Research Literacy Guidelines

The responsibility of teaching research literacy is shared by librarians and classroom instructors. OCLC, a major consortium of libraries worldwide, conducted a survey of student perceptions of the library.[1] When asked who they most trust when seeking recommendations for reliable sources of information or to validate the worthiness of resources, classroom instructors were their first choice. While this is not surprising, it does put the burden of research fluency on the shoulders of the instructor. There are only nine librarians at Calvin and their influence on students is limited. It is important that collaboration exists between instructors and librarians and that instructors play an active role in any research literacy initiative.

In the 2005-2006 academic year, the librarians began formally working with English 101 instructors to deliver research instruction at the first-year level; for each 101 section, librarians offer at least three hours of research instruction, often in a hands-on setting. The outcomes, or objectives, outline below under "Foundational Outcomes" are introduced in English 101. However, this only lays the foundation for students' research skills and knowledge. Students cannot learn all they need to know about research in three hours; they need the opportunity to develop this knowledge through practice and application in further courses, and to learn the research practices and expectations for particular disciplines, especially in their majors.

Departments are encouraged to use these guidelines as departmental writing plans are revised. This document could be appended to the plan or the outcomes could be modified to fit the unique research process of a discipline.

Graduated Research Literacy Outcomes

FOUNDATIONAL OUTCOMES – These concepts are introduced in English 101 and reinforced in discipline-specific 100- and 200-level courses, and also upper-level courses as necessary)

1. **The student will understand why and how to prepare for research.**

    a. Recognize the recursive, process-oriented nature of research.

    b. Recognize the purpose and expectations of academic research and its role in a scholarly community.

    c. Develop an appropriate research hypothesis or question.

2. **The student will be able to navigate the Hekman Library.**

    a. Recognize the purpose, content, and organization of an academic library.

    b. Know about the resources and services available through Hekman Library (physical and digital).

    c. Recognize librarians as a source of research assistance.

3. **The student will understand the variety of types and formats of available resources.**

    a. Understand the advantages and purpose of an academic reference collection.

---

[1] http://www.oclc.org/reports/perceptionscollege.htm

b. Understand the relative advantages and disadvantages of books and periodical articles.

c. Understand the structure and advantages/ disadvantages of the Web.

d. Identify and distinguish between popular and scholarly resources.

4. **The student will understand where and how to search for resources.**

a. Identify the types and formats of sources available through WebCat versus the research databases.

b. Know how to choose an appropriate research database.

c. Utilize basic to intermediate searching techniques common to research databases and WebCat.

d. Know how and why to broaden or narrow a search strategy.

5. **The student will know how to locate sources.**

a. Identify and interpret citations for books, periodical articles, and other major resource types.

b. Know how to locate periodical articles.

c. Know how to obtain materials not owned by Hekman Library.

6. **The student will understand how to evaluate sources and information.**

a. Understand how, when, and why to evaluate free Web sources.

b. Understand how to evaluate other sources (periodical articles, books)

7. **The student will be able to use sources effectively in his/her writing.**

a. Understand standard citation styles, and apply these styles correctly.

b. Recognize the forms, meaning, and consequences of plagiarism.

c. Understand how to use and integrate research in order to achieve a rhetorical purpose.

UPPER-LEVEL OUTCOMES – 300- level courses

1. **The student will understand how the scholarly conversation works in a given discipline, and apply this knowledge to the selection of resources.**

a. Identify the differences between primary and secondary research in the discipline (investigation methods, standards).

b. Understand what is considered "scholarly" research in the discipline (including the role of peer-review).

c. Be able to identify key topics, authors, publishers, and/or periodicals in a subject or in a discipline.

d. Choose a research topic appropriate to the student's level of knowledge in the discipline or subject area.

2. **The student will identify where and how to search for advanced and/or subject-specific resources.**

a. Identify and use subject-specific reference sources.

b. Identify the major research databases of a discipline.

c. Understand that the format of the information is irrelevant in the pursuit of knowledge.

d. Understand how to utilize controlled vocabulary and advanced searching methods in major research databases.

e. Utilize informal and formal "expert" searching methods (e.g., citation referencing, bibliographies, or using the "invisible web").

f. Understand and utilize unique types of resources or information important to a field (e.g., case studies, archival materials, gray literature).

3. **The student will know how to locate sources beyond Hekman Library.**

a. Understand why and how to search other libraries' catalogs.

b. Utilize interlibrary loan effectively.

4. **The student will use sources effectively in papers/projects.**

a. Understand how and why to cite sources in written or oral papers/projects (particularly using publication manuals specific to a discipline or field).