

2015 CARLI Instruction Showcase

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Topic: Develop an initial research question (50 minutes)

Objectives:

- Identify factual information through the lens of the 4 Ws (who? what? when? and where?)
- Examine factual information in order to construct an initial research question that allows for academic discussion

Materials:

- LibGuide
- Fact gathering handout (1 per student)
- Index cards (1 per student)
- Sample of print books/encyclopedias relating to student topics

Activities:

Prelesson: Retrieve a sample of print sources relevant to student topics and have on hand for the library session. Books can be on a cart or dispersed across the table tops. Distribute one handout and one index card to each seat where students will be working.

(5 minutes) Free write

- Project or write the following prompts on a board. Have students choose at least one of the prompts to respond to in an independent free write.
 - What do you already know about your topic? What do you want to know / need to know in order to write a paper?
 - What is your opinion on your chosen topic? What other opinions might one have?

(5 minutes) Peer share

- In pairs, have students share their free write. Encourage partners to share different perspectives that others might have for the chosen topic(s).

(5 minutes) Research question discussion

- Acknowledge that most everyone has a topic in mind for their research assignment but that the topics need to be transformed into a question that can be researched.
- Ask students how they usually write a research question. *Most responses mention the use of the 5 Ws (who? what? when? where? and why?).*
- Explain that **Who? What? When? Where?** are **factual** questions whose answers, for the most part, are not debatable. Everyone generally agrees with the responses to these questions. Use these questions to gather information about your topic, and then ask yourself a why? or how? question. **Why? And How?** questions are **interesting and lead to discussions**.
- Example: Ask student to think about the events in Ferguson, Missouri last summer. Ask:
 - **Who** was involved?
 - **What** happened?
 - **When** did it happen?

- **Where** did it happen?
- **Why** did it happen?
- **How** did it happen?

Most students will give similar answers for the first four questions. Responses to why? and how? may be varied. Explain that the variety of student responses to the why? and how? questions illustrates the differing viewpoints that contribute to a given topic. Remind students that it is this "conversation" that faculty want students to engage in and demonstrate in writing.

(20 minutes) In-class demonstration/independent work time

- Show students the "browse topics" tab on the LibGuide and explain that the listed print and electronic books reflect the topics that were submitted to their professor prior to the library session.
- Have students choose one of the sources that relates to their topic and begin browsing it to identify the Who? What? When? and Where? for their topic. Have students record their facts on the handout provided.

(15 minutes) Creating a Research Question

- Have students review the factual information collected on their handout and create an initial how? or why? question.
- Ask for two or three volunteers to share their initial questions with the class.
- Type questions into a word document projected on a screen or write questions on a board
- As a class, evaluate student questions using the questions given on pages 38 and 39 of Kate Turabian's *Student's Guide to Writing College Papers*, 4th ed.:
 - Can it be answered too easily?
 - Could the answer be disproved?
 - Is there factual evidence to support the answer?
 - Are there too many sources that you couldn't look at most of them?
- Have students revise their research question using the guideline given above.

(1 minute) Exit Card

- Have students write their revised question on the index card provided and submit to the librarian or professor before leaving class.

Assessment:

- Students have started to gather factual information and document it in their fact gathering handout
- Students have made an attempt to create an initial research question using the gathered factual information and documenting it on their index card.

References:

Turabian, K. L., Colomb, G. G., & Williams, J. M. (2010). *Student's guide to writing college papers* (4th ed.). Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press.

Use the print or electronic resources provided on your course libguide to identify factual information for your topic. Record your information in the appropriate space below. Answer why and how after you have gathered sufficient information to form an initial research question.

TOPIC: _____

WHO?	
WHAT?	
WHEN?	
WHERE?	
WHY?	
HOW?	