

Increasing Student Engagement: Wikis and Collaborative Learning in the Library Workshop

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Workshop Wiki: www.carlicollaborate2009.pbwiki.com

The benefits of collaborative learning are well documented, including:

- Increased student engagement
- Improved critical thinking skills
- Enhanced information retention
- Better comprehension

To increase the benefits of group learning, we turned to wikis as a shared workspace where students could work collectively on an assignment that assesses information literacy.

Background: Crown Librarians adopt wikis in Library Instruction

- Dominican University embedded an **Information Literacy Foundation Requirement (ILFR)** into English 102, the second semester freshmen composition course in fall, 2004.
- Librarians are paired with an English 102 section and provide at least 2 sessions (often more) covering basic information literacy concepts such as locating, searching, evaluating and using information.
- An **Annotated Bibliography assignment** was added as an assessment piece for the ILFR several years ago (Fall 2005). Librarians spend time during the IL sessions preparing students for the Annotated Bibliography assignment.
- Both the English 102 instructor and the librarian assess the assignment.
- So, we wanted to create an opportunity for practice ... which led to exploring collaborative learning practices.

The Assignment

Students are assigned to work in groups to assess a resource such as a scholarly article or website by applying the CRAP test. Since a wiki page can be edited by only one user at a time, group members choose a student to act as a scribe whose task is to enter the annotation into the wiki. Once the annotations are completed, a discussion of the students' work can take place.

The CRAP test

In fall, 2007, Librarians began using wikis as work spaces for student group learning. One component of the Annotated Bibliography is to assess the usefulness of resources by applying evaluative criteria. Molly Beestrup created a most memorable acronym, the **CRAP test**, for students to use in evaluating resources.

Currency -

- How recent is the information?
- How recently has the website been updated?
- Is it current enough for your topic?

Reliability -

- What kind of information is included in the resource?
- Is content of the resource primarily opinion? Is it balanced?
- Does the creator provide references or sources for data or quotations?

Authority -

- Who is the creator or author?
- What are the credentials?
- Who is the publisher or sponsor?
- Are they reputable?
- What is the publisher's interest (if any) in this information?
- Are there advertisements on the website?

Purpose/Point of View -

- Is this fact or opinion?
- Is it biased?
- Is the creator/author trying to sell you something?

The Outcome

Student, faculty and librarian responses to using wikis have been favorable. Since implementing wikis as collaborative work spaces, the overall quality of assignments submitted by students has improved. Student engagement in library workshops has increased.