



Good Practices from Mellon Library Partners, 2004-2005

Collaborative Implementation of a 'Homework' Activity

Environment:

College Writing R4B is a new course designed to satisfy the second half of the College of Letters & Science Reading and Composition requirement, which students can fulfill through R1B-designated courses offered in more than 17 departments. In addition to providing structured practice in the recursive processes of reading, analysis, and writing, CW R4B, a 4-unit variation on R1B, specifically offers “guided practice through the stages involved in creating a research paper.” Students who enroll in this course major in a wide variety of disciplines and, since the requirement can be fulfilled anytime before graduation, can range in level from freshmen to seniors. Heterogeneity is the rule not only for the student audience, but also for the course themes, which will vary widely with the individual instructor. This instructor chose ‘subcultures’ as the theme linking a multi-disciplinary range of course readings, a field assignment modeled on ethnographic research, and accompanying library research activities.

Description:

For the first of two related library research activities, I designed a “guided discovery” worksheet, in lieu of an in-class session, which combined prompted searches of the library catalog with reflective questions about search results. The goal of the activity was to familiarize students with Pathfinder while simultaneously leading them to the identification of sources that could potentially inform their individual topic selections and field research. Because their literature search was expected to be only rudimentary, secondary goals of the assignment design were to promote student responsibility for their own learning, and to minimize unnecessary use of class time: Students were therefore assigned to complete the worksheet outside of class.

The impact of well-designed research guides, worksheets, and library research-related activities is often undermined by poor implementation, a lack of communication and shared planning between course instructor and librarian on issues such as purpose, proper timing, activity “set up”, and feedback. The ‘good practice’ reported here focuses not on the pedagogical design of the worksheet itself but rather on the elements of the activity’s shared implementation that strengthened its use as a vehicle for learning:

- **Timing:** Place on the syllabus was negotiated in advance, timed with appropriate course content for maximum relevance.
- **Set-up:** Introduced during class time by the course instructor, who outlined expectations of students.
- **Purpose:** Written learning outcomes incorporated into worksheet, framing activity in terms of what it would enable students to do as a result of completing it.
- **Access:** Posted in and submitted on completion by students to Blackboard course management system.
- **Feedback:** Completed worksheets retrieved by Library Partner from course management system, who summarized key points in need of clarification and elaboration in 10-minute in-class follow-up.

Impact:

11 out of 16 students completed and turned in the assignment. Through an inductive process, most arrived at useful conclusions, transferable to other contexts, about LC subject headings and keyword vs. subject searching. 10 of 11 reported that the process was useful in stimulating ideas for their topics.

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RESEARCH ACTIVITY I

College Writing 1B

Activity I guides you through a process that will take approximately one hour.

Learning Outcomes

By completing this activity you will:

- Become familiar with *Pathfinder*, the UC Berkeley library catalog, and be able to perform a simple search to find books on a specific topic in the Library's collections.
 - Identify specific subcultures that sociologists/anthropologists have studied (and published books about) in the last couple of decades.
 - Learn how a search and review of available publications can help you begin to identify a manageable research topic in the early stages of your topic formation.
 - Become familiar with style guides, and use MLA citation style to cite books.
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I A. IDENTIFYING BOOKS AND OTHER MEDIA

Pathfinder is the web-based "card catalog" of the UCB libraries—an inventory of items in the collection including books, videos and other media, and journals. (The issue of finding journals versus journal *articles* is one that causes much confusion: While *Pathfinder* indicates which journals the library subscribes to and where they're available either online or on the library shelves, it can not be used to find *articles* published in these journals. Article searching will be covered in Research Activity II.)

Locate *Pathfinder* under the red tab labeled "Library Catalogs" on the library homepage at <http://library.berkeley.edu> and work through the following questions.

1. Compare the results of two searches: the first, a "title keyword"(TK) using the term "subculture" and the second, a "subject keyword"(SK) using the same term.

a) Number of results for the TK search:

Of the first 20 results, how many contain the word "subculture" in the title of the book?

b) Number of results for the SK search:

Of the first 20 results, how many contain the word "subculture" in the title of the book?

How many of the first 20 results contain the word "subculture" in the "subject headings" field of the full record? [Note: To get to the full record from the initial results list, click on the title of each item.]

2. Reflecting on the findings above, why do you suppose the SK search yielded so many more results? How would you briefly describe to a classmate the difference between a TK and a SK search?
3. Examine all of the results of your SK search more closely now. List eight different subcultures that books have been written about. (If the subculture is not evident from the book's title, look at the subject headings in the full record).
4. Select any three titles related to subculture that have interested you, and provide the following information:

Title 1:

_____ Author: _____

Publisher: _____ Place of Publication: _____

Publication Date: _____ Call number: _____

Location (Holdings Info): _____ Checked out? Y/N

Title 2:

_____ Author: _____

Publisher: _____ Place of Publication: _____

Publication Date: _____ Call number: _____

Location (Holdings Info): _____ Checked out? Y/N

Title 3:

_____ Author: _____

Publisher: _____ Place of Publication: _____

Publication Date: _____ Call number: _____

Location (Holdings Info): _____ Checked out? Y/N

5. Use the "Save" button to mark each of the three titles above and then email the records to yourself.
6. Searching the catalog would be a straightforward activity if every group that potentially fit the definition of "subculture" were classified as such. Because this is not the case, a SK search using the term "subculture" will not always work.

Imagine that you're beginning research on each of the following topics. Experiment with the terms you select (thinking of synonyms and variants, for example) and with TK versus SK searches to see what works best. Record the term that seems to get the best results, indicate whether you used a TK or SK search, and finally, find the subject heading that most closely matches the term.

Topic 1: computer chat groups as subcultures

Search term: _____ TK or SK: _____
Corresponding subject heading: _____
One relevant book you found (title): _____

Topic 2: the "goth" scene as youth subculture

Search term: _____ TK or SK: _____
Corresponding subject heading: _____
One relevant book you found (title): _____

Topic 3: the rave scene as subcultural phenomenon

Search term: _____ TK or SK: _____
Corresponding subject heading: _____
Two relevant books you found (titles):

7. What one or two discoveries have you made about searching the catalog up to this point?
8. Did the search process (or the search results) inspire any ideas about a subculture you might be interested in studying?

I B. CITING YOUR SOURCES

"Ethics, copyright laws, and courtesy to readers require authors to identify the sources of direct quotations and of any facts or opinions not generally known or easily checked."

Chicago Manual of Style, 15th edition (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press), p. 594

Providing a list of works cited with your written work is standard scholarly practice. While many students think of documentation as the end of the road in the research process, something to assemble only after the final draft is complete, savvy researchers know to keep a record as they go in order to avoid frantic, often unsuccessful, last-minute attempts to track down the source of a quote. There are a number of distinct citation styles in use, each with its own specifications concerning how bibliographic data like title, author, publication date, etc., should be arranged within the text and within individual citations on the works cited page. The preferred style is usually dictated by the discipline in which one is working. Always check your course syllabus to determine which style your instructor requires you to use.

In this exercise you will consult the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers; "MLA" is the preferred style for most humanities disciplines. You will use it to convert the bibliographic information in the 3 titles you selected above to the proper citation format, as though you were creating a works cited page.

A copy of the MLA Handbook is available on reserve in the Moffitt Library, behind the Circulation Desk on the entry level. Consult the chapter "Documentation: Preparing a List of Works Cited," and record your citations in the space below.