Assessing the Authentic Learning Assessment Project

*Report for the Spring 2009 Authentic Assessment Project*

*Post to http://informationliteracywactc.pbwiki.com*

 *Due June 19, 2009*

The purpose of this report is to reflect on your learning and to create a repository of shared ideas and strategies for Washington state community and technical college libraries.

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| **Project Summary** (about 200 words) |
| The EdCC librarian collaborated with an English faculty member to develop Information Literacy based instruction and assignments and authentic assessment for two of her English 205 courses. We identified two competencies to focus on for this project: (1) Understanding the differences between articles from a journal and a magazine and how that impacts the type of information [ACRL IL Standard 1]; and (2) how to thoroughly evaluate their different sources and decided which to use based on that evaluation [ACRL Standard 3]. Both classes had two sessions in the library with the librarian and were given assignments to be completed in a few days (described in detail in the Assessment section).  |
| **Participants –** Who worked on this project? |
| Librarian: Meryl Geffner / Edmonds Community CollegeFaculty: Nancy Kennedy / English Class name(s) and approximate number of students involved: Two classes of English 205 / Research Writing. Each class had approximately 25-27 students. |
| **Learning Outcomes or Project Outcomes –** What did you want the students to be able to do? OR What did you intend to accomplish? |
| **Outcome 1:** Students should be able to differentiate between scholarly and popular periodical articles. **Outcome 2:** Students should be able to evaluate three sources –a book, web site and periodical article – to determine each source’s appropriateness as a resource for their research topic. |
| **Curriculum –** What did the students need to know? What content needed to be covered? |
| For **Outcome 1** the students needed to know: How to identify differences between the periodical types by looking at specific aspects of each.They needed to consider:* The author and their expertise/credentials
* The audience to who the article is directed
* The type of and amount of advertising
* The presence (or absence) of a bibliography or works cited list
* The level of language used in the article
* The purpose of the article
* The review policy, if any

For **Outcome 2,** the students needed to know:How to apply the following criteria when evaluating a source (book, article, web): * Author
* Accuracy
* Currency
* Scope
* Relevancy

How to apply the information they gathered about the source and draw conclusions about its usefulness for their research.  |
| **Pedagogy –** What were the setting and learning activities for the students to gain/develop these abilities? |
| **Outcome 1:**Instruction session in the library* Brief overview of all different resource types, with a focus on periodical articles.
* Activity: (approximately 10 minutes)

Students broke into small groups. Each group took 2-3 scholarly journals and 2-3 popular magazines, examined them and listed at least 5 ways the two types are different. * Meryl projected a chart on the screen with a list of 8 criteria (listed above) to consider when comparing the periodicals. The students volunteered what they learned about the two periodical types and the librarian plugged that information into the appropriate criteria on the chart (along with adding a few additional criteria not on the chart). The chart was linked to the students’ Blackboard class so they could refer to it while completing the take-home assignment.

**Outcome 2:**Instructional session in the library* Overview and discussion on need to evaluate resources.
* Activity:

Students selected one web site they had found on their topic and completed worksheet (approximately 15 minutes).* Three students presented their evaluations of their individual web sites by projecting their web sites on the screen, pointing out the pros and cons of the site.
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| **Assessment –** How did the students demonstrate the learning? What assessment did you design for students? (Attach any assessment tools you used) |
| **Outcome 1:** Assignment - Students were given an assignment at the end of the library session with two days to complete. They were asked to search ProQuest and AltPress Watch and locate one article from each on their topic. One article must be from an academic journal and the other from a popular periodical (Time, Newsweek, New York Times, etc.). They were then asked to write a paragraph comparing and contrasting the two articles, considering language, tone, author’s credentials and audience, as well as the type of information and articles found in the two databases. The assignment was intended to support the learning outcomes stated above and is included at the end of this report. **Outcome 2:**Assignment - Students were given an assignment at the end of the library session. They were asked to search the library catalog to locate a book and search a periodical database for an article (popular or scholarly). They had to evaluate each by answering questions as to specific criteria. Using examples from the information provided in the first part of the assignment, they wrote a paragraph explaining why (or why not) they considered the source to be a good one for their research. The assignment was designed to support the learning outcomes stated above; it is included at the end of this report. |
| **Criteria –** How did you (instructor and librarian) know the students had done this well? How did you judge/evaluate the performance? |
| **Outcome 1:** A rubric was designed but not used. The librarian assigned points from 1-3 and wrote comments on the assignment (which was returned to the students.)**Outcome 2:** Scoring rubric was used and is attached at the end of this report. |
| **Data –** What data did you collect? How did the students perform? Please include the data (even if you have to mail it to us) if at all possible.  |
| Nancy used Blackboard to generate scores for both assignments. They are attached to this report. We are in the process of evaluating the data. |
| **Best Practices –** What Best Practice would you pass on to other librarians or discipline faculty? |
| * Having the students engaged in hands-on activities and group work and then share their findings with the class encouraged student interaction and participation. It also provided us with some “on the spot” insight into what students did and did not understand in our two areas of focus. This was particularly clear in the in-session web evaluation where three students got up and presented their evaluations, explaining why they came to their conclusions about the web site, using the visuals of the web site to support and demonstrate their thinking.
* Having the activities and assignments directly contribute to, and support, aspects of research they had to do for their final papers made the sessions and assignments relevant and useful to the students. For example, the students had to write an annotated bibliography; the activity and assignment of having to evaluate a web site, book and article provided them with the tools and skills that they could directly apply to preparing their annotated bibliography.
* Having to consider what qualities are necessary for making a source useful to their research and then examine their sources based on those qualities required the students to use critical thinking skills and draw conclusions.
* Working together on this project gave Meryl (and by extension, the library session and the library) more legitimacy as a resource integral to the students’ research and not simply an add-on. [For a few weeks after the library sessions and the assignments, some students from the classes came to Meryl for help with problems they were having with their research.]
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| **Key learning –** What’s your observation or reflection on this project? What did you or the faculty member learn from this project? |
| While the take home assignments were both good learning activities, we felt there were some problems with their design. The students’ final products revealed that certain parts of the assignment were not clear to the students. A few examples:1. With the first assignment, there was no specific place on the assignment asking students to include each article’s title and/or periodical name. As a result, only one or two students (out of 50) included the titles which meant when Meryl graded the assignments, she had no idea if they actually found an article or not.
2. Along with finding two articles in the first assignment, we wanted them to use two different databases (ProQuest and Alt PressWatch) and think about how they might be different, in terms of the types of periodical in each. However, no one did this part of the assignment. In rereading it, we saw how unclear the wording was for that part of the assignment.
3. With the second assignment (Evaluating Sources), students were asked to first evaluate two sources using specific criteria listed on the assignment and then write a paragraph explaining why or why not the sources might be useful for their research. The assignment stated they should use examples from their sources based on the criteria from the chart. However, it should have been more specific, with language such as “**address at least three criteria”** rather than leaving it vague. The result was that some students only addressed one element (currency) in their paragraph which made for a not very thorough evaluation
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