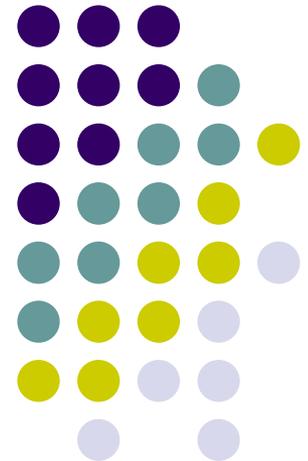


# Research Assignment Design

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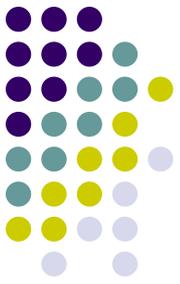
Diane VanderPol  
[diane.vanderpol@unlv.edu](mailto:diane.vanderpol@unlv.edu)

Fall 2007

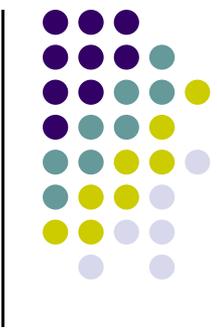




# Why revisit and/or rework research assignments?



- Changing information environment
  - Information overload/ anxiety
  - Need for new (and many not so new) literacies
- Faculty frustration with student work product
  - Misunderstood or unmet expectations
  - Students' lack of prior knowledge and skill development

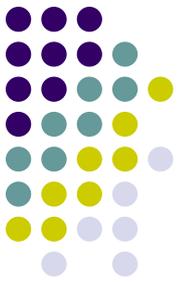


What do researchers need to know?

What skills and knowledge do  
information literate people  
possess?



# ACRL's Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education

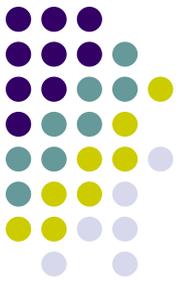


<http://www.ala.org/acrl/ilcomstan.html>

An information literate individual is able to:

- Determine the nature & extent of information needed
- Access the needed information effectively & efficiently
- Evaluate information and its sources critically & incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base
- Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
- Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, & access and use information ethically and legally

*Standard:* Determines the nature and extent of the information needed.



***Performance Indicators:***

1. Defines and articulates the need for information.

**Outcomes Include:**

- Confers with instructors and participates in class discussions, peer workgroups, and electronic discussions to identify a research topic, or other information need
- Develops a thesis statement and formulates questions based on the information need
- Explores general information sources to increase familiarity with the topic

2. Identifies a variety of types and formats of potential sources for information.

**Outcomes Include:**

- Knows how information is formally and informally produced, organized, and disseminated
- Recognizes that knowledge can be organized into disciplines that influence the way information is accessed
- Identifies the value and differences of potential resources in a variety of formats (e.g., multimedia, database, website, data set, audio/visual, book)
- Identifies the purpose and audience of potential resources (e.g., popular vs. scholarly, current vs. historical)

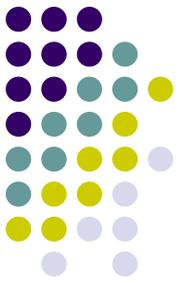
# Helping students develop information literacy skills



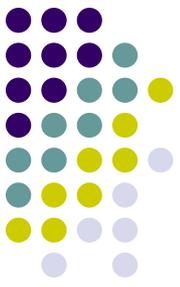
- Teaching faculty
  - Research assignments provide opportunities to ask students to demonstrate and develop skills
  - Grades motivate
  - Inclusion of information literacy skills in the curriculum lends authority and subject relevance
- Library faculty
  - Can collaborate in the development of assignments that take best advantage of local resources
  - Provide many opportunities for help and instruction for individuals and classes
  - Subject librarians select and teach/ promote latest resources



# Designing research assignments



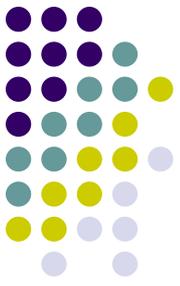
- Be specific (and realistic) about your expectations
- Isolate parts of the process, stagger due dates  
(Assignment calculator  
<http://www.lib.umn.edu/help/calculator/>)
- Take advantage of library instruction (895-2123) and collaboration opportunities (& the writing center too!)
- Discuss research concepts and strategies- intellectual property, peer review, topic selection...
- Be sure the that the purpose and benefit of the assignment is obvious to students
- Emphasize analysis over answers. Encourage reflection on the process, use failure and frustration as an opportunity for feedback and as a teaching moment



# Sample assignments

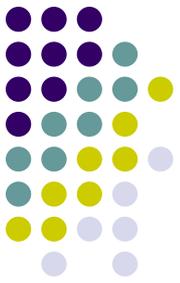
- Students are given a failed search strategy and must troubleshoot to produce better results
- Students create a reading packet- an anthology-type collection for which they write an intro
- Students read selected materials and rank them, with justifications, as more or less scholarly

# More sample assignments



- Students keep a log of search process, noting search terms and/or resources tried (log efforts via threaded discussions on WebCT so students can learn from each others mistakes).
- Students examine the submission guidelines for journal, serve as mock editors in a peer review process (could use own work or could pull material from a paper mill)
- Students write questions on a topic that demonstrate an understanding of the issues

# Even more sample assignments



- For every opinion there is an equal and opposite opinion. Students examine letters to the editor for dubious statements & develop a well supported response
- Students prepare a resume for a person they have researched
- [http://www.bvu.edu/departments/academicaffairs/library/faculty\\_support.html#ideas](http://www.bvu.edu/departments/academicaffairs/library/faculty_support.html#ideas)
- <http://www.library.ohiou.edu/inst/creative.html>
- <http://www.gustavus.edu/academics/library/facultyresearchassignments.html>