The Embedded Librarian's Cookbook

edited by Kaijsa Calkins and Cassandra Kvenild

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Too Many Cooks in the Kitchen?
Improving Students’ Research Approach by Providing Them with the Necessary Tools

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NUTRITION INFORMATION
College level, any course where the goal is to have students dig deep into a specific topic that relates to the overall subject matter of the course

In order to have students fully understand the expectations of a comprehensive literature review assignment—subsequently teaching them the rigors, process and content of scholarly communication—it is essential that they see examples and models of what to include and what not to include in an annotated bibliography. It is also helpful that students engage in the process of determining the criteria upon which their annotated bibliographies would be assessed. Through both means (seeing examples of past work and determining assessment criteria), students enter into the project with a clear idea of what makes up an outstanding literature review and more importantly (to them), what will give them the highest grade.

Students
- Evaluate prior (unnamed) annotated bibliographies ranging from lower (draft version) grades to the highest in order to recognize best practices
- Practice and perfect: accurate citation writing, searching comprehensively to identify the main scholars in the field, choosing to include scholarly over popular texts, justifying the selection of a popular article if appropriate to the overall body of research, making connections between scholars’ work, locating more resources based on bibliographies and cited by references.
- Develop an assessment rubric (upon which their work would be based) in order to prepare themselves for the expectations of the annotated bibliography assignment.
- Use Google Docs to document the rubric and additional notes (simultaneously in-class) in order to refer back to the expectations as annotated bibliographies were completed.

Instructors
- Become consistent and systematic in their joint grading of the draft and final versions of each small group’s annotated bibliography.
- Collaborate and reaffirm key names, topics and texts related to a small group’s given subject.
- Learn from each other about new approaches and tools for research topics in the field.

SERVES
No more than 30 students and they should be divided into small working groups. Ten group bibliographies to assess, staggered throughout the semester, is manageable

COOKING TIME
Class session: 50–75 minutes
Full project with grading/commenting on draft and final bibliography versions: 1 semester

INGREDIENTS AND EQUIPMENT
- One professor willing to collaborate with an instruction librarian
- One librarian willing to teach at least one research session
- The same librarian who is willing to provide detailed feedback on each annotated bibliography and negotiate grades with the collaborating professor
- A computer classroom and/or student laptops
- Proficiency in using Google Docs in the classroom
Examples of past student bibliographies to demonstrate varying levels of quality/scholarly comprehensiveness.

**PREPARATION**
1. The professor clearly defines his/her objectives for a one-time research session. Should it be based on search skills, variety of library databases appropriate to the given topics, citation writing, or quality issues when researching and writing annotations?
2. The librarian gathers examples of low, mid and high level output of prior bibliography assignments.
3. The librarian coordinates groups within the library classroom (based on classroom layout and potential groupings) to work on various aspects of the class rubrics.
4. The librarian sets up the framework in Google Docs for a series of rubrics to be completed by students.
5. The librarian identifies potential databases and search strategies that could be useful to highlight during the course of the research session.

**COOKING METHOD**

Some background to this developing method

Students of an anthropology course are assigned (in small groups) a broad and reasonably well-known topic germane to North American archaeology and asked to comb the professional literature to develop a comprehensive annotated bibliography to accompany a 20-minute illustrated in-class presentation. There is a draft and final version of the bibliography which allows the students to learn from the gaps in information they may be missing from version 1 to 2. Through the process of librarian feedback, corrections and suggestions, along with collaborative grading between librarian and professor, students learn the art of scholarly research without expending too much of the professor’s class time beyond a 50-minute lesson early in the semester.

The first time the librarian offered a scholarly research session (two sessions in Fall 2010), she focused on skills to lead students to the appropriate databases and employ useful search strategies. The second time, she was specifically asked to skip the lesson on searching and focus more heavily on what it takes to create a comprehensive annotated bibliography. In the professor’s (paraphrased) words, “students can find the material, but you can help them make sure they understand the concept of a comprehensive annotated bibliography.”

Spring 2012’s scholarly research lesson consisted of the following activities:

**In-class, library session**
1. Student evaluation of prior (unnamed) annotated bibliographies ranging from lower (draft version) grades to the highest
2. Students developed a list of best practices of what to include, what to avoid and how to organize and connect within the bibliographic entries

» Student development of an assessment rubric upon which their draft and final grades for the annotated bibliography would be based

» Student use of Google Docs to document notes simultaneously (in-class) that they could refer back to as their annotated bibliographies were due

**After library session**

» The librarian looked at each draft annotated bibliography on their scheduled due dates, adding corrections to citation format, searching broadly for the given topic to help identify missing gaps in key resources/authors, skimming bibliographies of the sources included in the students’ work to identify key resources/authors, reading annotations to verify (where appropriate) that connections were made from one scholar’s work to another, suggesting additional databases and search methods to employ to complete the final version of the bibliography.

» The librarian would consult the student-developed rubric, highlighting the blocks of the rubric where students’ work fell and suggested a grade to the collaborating professor.

» Professor and librarian agreed on a grade with additional notes of suggestion for the student group and the librarian forwarded the comments, grade and attached the highlighted rubric along with marked-up version (with librarian feedback) of the bibliography.
1. Amuse Bouche

The student-developed rubric-assisted librarian and professor in being consistent and systematic in their joint grading of the draft and final versions of each small group's annotated bibliography.

Student groups considered the librarian feedback, made the appropriate changes and turned in their final version (along with a formal presentation to the class).

ALLERGY WARNING
We have found that student groups receiving a high grade on their draft version of the bibliography may be inclined to ignore the librarian's suggestions and feedback and simply turn in the draft version as their final version, whereby doubling that high grade (where draft version grade is added to final version grade).

Detailed feedback and grading on the annotated bibliographies is time-consuming but gratifying work. Schedule your time accordingly and find ways to "work smart" (e.g., group students into manageable sizes so the collaborating faculty aren't looking through more than 10 bibliographies per semester, space the submission dates for each small group even throughout the semester, don't require students to submit 20+ resources for the bibliography).

Resist the temptation to fix all the students' mistakes. Remember that a librarian's feedback is meant to guide the students' work to a more improved and higher quality state. In order to become lifelong learners, students need to see where corrections and resource additions need to be made along with simple explanations. They need to go through the process of making the corrections and/or seeking additional information. If a mistake is being made repeatedly, add "see" references to save yourself some time.

CHEFS' NOTE
As a second run of this collaborative annotated bibliography assignment, we have seen much improvement in the students' quality of scholarly work. With this more recent iteration, overall group grades have clustered in the high-mid to high level range of the possible 50 points (for each bibliography version—draft and final). In the first trial, before assigning the student-directed rubric activity, grades were widely scattered from low-mid to high level range. Consensus on assigning grades between the librarian and professor has become much smoother with the rubric implementation and students are meeting the expectations that they developed within that Google Doc rubric.

With respect to our first cautionary tale above, in our third iteration of this collaborative project, we plan to require students to make the necessary changes from draft to final version if they are to receive a higher final grade. Another possible addition is to strongly encourage students to arrange for a one-on-one research consultation so many of the gaps needing to be filled can be discussed in person before the draft version of the bibliography is due.

One last possible adjustment, tackling cautionary tale #2, is to develop a method of bibliography peer-review so that students are learning the essential components of a comprehensive literature review in a multitude of ways:

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**FIGURE 1. Statistics illustrating students’ improvement in work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Range</th>
<th>Grade Count</th>
<th>Grade Count</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>3 student bibliographies</td>
<td>35-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-43</td>
<td>1 student bibliography</td>
<td>40-43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44-47</td>
<td>6 student bibliographies</td>
<td>44-47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48-50</td>
<td>0 student bibliographies</td>
<td>48-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-54</td>
<td>= 1 student bibliography (52)</td>
<td>51-54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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• Through examples of varying quality during the scheduled research session
• Through the collaborative development of a grading rubric (in class and later posted on the course site)
• Through the review of a preceding group’s annotated bibliography
• Through meeting with a librarian one-on-one
• Through completion of their own annotated bibliography—one as a draft, followed by librarian feedback to help them perfect the final version.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES