



Refer to Student Assignment: Immigration to California, 1865-1990

What assumptions has the instructor made in crafting this assignment?

That his/her students already ...

- know what an "ethnic minority" is
- know what a primary resource is
- know the best places to look for primary resources
- know that there are multiple places to go to identify primary resources
 - e.g., Library catalogs | journal & news indexes [print & online] | book & journal article bibliographies | print sourcebooks & bibliographies | document indexes, etc.
- know significant
 - People
 - Dates
 - Events
 - Organizationsassociated with the subject they are researching
- know strategies for identifying significant people, dates, events, organizations
- understand the structure of information or "the literature" in the field & are able to determine a "reasonable" scope for a research question
- know how to narrow or broaden the scope of their research
- can employ special & multiple search strategies & can determine the best types of searches to perform based on what they know about the subject



What librarians observe about student research

That students frequently ...

- see "library research" & "searching the Internet" as synonymous
- expect to find everything on the Internet
- are unaware that there are structured ways to identify & locate library materials
- are non-methodical in their approach to research
- employ trial & error methods in searching for information & resources
- work from the verbatim assignment
 - e.g., if the assignment contains the phrase "immigration to California, 1865-1990" that is the exact phrase that students will search
- need help in re-framing their research question & establishing reasonable focus
- don't know how to recognize what they've uncovered through their research & can't evaluate its worth
- are unfamiliar with what a citation is
- don't know what a bibliography is & why they exist
- are unfamiliar with what "MLA" or other "style manuals" & why they would use them
- think its okay to plagiarize, especially from online content
- think all online information is or should be free
- underestimate the time & effort entailed in conducting scholarly research
- leave assignments to the last minute & want to get them over with fast!
- take their cues from "the professor"
- are excited by & value the research process once they know how to do it