

Pathways potluck: They bring the questions, we bring the research!

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Abstract:

Our goal is to assist students in finding appropriate scholarly sources for their final research papers in an entry level (Pathways) course for the BA in Liberal Studies. We have been invited to work with this class to help students in the online Humanities program develop and hone their information literacy skills and become more familiar with library services and resources for distance students.

Keywords: embedded librarian | research | higher education

Book chapter:

NUTRITION INFORMATION

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SERVES

20-25 students in an online course.

COOKING TIME

Prep time: At start of each semester update the LibGuide and touching base with the professor.

INGREDIENTS AND EQUIPMENT

Your brain and a computer with an Internet connection!

PREPARATION

- Identify the entry level course for an online program with a research need.
- Meet with the professor to discuss the syllabus, goals, assignments, etc.
- Explain how librarians can help with research assignments.
- Get the professor to add the librarian(s) as course builders or TAs in the course shell in the learning management system and have professor encourage students to consult with librarians at the time of research paper assignment.
- Set up a LibGuide for the class to use that includes relevant library resources and databases as well as information about services for distance learners.
- Record a video greeting to students to help them personally connect with the librarian ("we are real people!"). Embed video in LibGuide and in Blackboard course.

COOKING METHOD

During course, push announcements to students at key times when assignments are due and periodically check on discussion boards or set up notifications. During research paper assignment, students will email librarian(s) once their professor has approved their research topic.

Jenny Dale <jedale2@uncg.edu>

to Alyson, Beth

Hi Alyson,

10/23/11



Thank you for getting in touch with us! It sounds like you've chosen a really interesting research topic.

I've done a bit of searching and here are a few tips I have for getting started:

1. Use the MLA International Bibliography. If you visit the BLS 301 Course Guide (library homepage - research guides by subject - Liberal Studies - BLS 301), there's a link to this database on the Research Paper tab. This is one of our main sources for literary research. I'd recommend pulling out the most important concepts in your search - probably Hard Times, structure, and biblical connection. I tried a search with Hard Times in the top search box and bibl* in the one below it. The little * serves as a truncation symbol. By doing bibl* instead of biblical, the database knows to search bible, biblical, and anything else that starts with that root.

2. One of the challenges of literature research is that there's often not an article or book out there that says exactly what you want it to say. You usually have to be creative and pull together sources that support your argument. In your case, for instance, you might find articles that deal with religious overtones in Hard Times rather than specific biblical connections. You can still build your argument by using those. You may also find works that deal with Dickens more broadly as a writer, and maybe don't focus strictly on Hard Times. Those could have good support for you, too.

3. The library catalog is another good place to check - you can do keyword searches there to find books or chapters in books. We have a good collection of literary criticism on 19th Century British Literature, and plenty of criticism and interpretation of Dickens' works.

I hope this helps you get started. Please let me know if you need me to clarify anything, and keep me posted about how I can help as you're working through your research. I'm always happy to help by email, phone, chat, or in person. Just let me know!

Thanks and best,
Jenny

Figure 1. Embedded librarian email to student

Create a template email response that can be tweaked for each student since most will start with the same handful of databases and copy each other on the email if more than one librarian is embedded. (See Figure 1.) Let the professor know which students have consulted with the librarians. At end of semester, reflect with professor and possibly review papers for assessment.



Figure 2. Embedded Librarians Guide

ALLERGY WARNINGS

It is critical to collaborate with faculty to ensure that there is a relevant and appropriate research project. This idea is best for the entry class for an online only degree program, otherwise it is not scalable to all courses due to the time involved. Consultations can take 15-30 minutes for each student, and sometimes more if they come back with more questions.

CHEFS' NOTE

At the end of each semester, it is important to reflect on how the embedded project worked. Each class is different, and some semesters are more successful than others. Active reflection and

periodic check-ins with the course instructor help ensure a successful embedded relationship between the librarian and the students in the course.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Course LibGuide available at <http://uncg.libguides.com/bls301>