually select are a print book, a website, and a scholarly journal article. I bring printouts of the journal articles and website pages as well as the physical books to class so that students can manually find the key informational components needed for citations. The first team to correctly write out citations on the chalkboard or dry erase board for all the sources wins. I usually bring small prizes like Kreitzberg Library-branded pens or highlighters to award to the winners. As an alternative, the LibGuide to the UNCO Citation Relay instruction also includes a printable template for stickers to hand out as prizes and “consolation prizes.”

A photo of students playing the Citation Relay at UNCO in Fall 2014 is shown below:
Guidelines for setting up and playing the Citation Relay are found below and at:

http://bit.ly/2psc82f

CITATION RELAY
A competitive-style classroom relay designed to teach citation writing.
William Cuthbertson, Lyda Ellis, and Andy Malinski
The University of Northern Colorado, May 2014
http://library.unco.edu/

What is Citation Relay?
In the game of Citation Relay, the class is divided into two large groups. These groups are the two teams that will be competing against each other overall. Within each group are smaller teams, usually of only 2 or three people. Each of these teams is responsible for writing the correct citations for whichever item they are given.

The items students are asked to cite are those items most commonly found in student research papers -- for example, a book, a chapter within an edited book, a peer-reviewed journal article, and, if there are enough students in the class, a newspaper article taken from the open Web.

What you will need:
Sources for your groups to cite:
  • Academic books (one per large group)
  • A print-out of a journal article (one per group)
  • A chapter from an edited book or anthology (one per group)
    Note: Use a post-it on the book’s cover and at the start of the appropriate chapter to make it clear to students that a chapter within the text has been marked for citation.
  • A print-out of a news article from the open Web, such as The New York Times or The Los Angeles Times.
Now gather one source of each type above to prepare as bundles for each group.
  • Write Citation Answer Keys for the source bundles.
    Note: These are print-outs of the correct written citations for each of the item within a bundle for the instructor/judges to use in correcting citations. If there are concerns about format discrepancies in the literature, we recommend matching these answer keys to whichever online or print style guide you are providing for students during the relay event.
You will also need:
- A desk bell or small whistle, one per large group.
- A large dry-erase board, or chalkboard, one for each group.
- One colored marker for each group.
- Web-accessible computer terminals, or multiple print copies of citation guides (one per team)

How to Play Citation Relay:

Student teams are arranged in rows, but of course you can figure out whatever works for your classroom. In the sample below (Table 1), there are four rows of desks on each side of the room, and each desk has a mounted computer.

Table 1: classroom arrangement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team 1-1</td>
<td>Team 2-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 1-2</td>
<td>Team 2-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 1-3</td>
<td>Team 2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 1-4</td>
<td>Team 2-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

❖ = book
❖ = journal article
❖ = chapter within an edited book or anthology
❖ = news article from the open web
❖ = impartial, non-student judge

Hand out the materials to each row of students following the diagram above. So the front rows each get the journal articles, the next row the books, etc.

To write their citations allow the students to use standard, accessible sources. For example, your library catalog, and an online APA citation guide. (At Northern Colorado, our APA guide is hosted through LibGuides.) Limiting student access to only these Web sites ensures that students are seeing consistent information in both how citations are written, and in the expectations for their citations in future assignments.

There is one important ground rule to establish with students before they begin:
• All the teams within the group must have their citations completed before the first team can begin writing their citation on the board. This means if a team that is particularly good at citation writing finishes early, they are responsible for helping out other members of their group.

When you say, “Go!” students are allowed to look at their book or article and the two websites. Working at the computers in front of them, Team members will work together to create the correction citation for their item.

When the entire group is ready, and all citations are agreed to be correct, they return to their seats, and the first team – and only the members of that team – take their marker and run to the front of the room to write their citation. When they are done writing, they ring the bell for their Group’s instructor to check the citation.

• If the citation is correct, the first Team passes the marker (baton) to the next Team within their Group, that and that Team goes to the board to write their citation.
• If the citation is incorrect, the other Teams can help correct the citation. Other Teams may not leave their seats. Only one Team from each group can be writing at the white board at a time.
• It’s important to note that judges do not provide advice or allow other students to help correct the citation until after each time the students ring the bell. This keeps students focused on the game and prevents the scene from devolving into chaos.
• When the citation is corrected, the Team passes the marker (baton) to the next Team, and the next citation is written on the board.

Because of the element of speed involved in the Relay – it is still surprising to talk about an “element of speed” and citation writing in the same sentence -- it is ideal to have one instructor on hand to “grade” and approve citations for each Group.

Winning Citation Relay:

As you can guess, the first Group that correctly cites all of the sources assigned to its teams is the winner of Citation Relay.