



## Good Practices from Mellon Library Partners, 2004-2005

### Using a Worksheet on Evaluating Resources as a Component of a Research Assignment

**Environment:** Chemistry 1A is a large-enrollment lower-division introductory chemistry course for non-chemistry majors. Each year over 2000 students interested in biology, medicine, engineering, physics and environmental and earth sciences enroll in the semester-long class. The students meet for three hours of lecture and four hours of laboratory each week. There is typically one instructor in charge of the lecture and another instructor in charge of the laboratory. The instructor for the laboratory component supervises the 30-45 graduate student instructors (GSIs) that teach the laboratory sessions each semester. Since the research assignment for this course is conducted through the laboratory sessions, the GSIs lead the students through their projects and are responsible for grading the final results.

**Impact:** Developing a worksheet on evaluating resources was an effective way to provide structure to the research assignment for the students so they could begin to develop their evaluative skills without getting lost or side-tracked at the very early stages of research. It was also an effective way to indirectly coach and mentor the GSIs as they discussed the assignment with the students in their lab sessions.

**Description:** The worksheet had to meet these criteria:

1. Clearly written so that both students and GSIs would understand the assignment. This was especially important in such a distributed teaching and learning environment with so many students and GSIs.
2. Written so that it was obvious to students and GSIs what was expected for a quality assignment.
3. Written so that GSIs could grade consistently across all sections.
4. Short enough to be able to be squeezed into an already full laboratory syllabus.
5. Encourage creative thinking, therefore no artificial restrictions on the format or type of resource. (For example, no requirements such as one book, one journal, one print resource, one online resource, etc.).
6. Emphasize learning how to evaluate a resource independent of format or type.
7. Introduce students to the required style format for citations.
8. Lead students to think about the next steps in the research process.

See the Chemistry Worksheet available on the Mellon Library Partners web site.

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