



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE LIBRARY

Going to the Library

Two librarians approached two sociologists at North Harris College with a concern and a proposition—they regretted that students did not know about the library, and they wanted to join faculty in teaching students about library research. The librarians suggested that students would benefit from an introduction to the library at the beginning of their college experience. We teachers jumped for joy at the idea. We agreed that students would benefit greatly from an introduction to the library and opportunities to develop their research skills.

Attending to Research Skills

Many of our students have had little or no experience in conducting research and scientific analysis, and so we welcomed the opportunity to include library research instruction in our classes. Having students involved in activities that would encourage development of these information literacy skills could make a positive difference in our students' academic lives.

Explore Databases

We took the students to the library, and the librarians covered the relevant material: (1) distinguishing between a scholarly journal and a popular magazine, (2) explaining how to distinguish an editorial from a scientific study, (3) informing students about where and how to look for authorship in order to determine credibility of authors, and (4) explaining how students could tell if an article was juried or not. After the presentations, we walked students through the steps of getting into the library's online resources and introduced them to several databases. With the combined guidance of instructors and librarians, students looked for appropriate scientific journal articles with which to complete their assignment.

The Assignment

Find and read an article from a professional journal dealing with sociology. Journals available in the NHC Library include: *American Journal of Sociology*, *American Sociological Review*, *Current Sociology*, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *Journal of Social Issues*, *Journal of Social Psychology*, *Social Forces*, or *Social Research*. The article must have been published in 2002 or 2003. Current issues, only, are acceptable. Select an article that interests you from one of these journals (or from another sociology journal). Be careful to select a research report (not a case study), descriptive project, or theoretical discussion. If you have a question concerning the type of article, talk with your instructor. Complete a synopsis of the article, following the outline provided below. Each of the items is worth 1.5 points. You must submit a copy of the article with your paper.

1. Source: From what journal is the article taken? Who is the author? Use proper bibliographical form.
2. Problem: What is the problem or issue being studied in this article?
3. Hypothesis: What hypothesis is being tested? What are the independent and dependent variables? State the hypothesis in an "If...then..." format. There may be more than one hypothesis.
4. Research design: What research design is being used? Support your answer.
5. Time frame: What time frame is being used? Explain your answer.
6. Operational definitions: What operational definitions are used to define the research variables?
7. Sample: What kind of sample is used? Random? Nonrandom? Why? Who or what is the sample?
8. Findings: What are the findings of the study?
9. Conclusions: What conclusions did the author draw?
10. Ethical questions: What ethical questions are or should have been addressed?
11. Copy: A copy of the article must be attached to your paper. Your paper WILL NOT be graded unless the article is attached.



Team Effort Pays Off

Everyone benefited! Although the librarians made more work for themselves, they felt that their intervention benefited students, and they plan to reach out to other disciplines. The instructors benefited because students became more knowledgeable about scientific studies, developed skills in researching the literature, and improved their grades on assignments.

The big winners, however, were the students. For some, this was their first trip to the library. Students were introduced to the physical location of the library, the reference desk, and the computer labs. After their visit to the library's computer lab, students walked away with the basic knowledge and skills needed to use databases. They gathered useful information with which to improve their library locating skills and competently search for both academic and personal-interest information. And, students learned to think critically about the information they found.

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We're back in the saddle again!

Suanne D. Roueche, Editor

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