



# GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL LIBRARY ASSIGNMENTS

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This page gives suggestions for research assignments that require the use of the Mortvedt Library collection and services. Course-related library assignments are an effective way to introduce students to library resources and research in general.

## ASSUME MINIMAL LIBRARY KNOWLEDGE

- Students may think, “Everything is on the Internet”. They also may not recognize the differences between free websites and the resources the library subscribes to (such as databases).
- Research journals will also be new to many lower division students whose experience with periodicals may be limited to *Time* and *Newsweek*
- While many students are familiar with using a library catalog for searching authors and titles, few will understand the intricacies of subject terminology or know how to use indexing and abstracting tools.

## EXPLAIN THE ASSIGNMENT COMPLETELY

- Design your assignment so that students are asked to find information and use it in a meaningful way. Applying information and constructing meaning, not just retrieving facts, will mean more to students in the long run.
- Work through the assignment yourself to ensure that the materials are in the Library's collection
- Be sure that each resource listed has the **complete & correct** name of the item. Students working from incomplete or incorrect resource lists will become frustrated and they will assume, incorrectly, that the Library does not have the information they need.
- Specific requirements as to what resources should be used (ex: two books and three articles, at least 10 peer-reviewed journal articles, two primary sources and two secondary review articles) help direct students' research.

- Give reference librarians a copy of the assignment.  
(<http://www.plu.edu/~libr/get-help/assignment-alert.html>)

## **AVOID ASSIGNING MANY STUDENTS TO LIMITED RESOURCES**

- Put circulating materials on reserve to assure access. For best results, get reserve items to Janet Allan at X7175 before the semester starts.
- Alert librarians if many students will need the lone copy of a reference book.
- Be aware that most materials circulate and may be checked out for a month at a time.

## **AVOID OBSCURE FACTUAL QUESTIONS**

- Library scavenger hunt, or treasure hunt, unless focused on the research process and the use of the information found, tend to encourage students to seek factoids rather than learn valuable research skills.
- When many students search for one answer, library materials may be damaged--the answer circled, the page torn out, the book hidden, etc.

## **TEACH RESEARCH STRATEGY WHERE APPROPRIATE**

- Research strategies often seem obvious to the experienced researcher, but are generally unknown to undergraduate students.
- Discussing these strategies with your students will help them understand that research is a complex and demanding process. The best library assignments are a collaborative effort between librarian and professor; assignments can be designed for the goals and objectives of the course utilizing the library's resources.
- Arrange to have a librarian teach research strategies and major resources in the discipline to your class. (<http://www.plu.edu/~libr/get-help/request-library.html>)
- Contact Gail Egbers at 535-8869 or email at [egbersgl@plu.edu](mailto:egbersgl@plu.edu) for more information.