Honors 101 Teaching Guide  
Fall 2017

The class activities in this teaching guide are designed to prepare students for the Honors 101 library assignment, which asks them to explore various information platforms and find three sources (a peer-reviewed article, a book, and an additional source) related to some aspect of their course theme. Materials are available at: http://library.louisville.edu/ekstrom/honors101 (library assignment and “Westersource” worksheet). Padlet may also be useful.

Introduction (5 minutes)
Introduce yourself and explain to students that the session will focus on the skills and resources they will need to complete the Honors 101 library assignment. Professors are expected to introduce the assignment ahead of the session, but sometimes this doesn’t happen. Be prepared to go over the assignment (briefly). During the introduction, be sure to provide session goals or learning outcomes. You can use the same outcomes listed on the assignment.

- Distinguish among common types of information sources and begin to identify appropriate criteria to evaluate their credibility and relevance.
- Explain the role of library research tools within the larger information ecosystem.
- Conduct basic searches in WorldCat Discovery and EBSCO Academic to identify credible academic sources on a particular topic.

Developing a Research Strategy (10 minutes)
This part of the session focuses on developing a research strategy, based on a particular topic or question. Provide the students with an example research question related to the course theme, such as:

**Theme: Social Justice**

**Question: How has Black Lives Matter been influenced by previous protest movements?**

Ask the students to consider ways the question might be narrowed, noting that research questions often narrow or evolve over the course of a research project. As a class, develop a list of keywords and subject areas that might be relevant to the question. If you wish, you can use Padlet to track student responses.

Explain that research is sometimes interdisciplinary and that thinking about subject areas can help us figure out which databases to choose. Throughout the discussion, emphasize that research is an inquiry-driven process of strategic exploration and that research questions and keywords provide a sense of direction and options as you begin searching for sources.

Exploring the Information Ecosystem (15 minutes)
Pass out the “Westersource” worksheet and explain that it’s our nerdy way of representing the information ecosystem, the complex world of information that surrounds us in our daily lives. As researchers, we have access to many different kinds of information, including scholarly articles,
news, Wikipedia, books, government websites, social media, and more. These sources are created under different conditions and reflect a wide variety of interests and points of view.

Using some of the keywords generated from the previous exercise, bring up a list of Google search results. Point out some of the source types on the Google list that are also listed on the worksheet (e.g., news, Wikipedia, etc.). Work with students to generate some additional types of information sources that aren’t listed on the worksheet but that might show up on Google (e.g., blogs, non-profit websites, company websites, online magazines, etc.). The students can list these additional sources under “Here Be Dragons” at the bottom of the worksheet.

Divide the students into small groups. Each group should now spend approximately 10 minutes filling in responses on the worksheet. The goal is to have them think through how each type of information might be useful for a research project (on the example research question from the previous exercise) and how reliable the information might be (and why). For instance, articles from news websites might provide updates and opinions on current Black Lives Matter activities; Wikipedia might provide a general history of the movement; and scholarly articles might provide in-depth analysis and research studies focusing on the influence or impact of the movement.

Spend a few minutes going over the students’ responses, focusing in particular on the issue of reliability. Stress that credibility is a sliding scale and that we have to be critical consumers of all information sources. You should also discuss how the different types of sources are reviewed prior to publication (peer review, editorial review, etc.). Be sure to emphasize that the quality of evidence provided in a source (which can be difficult to evaluate at first glance) is of central importance. The goal is to show students that all types of information can be useful, depending on context, but that we need to understand how sources are put together in order to use them appropriately. Google makes this challenging because it’s not always obvious what type of source you’re looking at.

Exploring Information Platforms (20 minutes)
Briefly discuss Google as a particularly popular information platform. Google is a for-profit company and search results do not necessarily reflect the best or most credible or most comprehensive information available. Google doesn’t produce the content being searched but profits from it through advertising. Popularity, search engine optimization, and personalized searching can influence how results are displayed.

Explain that some information is missing from a typical Google search. For example, scholarly information is very expensive, and even Google Scholar cannot provide free access to most scholarship. This is why researchers need to be aware of the library as a specialized scholarly information platform. We have scholarly journals, books, and other types of traditional publications, such as news and magazine articles. We also have archival and primary source materials, including our Digital Collections (oral histories, images, Louisville Leader, etc.).

Introduce the University Libraries homepage, including the library catalog, subject guides, and EBSCO Academic. When discussing the subject guides, you can refer back to the subjects that were mentioned in relation to the research question in the earlier exercise.
The last part of the session should be spent allowing the students to familiarize themselves with the library’s resources. You might ask each group to find one book or article, using the keywords from the earlier exercise. By the end of the session, students should have a good sense of where to go to find the sources they need for the library assignment, as well as how to search for books and articles. It’s not expected that they will have a comprehensive understanding of everything, so encourage them to schedule a research appointment and make use of Research DIY.

Try to leave a few minutes at the end for questions and the post-session reflection form. Summarize by reminding students that the library assignment will ask them to go through many of the same steps covered during the session: developing a research topic and keywords; exploring sources across several information platforms; and identifying three different sources related to their chosen topic.