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# LOEX Quarterly

Affiliated with Eastern Michigan University's Bruce T. Halle Library

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Volume 32, Number 1-2

## News from the LOEX Office

Here we are again, preparing for another academic year. The season of instruction-related conferences barely over before the implementation of new ideas and planning for new programs is upon us.

I've noticed a trend toward application and I think that it is important to continue to share these real-life experiences with each other. I would like to see volume 32 of *LOEX Quarterly* focus on what is happening in the classroom.

Please feel free to share your latest ideas, adaptations, self-evaluations, and most importantly, implementations with LOEX and we will be sure to keep applied instruction techniques at the forefront of the organization.

And, don't forget to mark your new calendars for the 2006 conferences. We are attempting to reach out to some new time zones this year:

2006 LOEX: May 4-6, Adelphi, Maryland

2006 LOEX-of-the-West: June 8-10, Fairmont Orchid, Hawaii

Look for more information in the September *Currents*.

Theresa Valko

Director

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## Engaging Honors Students with Active Learning

Colleen Boff, Carol Singer, & Robin Sinn

Bowling Green State University

### Engaging Honors Students with Active Learning

With the shift in education from a teacher-focused classroom to a student-focused classroom, developing ways to incorporate active learning experiences into the curriculum is crucial. This may be a challenge for instruction librarians to negotiate for several reasons. The “60 minute” or “one shot” session is hardly enough time to tell the students everything they need to know about the library, let alone have students also do an activity. Since librarians are often guest lecturers, it may also be a challenge to convince a professor to engage students in an active learning activity since librarians do not “own” the curriculum.

At Bowling Green State University in Ohio, three librarians collaborated with the director of the Honors program to develop an active learning experience for a critical thinking course taken by first year students. A 50 minute library session was developed that could be used for all sections of the course.

Instead of having a formal meeting with the Honors Director where we sat down and framed our conversation in

the context of Information Literacy standards, we decided to take him to lunch during which we were able to talk with him about his impressions of library research habits of honors students in a more informal way. Our conversation kept coming back to the lack of quality sources in their papers as a result of students using only the web. We agreed that these first year students may simply be unfamiliar with the location of the library research databases. The Director of the Honors program also indicated that the types of sources students were using were not research-based or scholarly. As a result of our conversation, he became increasingly interested in what librarians could do to help honors students improve their information seeking skills.

The next step was to draft a proposal for a 50-minute session addressing the difference between primary and secondary sources as well as the location and use of the library research databases. The librarians made several assumptions about these traditionally- aged students that are articulated best by researchers Oblinger and Oblinger:

- 1) They don’t feel the need of instruction manuals to learn technology
- 2) They like to learn from experience rather than listening to lectures

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Please consider submitting your instruction  
research, reviews, and reports.

- 3) They like activities that include social interaction
- 4) They like to work in teams
- 5) They're achievement oriented
- 6) They like to use inductive reasoning instead of being told the answers \*

The proposal was approved by the Director and was sent out to the 14 faculty members who were teaching the course. Of the 14 sections, students in seven of the sections participated in the library session.

### What we did with the students

First we established what we hoped the students would learn. Our learning outcomes included:

- work cooperatively with peers in order to learn information search strategies from each other
- learn how to locate primary source material in order to verify information reported in secondary sources

become familiar with library systems in order to gather information and evidence to support critical analysis and inquiry

There were approximately 21 students in each section of the course. At first, two librarians team taught the session because of the interactive nature and new approach for us. We began the 50 minute session with a ten minute explanation of the differences between primary and secondary sources, using paper copies of journal, newspaper, and magazine issues as examples. We divided the class into groups of four to five students and assigned roles of reader, recorder, time keeper, and speaker to each group member. We gave each group a short article from a newspaper or magazine summarizing the results of a research study published elsewhere. The group was told to locate the full text or the citation of the original article referred to in the summary article. We were intentionally vague and offered little direction to the students about which research tools to use. Groups had approximately 15 minutes to search and then each group reported back to the class. Representatives of each group were expected to tell the class if they located the original study, how they located it, and anything interesting they came across during the process.

When the groups reported their findings back to the class, we reinforced the good search strategies and offered suggestions to groups that had difficulties. Rarely did the students start out with the library resources. Instead, most students gravitated towards Google. Some students were able to identify the full text of the original research article by using the free web. More often than not, students got as far as locating a citation and then were asked to pay for the full text. Either way, the students were engaged in the search enough to care about our explanation of how they could find the full text through the library resources.

### Preparing for the session:

Students have access to more than 150 research databases through our library system. We wanted to make sure that the research articles referred to from the newspaper articles we identified were all available from *Academic Search Premier*, our interdisciplinary database with which we want all students to be familiar.

We then identified newspaper articles that summarized studies. At the very least, we made sure that the name of the research journal was stated in the article. Ideally, it's a good idea to start this process three to six months prior to doing the activity since it often takes a few months before the original research article is indexed in the library databases. Since we didn't have that much time to prepare, the secondary-source articles we handed out to the students were from Lexis-Nexis. The titles we've used in the past include:

"Post-stress pig-outs appeal to women, not men..."

"Bias in the Jury Box?"

"Coffee reduces diabetes risk, study says."

"Children's waistlines are growing"

"Grandma is good for you..."

"Fizzy drinks are a recipe for fatter children..."

"No pain, no gain? No way..."

We have since begun clipping articles out of our local newspaper for future use and have been diligent about finding articles that may pique the interest of an 18 year old.

## *TechMatters:*

### Welcome to the WildWorldOfWikis

**Krista Graham, Central Michigan University**

**Wiki (n.)** A collaborative Web site comprised of the perpetual collective work of many authors. A wiki allows anyone to edit, delete or modify content that has been placed on the Web ... including the work of previous authors.

*From the Webopedia, <http://www.webopedia.com>*

#### **MoreAboutWikis**

At its simplest, a wiki is a collaborative communication and authoring tool. Much like a weblog, a wiki allows individual authors to post and revise online entries related to a specific topic. The main distinction is that a wiki allows **anyone** to change **anything**. Typically, authorizations and passwords are not required, and content can be changed simply by clicking on an “edit link” located at the bottom of each page. Wiki content is often described as “ego-less and time-less”<sup>1</sup>; when and by whom something was written is not considered particularly important.

The term wiki is derived from the Hawaiian word for “quick”. Accordingly, authoring and editing wiki content is facilitated by a simplified markup syntax<sup>2</sup> and automatic linking to PagesThatUseWikiNames which are indicated by joined, capitalized words. Because linking to related WikiNamedPages is so easy, cross-linking throughout a site is very common.

#### **SomeWellKnownWikis**

Portland Pattern Repository

*<http://c2.com/ppr/>*

Created in 1995 by Ward Cunningham, the Portland Pattern Repository (PPR) is the original wiki. The PPR itself contains information regarding pattern languages as solutions to computer programming problems. More importantly from my perspective, however, the PPR is also often referred to as the WikiWikiWeb and contains massive amounts of information related to authoring, setting up, and managing a wiki<sup>3</sup>.

Wikipedia

*[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)*

The *Wikipedia* describes itself as a “Web-based, free-content encyclopaedia”. As a wiki, it is written collaboratively and any entry can be edited by any individual at any point in time. The English language version of *Wikipedia* contains over 500,000 articles of varying length and depth on a wide variety of topics. It even contains an entry for “Library Instruction” [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Library\\_instruction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Library_instruction)].

The *Wikipedia* has been controversial amongst librarians, who often cite the lack of authority and editorial control as a deficiency. That being said, *Wikipedia* is a well-known source amongst students, and is accessed millions of times each day.

Wikibooks

*[http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Main_Page)*

*Wikibooks* is a companion site to *Wikipedia*. It is a collection of free, online textbooks that are being written collaboratively in the wiki tradition. Currently, the English language version of the site, includes over 8,000 “wikibooks” in subject areas ranging from the humanities to science to computing. There’s even a “How to Find a Book” module [[http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/How\\_to\\_find\\_a\\_book](http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/How_to_find_a_book)] that includes information about searching for books in library catalogs and using WorldCat to locate materials.

#### **PlayingAroundWithWikis**

If you’re anything like me, your curiosity regarding how to edit wiki pages was peaked within a few minutes of your first visit to a wiki site. That “edit text” link at the bottom of each page can be hard to resist! However, before starting to contribute to a wiki, it is important to become familiar with the text formatting conventions to ensure that you don’t inadvertently create editorial havoc. Fortunately,

most wikis provide a “Sandbox” area where you are free to experiment in a safe area where you can’t do any permanent harm to the rest of the site. One such experimental “play area” is the WikiWikiSandbox [<http://c2.com/cgi/wiki?WikiWikiSandbox>] on the *WikiWikiWeb* site.

After playing in the sandbox, you may become interested in establishing your own wiki. Although choosing the best software for your purposes and setting up your wiki are beyond the scope of this article, there are many excellent online resources that will help you with this process.

“Wiki Science”, from *Wikibooks*

[http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Wiki\\_Science](http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Wiki_Science)

What could be a better resource than a “how-to” guide to all things wiki created by active members of the wiki community? This “wikibook” covers starting, publicizing, maintaining, and troubleshooting a wiki, and includes numerous links to outside sources of information. And if after setting up your wiki you become an expert, you can then add to the wikibook and share your knowledge!

“Top Ten Wiki Engines”, from *WikiWikiWeb*

<http://c2.com/cgi/wiki?TopTenWikiEngines>

Another resource produced via the collaborative efforts of wiki contributors, this list of the top ten wiki engines provides comments and critical reviews of the “best” wiki software. For a more comprehensive list of software options, see *WikiWikiWeb*’s complete list of “Wiki Engines” [<http://c2.com/cgi/wiki?WikiEngines>].

### WikisAndLibraryInstruction

Now that we’ve taken a look at what wikis are and how they work, let’s explore how they can be used to enhance a library instruction program. First, wikis could be used as a tool to help instruction librarians collaborate on the development of lesson plans and instructional guides. Wikis are ideal for editing text, and thus for creating documentation. By working together in a wiki environment, instruction librarians could combine their collective knowledge to produce the best possible instructional ma-

terials for their students.

In a classroom setting, wikis could be used to encourage collaboratively learning between students, faculty, and librarians. For example, instruction librarians often create “research guide” web pages for students to refer to and use following a one-shot bibliographic instruction session. What if those guides could be accessed, edited, and changed by students and their professors as they proceeded with their research and identified other useful tools for their purposes? By sharing their research experience and knowledge in such a way, students might become more engaged in the research process.

Similarly, wikis could be used in a for-credit information literacy course to facilitate group research projects. Students could use the tool to collaboratively conduct in-depth research tasks and track their learning experience over the course of the semester. Instructors would also be able to monitor each group’s progress and provide guidance as required.

### AdditionalSourcesOfInformation

James, Heather. (2004, May 21). My brilliant failure: wikis in classrooms. *Kairosnews*. Retrieved May 13, 2005, from <http://kairosnews.org/node/3794>

Lamb, Brian. (2004). Wide open spaces: wikis, ready or not. *Educause Review*, 39(5), 36-48. Retrieved May 13, 2005, from <http://www.educause.edu/pub/er/>

### Notes:

Various authors. “Elements of Wiki Essence”. *WikiWikiWeb*. <<http://c2.com/cgi/wiki?ElementsOfWikiEssence>>.

Various authors. “Text Formatting Rules”. *WikiWikiWeb*. <<http://c2.com/cgi/wiki?TextFormattingRules>>.

Various authors. “Wiki Wiki Web”. *WikiWikiWeb*. <<http://c2.com/cgi/wiki?WikiWikiWeb>>.

## Merging information literacy and technology through instructional and collaborative initiatives

Jennifer Sharkey, Purdue University Libraries

Every new generation of students coming to our campuses will have different and higher expectations for using and accessing types of technology. While college IT departments are responding by establishing wireless networks, implementing course management systems, and even providing iPods, students still struggle with effectively building their information literacy skills and merging these with the technology they use every day. The Digital Learning Collaboratory (DLC), a program and facility at Purdue University, encourages creative application of information literacy and technology to research and course projects. Active collaboration with faculty helps bridge the gap students have with information literacy and technology.

Most research projects have inherent aspects of information literacy and can be adjusted easily to enhance that focus. However, incorporating technology into a course or project varies as much as the content of the classes. We focus on the learning outcomes of the project and course to strengthen the information literacy components and to determine the best technology to use so it will enhance the learning experience not overpower it. The types of technology used range from basic scanning to graphic creation for web sites to short animations or multimedia presentations. Below are two examples which highlight the DLC's efforts in integrating information literacy and technology.

The instructor for a communications course, which focused on small group communication, wanted to provide a unique active learning experience for her students while mirroring a realistic workplace scenario. Since the class comprised mostly of technology majors,

she also felt it was important to appeal to their strong technical knowledge-base but at the same time fulfill the main course outcome: reinforcing the application of positive and productive communication behaviors.

At the end of the consultation session, the overall activity included two aspects: 1) the students had to conduct a group meeting using an instant messaging (IM) application and 2) construct a summary document about the meeting using email and the comments and tracking features within MS Word. Initially, the activity included the use of the white board and document sharing features of the IM. Unfortunately, the University's wireless network firewalls would not allow these functions and the instructor was reluctant to utilize a commercial service like Webex. The purchase of a university-wide site license for the program Breeze allows the inclusion of document sharing and white boarding for future classes.

The online meetings focused around a problem scenario presented to the students at the beginning of the class; students were encouraged to utilize online resources to support their arguments and decisions. The document included a summary of the meeting, the group's resolution to the problem, and a reflective piece about the experience. This activity focused on aspects of the ACRL Information Literacy Standards Three and Four, where students were encouraged to synthesize new knowledge through discussion and each group developed a summary document based on that discussion. The students used the IM and word processing applications in new ways, which increased their technology skills.

Teaching students outside of the classroom is also an

important component of the DLC's instructional program. A pilot workshop series was developed and tested during the 2004 Fall Semester. The workshop series was designed to be a blended information literacy and technology learning experience. The pilot outcome determined the need for such a series and the types of sessions students were interested in.

To create consistency and context to the individual sessions of the series, an overall theme, *Researching with Technology*, was picked. A general problem statement, which focused on the upcoming presidential election, was used as a starting point. A tailored, expanded problem statement reflected each session's specific learning outcomes. The series comprised of eight sessions and were titled and ordered as: *Effective Researching Strategies*, *Finding Full Text Articles*, *Advanced Google Searching*, *Using Quality Images*, *Creating Web Graphics*, *Developing a Web Site*, *Creating Multimedia Presentations*, and *Manipulating Video*. Advertising for the workshop series included posting an announcement to the DLC and Libraries web sites, displaying posters, announcing via the residence hall cable system, and sending email to faculty and staff contacts asking them to post and announce to their students. Due to facility limitations, registration for each session was capped at twenty. Even though all sessions had full registration with several students placing themselves on a wait list, actual attendance varied greatly.

An anonymous evaluation at the end of each session was used to assess the overall success of the program, examine the overall program timeline, check the order of the sessions, and look at any needed modifications to each session's the learning outcomes and content. We determined there was enough interest to implement the series with some alterations. Modifications to the series and individual course content varied. The changes for the 2005 Spring semester ranged from

slight title revisions for some sessions to completely reworking content in others. The biggest change was the number of sessions offered, which increased to three series (24 sessions) over the course of the semester. The intent was to provide students more opportunity to take each session. The use of a generic university-wide staff development registration system presented challenges in branding the series and reaching undergraduates. Continued use of this system as well as marketing efforts will be evaluated over the summer of 2005. A description of the current sessions can be found at <http://www.dlc.purdue.edu/workshops/descriptions.htm>.

Each new generation of students will come to universities and colleges with certain expectations for accessing hardware, software, and information. Programs and facilities like the Digital Learning Collaboratory can evolve and adapt to the needs and expectations of both students and faculty through effective collaboration, innovative programming, and keeping an eye on trends in both information literacy and technology developments.

## Step by step teaching: creating learning outcomes

Jennifer Nutefall and Laura Maldonado  
Gelman Library  
George Washington University

•Who teaches instruction sessions at your library? How do they teach? Do they follow a particular model? This is how the Gelman Library at George Washington University worked towards Step By Step Teaching.

At Gelman, the librarians of Education and Instruction Group (EIG) teach the majority of instruction sessions while reference librarians occasionally teach specific discipline related classes in fields such as Business, Science, and Engineering. The department recently moved to a working group model with four main groups that do reference on a regular basis and other tasks that may or may not include instruction. We have 15 reference librarians and half of them are members of EIG.

Within the library there was a consensus that EIG librarians were progressive in their teaching, incorporating active learning and group exercises, and that the department as a whole would benefit from learning these techniques. To share experience and knowledge about the process of teaching, EIG librarians have conducted a series of teaching workshops for the rest of the Reference and Instruction Department.

In early 2004, EIG librarians discussed the idea at a weekly meeting and suggested taking a systematic approach, where one workshop would build upon the next. During the initial group discussion, EIG librarians suggested planning the sessions to last at least 90 minutes to allow for hands-on exploration, focus on the target audience of reference librarians and library assistants who teach, and consider how the workshops will be perceived by our audience. It was agreed that a team of two librarians would lead each workshop and in planning should make sure to incorporate some form of hands-on practice.

The basis for the workshop series was the five questions for instructional design as presented at the 1999 and 2002 Institute for Information Literacy Immersion Program, which was attended by the Instruction Coordinator. The questions are:

- What do you want the student to be able to do?

(Outcome)

- What does the student need to know in order to do this well? (Curriculum)
- What activity will facilitate the learning? (Pedagogy)
- How will the student demonstrate the learning? (Assessment)

How will I know the student has done this well? (Criteria)

The first workshop in the series covered the topic of learning outcomes. As a whole, the EIG librarians adhere to the idea that all classes should have clear outcomes. However, we had to make a connection with the larger department on the usefulness of learning outcomes and to emphasize that learning outcomes are valuable not only for formal classroom instruction, but also for interactions at the Reference Desk, one-on-one Research Assistance Appointments, and training within the department.

The first workshop on creating good learning outcomes was held in July 2004. All the workshops were held during the regular weekly reference department meeting time. As this was the first in the series, we covered the goals for all of the workshops as well as for this particular workshop.

The goals for the workshop series were:

- By the end of the workshop series librarians will have a better understanding of the instructional design process and how it is used to assist with creating instruction sessions.

By the end of the workshop series librarians will have the tools to incorporate at least one new idea into their interactions with patrons in order to assist them with the learning process.

The goals for the Learning Outcomes workshop were:

- By the end of this session, librarians will be able to identify the main ideas/goals of the instruction session in order to draft learning outcomes.

By the end of this session, librarians will be able to construct at least one learning outcome related to an assignment/syllabus in order to focus their instruction into measurable parts/goals.

We used a brief PowerPoint to cover what goes into creating good learning outcomes:

- o Action oriented language
- o Measurable results
- o Transferable skills
- o Clear to the student
- o Use the phrase “in order to”

Reflective of Bloom’s taxonomy

We divided the participants into small groups of four in order to facilitate discussion and collaboration and assigned EIG librarians to sit at each group table. We designed exercises for each group that required drafting a learning outcome for a mock library instruction session based on real assignments collected by EIG librarians. These were assignments that EIG librarians had used to design instruction sessions in previous semesters.

We distributed a handout of Bloom’s taxonomy covering the six levels of learning as well as verbs associated with each level in order to assist participants in drafting their own learning outcomes as part of the group exercises.

Each group was given a sample assignment with these instructions:

Group Activity:

Read the assignment below. List what should be covered in a library instruction class in order for the students to complete the assignment. Off of the list, what are the three most important things to be covered in the instruction? Using the flipchart, write at least one learning outcome based on your discussion

During the modeling exercise, EIG members stationed at each table facilitated discussion by encouraging each group to consider: What skills the students need to learn in order to complete the assignment? What can realistically be covered in a 75-minute instruction session? And the EIG members assisted the group with creating a learning outcome.

A timeline provided additional information that could be useful for refining the learning outcomes, such as; the date of the instruction session, due date for the rough draft or

bibliography and the due date for the final assignment. This was followed by a brief 1-2 paragraph description of the assignment.

During the design of the workshop, we did a trial run for EIG members and incorporated their recommendations into the final version; with their assistance we were able to focus each assignment to help lead the groups toward a particular learning outcome. An EIG member was stationed at each table to help facilitate discussion but we wanted them to refrain from leading the debate in order to encourage reference librarian’s comments first. There was lively discussion in all of the groups and each table was able to draft a learning outcome based on the assignments we distributed.

Although EIG members thought the workshop series went well, it was insightful for us to gather comments from the reference librarians who participated.

Debbie Bezanson, Electronic Resources librarian said: “Although I have not conducted any instruction since the workshop, I have found the information I learned about creating learning outcomes useful in preparing and organizing myself for one-on-one research assistance appointments with patrons. Instead of assisting the patron with a ‘here is the information you requested’ approach, I can plan the meeting along a set of skills rather than finding a specific source of information.”

Shmuel Ben-Gad, Reference and Collection Development librarian said: “Since the workshop I have concentrated on major research concepts that would be most useful to students across the board. The workshop helped confirm the need to focus on fewer sources and customize handouts.”

Even though the original intent of the workshop was to teach reference librarians and library assistants how to construct learning outcomes in order to focus their instruction, we were delighted to see other useful applications for this new set of skills.

We built upon this first workshop by offering two subsequent ones, the second on tasks and activities, and third workshop on collaborative learning. Please look for the next article in this series in the subsequent LOEX Quarterly.

*Engaging Honors Students* continued from p.3

### Assessment

Though we made inroads with this program by incorporating a library session into at least half of the sections offered that semester, we were not as successful in developing an assessment instrument. This would have been an ideal situation since we had a control group of honors students who did not have a library session to compare to those who had.

Anecdotally speaking, students seemed genuinely engaged in the activity. One young woman came into class feeling indignant about having to take a critical thinking course at all since she had already taken such courses in high school. The librarians teaching this section made sure to ask her after the session if she felt like the session had been a waste of time. Perhaps she was being nice, but she indicated that it was the best class in the course to that point. Overall, each time we taught the session, we as teachers felt extremely satisfied with the way the students responded. All seven faculty members, many of whom participated as if they were students in the class, responded well to the session. Though we have not done so yet, we feel confident that this instructional approach could be used with non-honors courses as well.

Oblinger, Diana and James Oblinger. "Is It Age or IT: First Steps Toward Understanding the Net Generation," In: Diana G. Oblinger and James L. Oblinger, eds. *Educating the Net Generation*. Boulder, CO: EDUCAUSE, 2005. <http://www.educause.edu/educatingthenetgen/>

*Ross' Rave*, continued from p.12

I have take-out in my fridge older than that, I want to tell her.

Every once in a while, I get something a bit more personal. More exploratory. "I was in your class last week and you said we should pick a topic we care about. And, I really want to do my speech on depression in teenagers." Red flag.

Last semester after my zillionth class, I got an email from a student in a Comm 8 class. (Group Communications, General Education requirement, taught by TAs slightly older than my dog.)

She told me her class had come in for a library tour and that I was really funny and could I help her find something about her topic which was about sweatshops and she was taking the pro side but even though she looked like everywhere she couldn't find anything that was in favor of them even though she was using words like "in favor of" and her group was doing the presentation tomorrow and she'd be really, really grateful for whatever I could find and could I email her back at [sorrory-chicklet-4U@hotmail.com](mailto:sorrory-chicklet-4U@hotmail.com).

Ok, this is slightly embellished (that's not her real email) but the dilemmas were real: Her dilemma was she needed reputable information on a position which was going to be very difficult to find articulated. My dilemma was my moral convictions were being pitted against my professional ethics. I try to be open-minded, but I honestly can't see how working 80 hours a week in squalid conditions, sewing Pocahontas tee shirts [yet another insult] for 17cents an hour has much merit. Compounded by the fact that big Mickey Eisner himself pulls down over \$100K in the same hour and could give a sh\*t!

Librarians face this dilemma all the time.

For many years I shared a closet-sized office with a wonderful librarian and passionate humanist. She made her own granola, carried plastic bags everywhere and wore other people's clothes. We got along great ... even after I

delicately mentioned one day that perhaps Lilly's All Natural Crystal Deodorant may not be living up to its promise.

One day she suggested we declare the office a "Nuclear Free Zone". I wasn't sure what that meant, but knew it involved a colorful sticker and I was big on stickers. She told me that, once declared, our office would neither contain nor support any product or device that promoted or used nuclear materials. Our tiny office couldn't hold a coat rack, let alone a cruise missile, so I was pretty sure the declaration was more symbolic than practical. Besides the sticker was cool.

The dilemma came the day an electrical engineering student asked for help finding an NTIS document on submarine guidance.

Sorry buddy.

At the reference desk a few semesters ago, a student asked for some help researching HIV/AIDS funding. We did the usual library dance (books, articles, government sources, organizations, etc) and found some great stuff.

For example: In 2002 Viacom donated \$120 million in airtime to HIV/AIDS awareness.

"That's a lot of money," he said.

"It's a lot of money for you and me. I wonder if that's a lot of money for Viacom," I replied.

We found out that \$120 million is 1/2 of 1% of their annual sales. That certainly puts things in perspective!

I don't know about you, but whenever I'm faced with these kinds of issues, I turn to ACRL's *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* for guidance!

Figuring we were dealing with one of the more com-

plex, higher order skills, I flipped past Standards #1 and #2 (hunt and gather) and zoom in on #3.

#3 (6) The information literate student validates understanding and interpretation of the information through **discourse with individuals**, subject-area experts, and/or practitioners.

This could work. I'm an individual. Mostly.

#3 (7) The information literate student determines whether the **initial query should be revised**.

I like this one. It gives the students permission to change their minds, and it gives me permission to help them.

Surely, my own biases are interfering with objectivity. Yet given the over simplified, homogenized, rating driven, edutainment which passes off as truth, I feel ethically obligated to challenge students' thinking every chance I get. In fact, not doing so would be malpractice.

A student once asked me to read his paper on the death penalty. His tune was pretty much, "Fry baby, fry!" When we talked about it, I pointed out that while his thesis clearly showed he advocated the death penalty, all of his statistics and arguments actually supported its abolition.

"You have a choice," I told him. "Either change your arguments or change your mind."

"I guess I really don't believe in the death penalty after all," he said. "I used to."

"I'm glad you asked," I said.

"Ask me anything you want, anytime."

### Ross' Rave: Anything. Anytime

Ross LaBaugh, California State University, Fresno

"Take out of piece of paper and write this down."

I begin every class like this.

"r" "o" "s" "s" "l" at "csufresno.edu"

"r" "o" "s" "s" "l" at "csufresno.edu"

"r" "o" "s" "s" "l" at "csufresno.edu"

It's like an infomercial.

"r" "o" "s" "s" "l" at "csufresno.edu"

"r" "o" "s" "s" "l" at "csufresno.edu"

I walk around the room checking, repeating, fooling around a little bit.

"My name is Ross, that's my email address, and you can ask me anything, about anything , anytime. Anything!"

"Anything," someone usually asks amid some light tittering.

"Yep."

What an offer.

Years ago, when my grandmother was in, what turned out to be, the last day of her life, she made me that same offer. There she lay, pressed and starched like her hospital sheet. Flashlight, blue eyes locked on to my blood shot brown ones. She usually didn't have much to say. When she did, one paid attention.

"Is there anything you want to ask me," she said. "Last chance," she smiled drowsily.

I didn't really know what to say. I knew what she was offering. Keys to three generations of unopened closets. Uncorked silences. A lifetime of the unanswered.

I had a million questions, but the only thing I could think of to ask was, "Are you thirsty?"

She shook her head slightly and closed her eyes again. I'm not sure who was more disappointed.

I knew I had blown it. Last gas before freeway.

Sometimes students take me up on the offer and email me questions. Thankfully, they are usually something mundane and simple. "Where are like magazines, 'cause my teacher says we can't use Yahoo?" Or, "Do yous guyses [sic] have old newspapers on microfish [sic]? I need to bring in a copy of the day I was born. Do you have anything that old? I was born in 1986."

Ross' Rave continued on p.10

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