Evaluating Information

USING an INSTRUCTIONAL SCAFFOLDING ACTIVITY to FACILITATE STUDENT LEARNING

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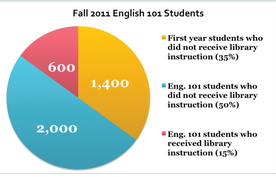
Who?

University of Tennessee (UT) English 101:

Standard Assignments...

- Rhetorical Analysis
- Contextual Analysis
- Argument Paper
- Source-Based Paper: "evaluate and integrate the ideas of others into their writing"*



Fall 2011 Library Instruction:

- 26 English 101 Classes

Select Student Learning Outcomes for the Library Session:

Students will be able to...

- Distinguish between a scholarly article and a popular article.
- Recognize that there are differences between articles and other document types, such as book reviews, reports, or editorials.
- Use and recall a method for evaluating an information source.

*majority of library instruction occurs during this assignment

What?

Information Evaluation Methods:

- The 5Ws (who, what, when, where, why & how) method is used as an alternative to popular evaluation acronyms such as CRAAP (CSU Chico, 2004) and CRITIC (Bartz, 2002; Matthies & Helmke, 2004).

CRAAP: Currency • Relevancy • Authority • Accuracy • Purpose

CRITIC: Claim • Role of the claimant • Information backing the claim • Testing • Independent verification • Conclusion

Why?

Qualities of Information Evaluation Methods	CRAAP	CRITIC	5Ws
Already Familiar to Learners	✗	✗	✓
Easily Recalled by Learners (e.g., mnemonic device aids in recalling method after session)	✓	?	?
Teaches That a Source's Relevance Varies, Depending on the Researcher's Purpose & Intended Use	✗	✓	✓

Goals for Information Evaluation Activity

- Works within the limitations of a one-shot instruction session
  - Draws on previous knowledge: many students are already familiar with the 5Ws
  - Transferable: can be used in library instruction for undergraduates and graduates and utilized outside of the library by course instructors
- Moves attention away from the scaffold (the tool or activity) to the learning negotiation (e.g. how do we find out the author's reputation?) that leads to the solution of the problem (is this a good source of information for my purpose?)

Where?

Where Did This Idea Come From?:

- Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): "Zone of activity in which a person can produce with assistance what they cannot produce alone (or can only produce with difficulty)" (Pea, 2004).
- Scaffolding: Vygotsky "wrote about collaboration and direction, and about assisting children 'through demonstration, leading questions, and by introducing the initial elements of the task's solution.'" (Moll,1990)
- Within the ZPD, scaffolding is a way to help a learner solve a task or gain skills. Scaffolds are "forms of support provided by the teacher (or another student) to help students bridge the gap between their current abilities and the intended goal. Scaffolds may be...
  - tools, such as cue cards, or
  - techniques, such as teacher modeling" (Rosenshine & Meister, 1992).

Puyol5 (http://weblog.ch)

More About Scaffolding....

- useful in teaching high-level cognitive operations (Rosenshine & Meister,1992)
- can be considered "...teaching as assisted performance" (Tharp & Gallimore,1988)
- gradually decreased as students master the skills needed to complete a task (Rosenshine & Meister, 1992)
- often involves the following steps:
  - teacher shows how to complete a task or solve a problem
  - class completes the same or similar task
  - groups complete the task
  - individual completes the task (Larkin, 2002)

When & How?

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Pilot Project: Assessment and Follow-Up Survey (Fall 2011)

- **In-Class Assessment Using Scaffolding:**
  - Students asked if they remember 5Ws from grade school
  - Given a column to skim from a newspaper's opinion section
  - Groups worked through 5Ws using "worksheet" in SurveyMonkey
  - Activity encourages responsible, practical use of Google and Wikipedia to gain background information

Assessment Questions:

- **What?** What type of document is it? (Book, editorial, popular article...)
- **Where?** Where did this document come from? (Find information about the publisher, not the document.)
- **Who?** Who created the document? (Find out about the author(s)...)
- **Why?** Why was the document published? (Convince, inform, entertain...)
- **When?** When was the document published?
- **How?** How was the information in the document gathered and presented?
- **Overall:** What is your impression of the document? (What are its strengths and weaknesses? Would you use it in a college paper?)

- **Follow-Up Survey**
  - 3-4 weeks after instruction session, to both students and instructors
    - Voluntary, with an incentive offered
    - Low student participation / High instructor participation

what we learned about PROMOTION:

- ✓ More and better promotion
- ✓ Talk to GTAs in orientation sessions
- ✓ Conversations with GTAs and adjuncts before and after sessions
- ✓ Email GTAs and adjuncts via department secretary
- ✓ Increase incentives

what we learned about IN-CLASS ASSESSMENT:

- ✓ Clarify and re-order some questions
- ✓ Include definitions of "abstract" and "methodology" in assessment
- ✓ Show progress bar
- ✓ We noticed student problems: differentiating between articles and editorials/columns, summarily dismissing newspapers because they are "biased"

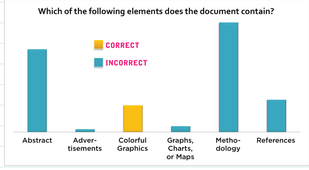
In-Class Student Assessment

Who? Who created the document?

3. Who wrote this? (List the author name) ____
4. Use Google and/or Wikipedia to find out more about the author.
   a. Where does the author work? ____
   b. Has the author published before? ____
5. Does the author have a master's degree, Ph.D., or work experience that contributes to his/her authority?
   a. Yes. The author has the following qualifications: ____ Identify the sites (list the URLs) that led you to this conclusion: ____
   b. No. I couldn't find any qualifications: ____ Identify the sites (list the URLs) that led you to this conclusion: ____
   c. Uncertain. (Explain what you found, and why you are uncertain): ____ Identify the sites (list the URLs) that led you to this conclusion: ____

Overall, what is your impression of the document?

22. What are the documents strengths? ____
23. What are the documents weaknesses? ____
24. Would you cite this source in a paper?
   a. Why, Why not? ____
   b. Would it depend on the type of paper? ____ How so? ____



- **Does the author have a master's degree, Ph.D., or work experience that contributes to his/her authority?**

Columnist Countries Experience First Class Honors Graduated From Harvard Harvard Crimson Harvard University Law Degree Magdelen College Pulitizer Prize Studied Arabic in Egypt Rhodes Scholar Studied Law at Oxford

- **What are the documents strengths?**
  - "...personal, warm voice, elements of storytelling, appeal to **pathos** in building his argument."
  - "The author has **personal experience** in Japan therefore contributing to the articles [sic] reliability."
  - "Nicholas **backs his opinion up** with actual life events that he encountered himself."
- **What are the documents weaknesses?**
  - "[The author] is **emotional**, so one could question the legitimacy of his argument."
  - "[The author] could... use more **academic sources**."
  - "it is not researched thoroughly, almost completely based on **personal experience**."
- **Would you cite this source in a paper?**
  - "No because it's opinionated. **If I was writing about opinions** about types of governments or stuff like that it would be okay."
  - "Yes. **If it is an argument paper** and you agree with Kristof it would be a good source."
  - "It would depend on **the type of paper**. If you were writing about how Japan handles disasters within itself, this article may be helpful."

Follow-Up Survey Assessing Student Recall:

(Excerpt from survey)

6. Do you recall learning about evaluating information sources during your library instruction session? ○ Yes ○ No
7. Do you recall the method to evaluate information that the librarian presented? ○ Yes ○ No
8. Please describe the method for evaluating information that the librarian presented: ____
9. Did you evaluate the credibility and authority of sources used in any paper that you had to complete this semester? ○ Yes ○ No
10. How did you evaluate your sources? Did you use a particular technique? If so, what was it? ____

88% recalled learning about evaluating information during the library session

56% recalled the 5Ws method

63% evaluated the credibility and authority of sources used in a paper written during that semester

Comments about recalling the 5Ws method:

- "...look and see **who wrote, where it was published, previous work** the writer has done."
- "...check to see if the article is scholarly/valuable by looking at the author and **seeing what credentials** he or she has."
- "You can decide whether a source is creditable [sic] or not by figuring out where the information was **published** and **who wrote** it."

Comments about evaluation techniques:

- "...searched the author or company's name on Google and **determined the amount of schooling**, etc. that person had been through."
- "We **found the Who, What, Where, When, Why of sources** and we also looked up the author that wrote it to see if there was any background information on them."
- "I know that academic journals were creditable [sic] while information published in newspapers was not, since most things said in it are biased and based off of opinion."

INCORRECT

Follow-Up Survey for Instructor Feedback:

(Excerpt from survey)

8. Do you feel that the 5Ws method had value for your students? ○ Yes ○ No
9. How was it valuable? ____
10. Do you think you might use the 5Ws method of evaluation in future instruction? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Not Sure If yes, how so? ____

(Excerpt from survey)

15. Did your students' work indicate that they had evaluated their sources (i.e. cited sources who had differing perspectives, cited credible sources, etc.)? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Other (Please Specify) ____

100% agreed that the 5Ws method had value for their students

33% used the 5Ws method in their own instruction that semester

67% agreed that they might use the 5Ws method in future instruction

Instructor Comments:

- "The 5Ws are a good focal point. Research can be overwhelming, but **asking basic questions helps** break down [students'] task into smaller parts."
- "It allowed [the students] **something familiar** in the midst of so much new material, so hopefully, even if they are not consciously thinking about using it, they will pull out that method when evaluating sources."
- "I think it was a good way to start, and then from there I could take them more in-depth via Harbrace."*
- "Incoming freshmen are pretty clueless about evaluating sources. The 5Ws is an easy way for them to remember how to evaluate the sources they find."
- "I'm always looking for **easy-to-remember** research tips for my students, and the 5 Ws certainly fits this."

*required style handbook for the course