

Innovating Approaches to Teaching Information Literacy: Business Research Instruction 2.0

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Abstract

The knowledge economy has dramatically changed the ways in which businesses access, use and benefit from information. While business information consumers are focused upon turning data into knowledge, there is a demonstrable gap in terms of what that means and, more importantly, how it is actually achieved. Business information literacy instruction represents an opportunity for librarians to demonstrate their value and expertise by going beyond the typical “find it” approach to one that is more centered upon how to analyze, apply and use information for decision-making and task execution. Whether for strategic planning, investing, due diligence or risk assessment, business information, independent of these critical functions, has no value. Similarly, librarians who separate the information from the execution of such tasks are severely limiting their perceived value to both individuals and institutions. Whether a seasoned subject specialist in business or a non-business librarian seeking to re-think the way in which she approaches information literacy instruction, or someone who simply wishes to learn more about business resources, this session will help attendees develop a keener sense of how students conduct research as well as demonstrate how librarians can engage them not only in finding relevant information but also in actually applying and understanding it. Using business resources and materials as examples, the presenters will encourage instructional librarians to move away from older models of information literacy instruction that center upon identifying relevant and appropriate information needs to also include steps in the analysis, interpretation, synthesis and application of information.

Introduction

Premised upon the notion that the best learning takes place when there is active engagement and “doing,” this pre-conference session examined the ways in which business students approach information literacy. Over the course of four hours attendees were exposed to active learning exercises and environments that fostered business student engagement as they were challenged to re-think their role as business librarians. Specifically, the presenters sought to convey the important role of information literacy in business instruction along with strategies for encouraging students, as business information consumers, to evaluate and consider information in ways intended to provoke improved analysis and interpretation of such complex information sources as company financials and industry reports.

The session began with introductions and the creation of groups or teams. Because working as a team is a widely-used learning model in business schools, it seemed appropriate to require attendees to

engage both as individuals as well as members of teams. It is worth noting that up to a third of the attendees were graduate students in information science, and they expressed a particular interest in a future in business librarianship. Other attendees included business librarians as well as those who work in environments where business information competency is expected.

After introductions and establishing the teams, business information basics were covered in an active learning way through the use of a customized *Jeopardy!* game. Participants were told how they could use the site <http://www.superteachertools.com/jeopardy/> to create their own games on topics relevant to their instruction. The game used in the pre-conference session included the following topics:

- Financial statement analysis
- Business databases
- Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) filings
- Common acronyms and concepts
- Adding value

The questions on adding value required attendees to think of librarianship as an exercise in creating value for the environment in which they function by conveying to students the direct benefits of consulting with a librarian and using library resources.

Following the *Jeopardy!* game there was a brief break before a discussion of confirmation bias and attributional error. The concepts were defined and discussed with acknowledgment that they represent significant cognitive barriers to effective research. Due to the overabundance of information available, business students frequently look at the research or information gathering processes as one of merely finding materials that confirm preconceived biases. Word choice and topic articulation thus becomes an exercise in confirming what it is the researcher wishes to say in a paper or assignment. As a result, the student researcher typically approaches research with blinders on that do not allow intellectual exploration or challenging of their preconceptions. The confirmation bias exercise used in the session was an actual in-class exercise used by the facilitators in their own classrooms as a means of getting students to understand confirmation bias (http://www.devpsy.org/teaching/method/confirmation_bias.html).

The pre-conference then moved on to the discussion of information literacy and student perceptions of value. One of the presenters (who, in addition to being a business librarian as well as an adjunct professor of marketing, also worked for many years as a marketing manager) shared his marketing management experience in the information industry by way of underscoring the importance of creating value by meeting customer needs. A short discussion of value as predicated upon combining features with benefits that meet needs led into an overview of how information marketers use this strategy to engage student customers in professional schools. There was a call to adapt this process to information literacy instruction for business school undergraduates so that they might better understand the competitive nature of the information sources and choices available to them, as well. A group exercise was undertaken in terms of developing an information literacy value proposition that could be shared with students during instruction as a means of conveying the importance of library instruction and its role in students' academic and professional success.

After another short break, the pre-conference concluded with a best practices sharing session. Attendees were challenged to move beyond the herd mentality that typically invades best practice sharing by thinking about the scalability, replicability and the specific benefits of the best practices they chose to share with the group. Specifically, the teams were asked to discuss and come up with one High Impact Tactic Share (HITS.) High impact tactics were defined as those that solve a problem or produce a desired result.

The pre-conference then wrapped up with a brief discussion of next steps and ways in which academic business librarians in California could develop into a community of collaborators.

Summary of Pre-Conference Program Topics

Agenda

- Introductions and Overview
- Business Information & Sources
 - Active Learning Exercise: Business Jeopardy
- Minimizing Confirmation Bias
 - Active Learning Exercise: Confirmation Bias Exercise
- Business Information Literacy Instruction: A Value-based Approach
- HITS (High Impact Tactics Sharing)
- Close and momentum for next steps

Introductions

- Who are you?
- What do you do?
- Why are you here?
- What's your business knowledge base?

Business Information Overview

- *Jeopardy!*

Confirmation Bias

- Confirmation Bias (along with Attributional Error) derails much meaningful academic research
- Student researchers are highly influenced by these
- Examples?

Minimizing Confirmation Bias

- Awareness
- Looking at Google as a search engine v. keyword ones
- Exercises

Confirmation Bias Awareness Exercise

Developing an IL Value Statement for Business Students

The next hour...

- What is value?
- How is value articulated?
- Who are our students?
- Why convey the value of IL?
- How do we convey the value of IL them?

Value Creation

- Features by themselves are meaningless
- They need to provide specific benefits
- When benefits are further connected to needs, we get value because the benefit becomes valuable

Communicating Value

- Hypothetical value
- Tested value
- Value Propositions
- Value Statements

What might this look like?

- Marketing online to law students in the 90's
- Internet came along
- How does an online provider differentiate?
- Product story and value proposition

Product Story

- Developed after intense research
- Uncovered student needs, priorities and what was of value to them
- Placed the product (online information) at appropriate times in the user experience where needs could be satisfied (value creation)

Key points uncovered

- Students cared about jobs and grades
- They didn't want to be told, they wanted to be guided to the right answer from available information
- Priority was authoritative information that could be relied upon
- Narrowing results was the most important functional ability

Not all needs were created equal

- Temporal (lasted a short time or popped up at a certain moment)
- Value developed along a continuum
 - Familiarity
 - Acquiring Expertise
 - Mastery
- Always subjected to Moments of Truth (Defined as disruptions in value creation)

The value proposition?

- Relevant without wasting time
- Easy to use interface that helps you find the right, authoritative answer so that you can succeed as a student and practitioner

How was it used?

- In handouts
- Webpages
- Tutorials
- Consultations
- Instruction

How does this improve IL instruction?

- “Sell” against bad habits (lessen impact of Google/confirmation bias, lack of citation, use of non-credible sources)
- Get students to buy into the value of library resources and instruction
- All value propositions answer the question: “Why should I care about _____?”

Can this be applied to business students?

- Workshop on developing a value proposition for business students
- Must consider their attributes including needs, priorities and goals
- What Information Literacy represents as an offering in line with the above
- Communicating the intersection of IL and features/needs/benefits/value

HITS: High Impact Tactic Share

Moving away from best practices...let the herd go its own way!

Innovative Teaching Tactics that Make a Difference

- High Impact (based upon evidence of some kind!)
 - Produces a desired outcome or
 - Solves a known problem
- Reproducible
- Translatable

Group Discussions

- What do you do that makes a difference in your instruction?
- What is it you do?
- How do you do it?
- What does it produce/fix?
- Can it be reproduced?

Share a HIT

- Is it truly a HIT?
 - Can it be used?
 - Can it be improved?
 - What will it produce/problem will it solve?
- Who will commit to using it?

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Confirmation Bias Exercise [*Handout*]

What's the rule?

I have a rule in mind that can be used to make a sequence of 3 numbers. The object of this exercise is to see if you can test my rule to come up with a definition of it. Your goal is to basically figure out the rule.

To determine the rule, you can write a sequence of three numbers in the "sequence" column. I will walk around the room putting either a + or a - in the "fits my rule?" column. A + means the sequence you created *does* fit the rule and a - means the sequence *does not* fit the rule. After I write a + or - for you, you should guess the rule. Then estimate how sure you are of your guess by writing a percent (from 100% for completely sure and 0% for completely unsure) in the "How Sure?" column. Now make up another sequence and start the process over again by writing it in the "sequence" column. I will keep walking around the room writing "+" or "-" until most of you are confident that they know the rule.

Sequence	Fits My Rule?	Guess My Rule	How Sure?

Information Literacy Value Proposition for Business Students [Handout]

Attributes of business students:

Type of Students	Words that describe them	Their Wants/Needs	Their Priorities
Beginning Students			
Advanced Students			
Soon to be Graduates			

Information Literacy Feature and Benefit Analysis for Business Students

Features	Benefits

Value Statements based upon features/benefits/needs:

- 1. _____

- 2. _____

3. _____

Overall Value Proposition:

Moments of Truth?

Typical/Predictable MOT's	Information Literacy/Library Related or Controllable? (Y or N)	If Yes, Information Literacy or Librarian Action to Minimize

HITS: High Impact Tactic Share [*Handout*]

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 - a. Produces a desired outcome or
 - b. Solves a known problem
2. Reproducible
3. Translatable

Group Discussions

1. What do you do that makes a difference in your instruction?
2. What is it you do?
3. How do you do it?
4. What does it produce/fix?
5. Can it be reproduced?

Share a HIT

1. Is it truly a HIT?
 - a. Can it be used?
 - b. Can it be improved?
 - c. What will it produce/problem will it solve?
2. Who will commit to using it?

Next steps?

1. Mechanisms for sharing post-conference?
2. Keep the conversation going?