Jeopardy and Bibliographic Instruction

Last year several academic instructors at my college, Baton Rouge Community College (BRCC), invited me into their classrooms to provide bibliographic informational sessions for their students. In each of the classes that I visited, I found that students were overconfident that they knew how to use the library and felt that my bibliographic sessions were superfluous busy work. In fact, during each of my presentations students got up and walked out of the classroom. When I attempted to convince students to stay, they generally justified their departures with some version of, "Oh, I'm already pretty familiar with the library."

Active Learning Strategies

At the time that I was providing bibliographic informational sessions to classrooms, there was a simultaneous push at BRCC to engage students in active learning strategies. As a part of that push, the campus Teaching and Learning Center had invited Mary C. Clement, a Professor of Teacher Education and author of First Time in the College Classroom, to be a guest speaker during a professional development series. During her presentation, one of the topics that Clement addressed was how to engage students by employing active learning strategies. In First Time in the College Classroom, Clement describes how active learning can be incorporated through three primary teaching methods: instructing with questions, encouraging discussions, and developing group work. She also points out that none of these methodologies are new and that incorporating them into instruction is not difficult. Clement's presentation similarly emphasized that each of these methodologies—instructing with questions, encouraging discussions, and developing group work—engages students in the learning process and makes students active participants in their learning rather than passive listeners.

Jeopardy and Active Learning

After attending Clement's presentation, and with the idea of promoting active learning in mind, I began to brainstorm how to incorporate questions, discussions, and group work into a bibliographic informational session. I started to consider using a game to invigorate the sessions, and became particularly interested in mimicking the TV gameshow, Jeopardy. With a format that includes responses in the form of questions, Jeopardy seemed like a great way to engage students and exercise Clement's initial active learning strategy of teaching with questions.

Though the TV version of Jeopardy features three contestants playing against one another, this individual player format is impractical for a classroom setting. I decided it would be simpler to divide each class into three groups. Using groups integrates the final two teaching methods that Clement recommends to increase student engagement—developing group work and encouraging discussions. Each team, through engaging in group work, would select a Jeopardy category. Then the student team would discuss the category's response among themselves—encouraging discussion—and provide their answers in the Jeopardy format of answer-in-the-form-of-a-question. By using all three of Clement's methodologies for active learning and engagement, I concluded Jeopardy would be a beneficial active learning model to use when teaching students about the library.

The In-Classroom Jeopardy Board

In order for students to play the adapted classroom game, I created a simple Jeopardy board with four categories and four point levels using Microsoft Word. The categories included Databases, Catalog Search, On-line Search, and Miscellaneous. The category point levels ranged from 100 to 400 and also included two hidden daily doubles, making the selection worth twice the listed amount. Figure 1 illustrates the game board.

	Databases	Library Catalog	Online Search	Miscellaneous
100	This database is good for conducting general searches.	** Daily Double** The catalog is ideal for searching this type of item.	These are used to search the internet.	BRCC Magnolia Library has __ floors.
200	These two pieces of information are needed to access databases off-campus.	As you begin your search you should start with a _____ search.	___ and ___ are usually reliable domains.	You will need this to check an item out of the library.
300	Before conducting your search of the database you should select this option.	_____ _____ contains search terms as well as an overview of the book.	A reliable Web Site will have this, usually located at the bottom of the page.	Fines at BRCC Magnolia Library for books are __ a day.
400	Databases are used to access this type of material.	This number provides the user with the location of the book.	A reliable Web Page describing an issue should not have this.	** Daily Double** Books in the general collection can be checked out for this length of time.

Figure 1. Example of the *Jeopardy* board.

In-Classroom Jeopardy Game Rules

The in-classroom Jeopardy game includes one round of regular category selection and response and one round of "Final Jeopardy." On the TV show, Jeopardy contestants lose points for incorrect answers; however, during the in-classroom game I do not deduct points if students answer the questions incorrectly or not at all—if either of these two things occur, the question goes to the following team. Student teams do not have buzzers, so "Team One" is always the first to play. If "Team One" does not provide the correct answer-in-question-format to the selected category, the selection then goes to "Team Two" or "Team Three" until one of the teams provides the correct response. The team that correctly responds to a category gains control of the board for the next category selection. The same team continues to control the board until it incorrectly responds to a selection, at which point control of the board is released to the next team that offers a correct response. The selection and response procedure repeats until all entries on the Jeopardy board have been exhausted.

During the "Final Jeopardy" round, I provide students with the title of a category from one of the four existing sections (in this example, either Databases, Catalog Search, On-line Search, or Miscellaneous) and ask each team to decide how many of their currently earned points they want to wager on the final question. Student teams must write the wager amount on a piece of scrap paper to document the stake. While the teams are deciding their wagers, I type a question below the Microsoft Word game board in white text to conceal what is being written. When all wagers are decided, I reveal the question and give the student teams 60 seconds to write their answers below the number of points they wagered. Playing the entire game usually takes no more than 15 to 20 minutes.

Game Results

I was nervous the first time I presented my Jeopardy-based bibliographic information session to students. Given previous reactions to my informational sessions, I was not sure how well the new approach would be received. I have since discovered that students love the game-based approach. Many students get very excited and become deeply involved in the game and I have not had a student walk out of a session since I began using this method. I have also found that students pay closer attention to the presentation of information following the game because they want to determine why incorrect responses provided during the game were wrong.

There have been some complaints from students that the Jeopardy game should come after the presentation of information. However, I have learned that the game serves as a very good assessment tool for how much students know about the library before I present them with information. Being able to gauge students' library awareness with the game allows me to better pace my presentation and emphasize information that students are not familiar with. The game has also served to reveal gaps in knowledge and other problem areas that students might not be comfortable asking about in a more traditional bibliographic instruction session where I lecture and then field voluntary questions. In several classes, the game has exposed a student tendency to think of database searching and internet searching as the same thing. Being aware of details like this helps to shape how I present the material following the game so that students develop a better understanding of when to use databases, when to use the Internet, and what types of material can be found with each search tool.

Conclusion

I have had a lot of success incorporating games and active learning strategies into my bibliographic informational sessions. By doing so I have gone from having students leave my informational sessions to having students actively participate in my Jeopardy game about databases and on-line search skill building. Regardless of the discipline that you teach, active learning strategies, like game-based instructional sessions, can be integrated into your courses to engage your students.

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