



For Faculty

## CREATING EFFECTIVE LIBRARY ASSIGNMENTS

Well-designed course-related library assignments are an effective way to introduce students to library research. The following guidelines are meant to ensure students a positive library experience, and reinforce library use as a means of learning.

**1. Consult with a reference librarian before the assignment.**

Librarians will work with you to design an appropriate assignment that will achieve your course goals and objectives. Sending a copy to the Reference Librarian will ensure that the staff is ready to help your students when needed.

**2. Assume minimal library knowledge.**

Although many students will be familiar with using some library tools (e.g., dictionaries, thesauri), few really understand the intricacies of subject headings or periodical indexes/abstracts; most have never used research journals, but only Time, Newsweek, and the like.

**3. Explain the assignment clearly, preferably in writing.**

Give students a clear idea of what the assignment involves, suggesting types of sources to be used. Give complete citations for specific works.

**4. Always be sure the library holds, or has access to the needed information.**

There are few experiences more frustrating than looking for what does not exist, has been discarded, or has been checked out. Use the library's Reserve service for materials that many students need to use. Send an advance copy of the assignment and its due date to the Reference Librarian.

**5. Avoid the mob scene.**

Dozens of students using just one book, article or index, or looking for the same information usually leads to misplacement, loss, or mutilation of materials. Give students a variety of topics and sources. Use the Reserve service as needed; use photocopies of "classic" articles if you can conform to fair-use practice.

**6. Avoid scavenger hunts.**

Searching for obscure facts frustrates students, can cause chaos in the stacks, and teaches students nothing useful about research. If planning a library exercise, talk to the librarian about designing one appropriate to the class.

**7. Teach search strategy when appropriate.**

Include a list of steps involved in the research assigned. Invite a librarian to review strategies for the assignment with the class, and discuss appropriate tools or types of material.

With sufficient lead-time, librarians can provide instructional lectures, workshops and written materials geared specifically to your course and its assignments, as well as general orientations for more inexperienced students. PLEASE ASK US!