LIB 5020 – Information Sources and Services
Appalachian State University

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Course Description

This course examines and evaluates the range of library reference materials and other information resources that support the information and recreational needs of the public library and school library media programs. Included are use of print, non-print, and electronic information storage and retrieval systems; citation and bibliographic formats; communications and human interaction techniques, including information seeking patterns; procedures in reference work, including the reference interview; reference services; evaluation of reference and information sources; and the educational and instructional role information media play in support of the adult learner and the modern school curriculum.

Methods of Teaching/Course Goals and Objectives

Using a base of professional literature, lecture, student presentations, library and computer laboratory CD-ROM and online database searching practice, field trips, class discussion, library reference desk observation, reference library interviews, simulation and role playing, and development and participation in hands-on library search activities, the student will begin to develop proficiency in reference services through the following activities:

1. Identification and evaluation of the sources most likely to contain specific types of reference information, location of information in reference sources, including electronic databases, effective use of indexes to reference sources, and analysis and evaluation of professional literature concerned with reference sources and services.

2. Discussion of the reference and information seeking process, including techniques for the reference interview and search strategy.

3. Definition of the responsibilities of reference functions and services within the context of public libraries and school library media centers.

4. Comparison and evaluation of information sources and review sources, considering such evaluative criteria such as scope, authority, and viewpoint.
5. Description of trends in bibliographic instruction, computer assisted reference services, evaluation of reference services and evaluation of research studies related to reference/information sources and services.
6. Demonstration of selected exercises to educate adult learners or library users, children, and teachers concerning the use of either a public or school library and other library information resources.
7. Conducting a simulation of a reference interview and observation of the professional reference process.
8. Preparation of a public or school library pathfinder for a topic and a library of the student’s own choice.
9. Examination and use of specific Internet reference resources such as lesson plans, NCDPI resources, NC Wise Owl, NC Live, Scholastic Network, etc.

The methodologies and strategies selected to create a rich and engaging learning environment for this course are done so with much care and thought, and are based on a significant body of research in the area of social constructivism. To better understand why we do what we do in this class, please review the Reich College of Education Conceptual Framework, an excellent primer on this theory and how it applies to teaching and learning here at Appalachian State University: <http://www.ced.appstate.edu/about/conceptualframework.aspx>.

Texts

Course Assignments

NOTE: All assignments must be completed at the time indicated. Assignments turned in late will have lesser points assigned than those turned in on time. All assignments must be word-processed unless noted otherwise. Sources should be properly cited when applicable according to the bibliographic citation method of the APA Manual (5th ed.). Save everything on a disk or your computer in case there is a discrepancy about work turned in.

1. Reference Librarian Interview
You will be required to interview a professional reference librarian and write up your observations to turn in. Please note that the write-up for this assignment should be in essay form (max 2 pages), not a simple question/answer format. Also, please note that you should interview a professional reference librarian (typically someone in a large public or academic library) for this assignment. Do not interview a school librarian, as actual reference work at a reference desk is generally a small part of what they do.
Following the interview, please share a summary of your reflections on the experience using the appropriate discussion board.

2. Reference Desk Observation
You will be required to observe at a busy reference desk for a minimum of 2 hours. Your final grade for this activity will be based on a short narrative describing the experience and in-class discussion of this experience. Please note that the write-up for this assignment should be in essay form (max 2 pages).

Note: You must observe in a busy public or academic library for this assignment. It is crucial that you carefully select your observation site because if the site is not busy, or you observe at a “down time,” you will have little, if anything, to write about in your final report. Poor choice of a setting will not be an acceptable excuse for a poor observation experience. Also, be sure you are observing professional reference librarians, not student assistants or library aides.

Following the observation, please share a summary of your reflections on the experience using the appropriate discussion board.

3. Resource Presentations
Reference librarians in both public and academic libraries find themselves providing instruction and doing online presentations to groups of patrons. This project will prepare students for this type of reference activity.

In pairs or small groups, students will teach the class to use one type of library reference resource. These 5-10 slide presentations should follow sound instructional and learning theory and should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Each group will consist of 2-3 students
- Each group will be assigned one type of reference source (i.e. Encyclopedias, dictionaries, geographical sources) to be presented on the date that resource is discussed in class and online.
  - Each group will play the role of reference librarians instructing their colleagues on the use of the reference tools.
  - Each group should provide the class audience with selection/evaluation criteria for the type of reference source being presented.
  - Exemplar resources (both print and electronic) should be selected to illustrate these criteria and may be brought to class to share with the other students
  - Groups should use PowerPoint or web pages to present their resources. Regardless of the tool selected, groups should use instructional strategies to actively engage the audience in the presentation.
These presentations will be made in class. Please allow 15-20 minutes per presentation.

Following the presentations of these resources, students are to share their reflections on the experience using the appropriate discussion board.

4. “Search and Discuss”
Students will participate in a development cycle creating “Search and Discuss” Guides related to specific types of reference sources. Pairs or small groups of students will develop 7 to 10 reference questions to be answered using the reference type(s) assigned for the resource presentations. Other students in the class will pilot test the questions by completing a reference guide. The reference guide will include the questions, answers to the questions, and source/process used to locate the answer. The pairs or small groups (“experts”) will lead a discussion on the completed reference guides comparing actual responses with intended responses. The questions and reference guide may then be revised based on the discussion. The development and testing of the Search and Discuss Guides will require extensive use of libraries. It will not be possible to complete the requirements for this course without this commitment. All guides will be provided in a MS Word format so the student can type directly on to the guide.

All Search and Discuss Guides should be brought to class on the due date for grading and discussion.

5. Pathfinder
Students will create a pathfinder on a topic related to the public library or a public school curriculum.

Note: A pathfinder for the purposes of this class is not a comprehensive bibliography on the topic chosen, but a guide to the literature on it in a particular library.

6. Attendance and Class Participation
Class participation includes in-class and online participation. Students are expected to contribute to class discussions and be engaged in class activities, regardless of the forum (in-class or online). It will be necessary to log on the course discussion and/or blog site AT LEAST TWO TIMES A WEEK to ensure minimum participation in online discussions.

Each student will be expected to attend and actively participate in all class sessions. Classes missed must be approved by the instructor ahead of time and will only be excused in extreme situations. Arrangements to make up missed work will be expected of each student. In some cases, absences may affect points given to some assignments.
Course Evaluation

Grades for the course will be determined on the basis of the following:
Reference Librarian Interview 5%
Reference Desk Observation 5%
Source/User Instruction Presentations 10%
“Search and Discuss” Guides 60%
Pathfinder 10%
Attendance and Class Participation 10%

100%

General Note

Please do not ask the reference librarian(s) to do the work for you. Such assistance will not help you increase your understanding of sources or the search process. However, if you cannot find something on the shelf where it is supposed to be, do not hesitate to ask someone for assistance.

Learning Needs and Accommodations

If you are a student with special needs of some kind, and feel that I should be aware of those, please let me know so we can work together to best meet them.

Academic Misconduct

Appalachian State University values academic honesty. It is expected that each student will submit original work. Where others' works and ideas are used, citations must be included. Please refer to ASU’s handbook on academic integrity for the official statement.