

Cast Your Students as Scholars

A Participatory Information Literacy Lesson Plan

Updated 6/6/19

Time: 45 min+

Audience: Undergraduate college students, best for students early in their degree paths

Subject: Many

Materials:

Required:

- Computers for research

Optional:

- Digital Artifact Submission Method (online discussion board, other)
- A Method for distributing or allowing students to choose topics
- Explanatory Documentation or Slides

This is a highly variable research activity that can be adjusted to fit a variety of lesson lengths and leveraged to cover a variety of information literacy topics. By inviting students into the scholarly process, this activity invites students to see themselves as researchers and participants instead of simple observers. Students will still explore a topic to learn more about it, but by framing students as producers of information, we create the groundwork for later conversations about authority and scholarly process.

This lesson plan details the basic idea behind casting your students as scholars and how that can support student learning, but many of the details are up to you. I suggest including or modifying the artifact and searching components and mixing and matching the remaining components as makes sense in your instructional context. As the author of this document, I would love to see this as a collaborative exercise. If you use this lesson frame and it works for you, please share your experience on Project Cora or the ACRL Sandbox as an adaptation of this lesson plan.

Quoted language from learning objectives comes from the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education.

Association of College and Research Libraries. "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education." *Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL)*, 9 Feb. 2015, <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.

Artifact

Begin by asking students to write a small amount (a few paragraphs, 500 words) about something they know and how they know it. This can be something they have experienced, or something they have learned a lot about. It's important at this point to tell students that they will be sharing this information. I've been calling this document an artifact.

Alternatives & Considerations

- Depending on the parameters of your instruction scenario, you might ask students to complete their artifact before they come to class.
- Consider writing an artifact or two as an example or in case a student does not complete the work ahead of time.
- Do what you can to remove any stress around this assignment. In some cases, students expect this assignment to be more difficult than it is, as it does differ from many assignments they are asked to complete.

Searching

Ask students to set aside their own artifacts and engage with an artifact another student wrote. What that engagement or research looks like will differ based on the time you have available. Some students may not love their new topics, or won't know where to go from here. Use this as an opportunity to talk to them about narrowing or broadening their topics, choosing a direction based on what about this topic interests them. Then, ask them to search for resources on the narrowed topic they have chosen.

Alternatives & Considerations

- Consider if you will ask students to switch topics with the student next to them, or allow them to choose from a list of submitted artifacts.
- If you're short on time, consider choosing one database for students to search.
- The size of student's topics will depend on what you are asking them to do with their research.

Possible Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to recognize common library database features and how those features affect their search results.
- Students will be familiar with library resources in the topic area of their research.
- Students will be able to determine the initial scope of their assignment or project and modify or adjust their topic to match the demands of their assignment.
- Students will be able to identify the key terms from their research problem or topic.
- Students will be able to use divergent and convergent thinking when searching.
- Students will be able to match search strategies or tools to their information need.

- Students will understand that research is "a process that focuses on problems or questions in a discipline or between disciplines that are open or unresolved."
- Students will understand that searching is complex, contextual, iterative and strategic.

- Students will value appropriate help, librarians as guide.
- Students will value mental flexibility.

Information Literacy Concepts

- Defines Information Need (ACRL, SCOUNL 1&2, ANZIL 1)
- Finds Information (ACRL 2, SCOUNL 3&4, ANZIL 2&4, ANZIL 5)
- Searching as Strategic Exploration (Frame 6)

Expand

If your instruction has time for topics included below or others like them, you can leverage student's current research to support conversations around:

- Searching Techniques (Boolean, Phrase, Truncation)
- Citation

Authority

When students have had some time to search for additional sources on their topic, regroup for a conversation about source evaluation/authority. Source evaluation conversations provide a great opportunity to talk about how students' sources fit together to advance their learning. How does the artifact written by their peer contribute to their knowledge and fit into the conversation around this topic? What kind of information does it include? When would this be good information to have? When would we want scholarly sources? What kind of authority does their peer have on this topic? Do the other sources they found agree with the artifact? What do you do when you find two sources that disagree?

Alternatives & Considerations

- This conversation includes the potential for ambiguity and for students to identify their peer artifacts as “bad sources”. Frame this conversation carefully to build up students as scholars while being honest and realistic.

Possible Learning Objectives

- Students will consider the value and authority of various sources and analyze the strengths of different types of information on their topic.
- Students will be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of different types of authority.
- Students will consider authority in informal and formal contexts.
- Students will consider themselves as authoritative voices in specific areas and recognize related responsibilities.
- Students will understand that authority is complex and imperfect.
- Students will “develop awareness of the importance of assessing content with a skeptical stance and with a self-awareness of their own biases and worldview.”
- Students will “question traditional notions of granting authority and recognize the value of diverse ideas and worldviews.”

Information Literacy Concepts

- Evaluates (ACRL 3, SCONUL 5, ANZIL 3, ANCIL 4)
- Authority is Constructed / Contextual (Frame 1)

Peer Review / Scholarship as a Conversation

Ask students to present what they learned through their research on a peer's topic. Students review the presentation of the peer who choose their original artifact. What did they learn from someone else researching their artifact? Discuss with students how this assignment mirrors peer review and the scholarly process.

Alternatives & Considerations

- Presenting research can be formal (paper), creative (brochure, infographic), or informal (short presentation).
- Creative presentations can incorporate learning about creative commons and copyright for images.
- Any presentations of research with a deliverable component can touch on citation and appropriate attribution.

Possible Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to summarize the scholarly information process
- Students will “see themselves as contributors to scholarship rather than only consumers of it.”
- Students will “recognize they are often entering into an ongoing scholarly conversation and not a finished conversation”
- Students will “understand the responsibility that comes with entering the conversation through participatory channels”
- Students will “recognize that systems privilege authorities and that not having a fluency in the language and process of a discipline disempowers their ability to participate and engage.”
- Students will understand the role citation plays in scholarly conversation.

Information Literacy Concepts

- Uses Information (ACRL 4, SCOUNL 7, ANZIL 5, ANCIL 8&9)
- Scholarship as Conversation (Frame 5)