Information Literacy Stipend Report

Spring 2012

Course: CHS 112: Human Service Systems

Instructor: Mary L. Troy, MS, NCC, LPC

Library Faculty: Bonnie Strohl

COURSE INFORMATION

The course, CHS 112: Human Service Systems, examines the human service system and institutions that have evolved as a response to human need. It also examines the impact of social problems on individuals, families and society, as well as the effectiveness of the service system designed to alleviate such problems. As such, students need access to information from a wide variety of disciplines, not only to understand the material, but to succeed in their chosen careers.

NEED FOR INFORMATION LITERACY

Today's students often rely on the internet to do research. While the internet has a wealth of resources, it is difficult for students to know which sources are reliable and trustworthy. Students often don't understand the difference between Wikipedia (a user written source) and encyclopedias.

Students are also more likely to use a search engine (such as Google) to find information and utilize the top few links as valid sources, rather than dig deeper to find more accurate information. They may become stuck when their search only reveals a few sources. They often don't know how to come up with alternate terms to expand their search.

Due to the amount of sources available, it is often impossible for students to know what sources are available to them for research. Students often don't know which databases to use for their particular topic or field of study.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students in CHS 112 will learn the various databases available at the Weinberg Memorial Library and what resources are available in hard copy or online. (Standard 1)

2. Students in CHS 112 will learn how to develop and use a concept web or map to enhance their research skills. (Standard 2)

3. Students in CHS 112 will learn how to evaluate sources and information critically before citing it in their research. (Standard 3)

PROJECT ACTIVITIES:

1. All students were required to complete, as part of a group, a 20 minute oral presentation to the class at the end of the semester. This project examined a current social issue using a historical perspective. The time frame of the social issue had to span of a minimum of 75 years. Students compared definitions, attitudes and solutions pertaining to the issue over time. An outline of the presentation, a bibliography and a Works Cited page were due the day of the students' presentations.

2. Prior to the start of the Spring 2012 semester, Mary Troy and Bonnie Strohl, Associate Dean - Weinberg Memorial Library, collaborated on designing Pre and Post Assessments in relation to students' research skills. **The Pre-Assessment included the following questions:**

1. What would you look at to determine if an article is scholarly vs. popular?

2. If you can't find resources that meet your needs, how can you broaden your topic?

3. If you find too much information, how can you narrow your topic?

4. What could you use from a good article to find more information?

The Post-Assessment included the above questions, plus these addition four questions:

5. Were you able to find enough resources for your research?

6. What was the single most important thing you learned?

7. How will you apply what you learned to other classes?

8. What would you have like explained in more detail?

3. All students were required to set-up a RefWorks account prior to attending the Information Literacy classes.

4. To help facilitate their research, students spent two (2) 75 minute class periods, spaced four weeks apart, in the Weinberg Memorial Library classroom, with instruction by Bonnie Strohl. Students were administered a Pre-Assessment test regarding research skills prior to any instruction. Over the course of the two classes, students were taught the difference between scholarly and popular articles, the databases available in the Weinberg Memorial Library, how to choose databases relevant to their research, and how to generate a concept map or web. At the conclusion of the two classes, students were administered a Post-Assessment test regarding research skills.

5. Students were also required to meet with Bonnie Strohl, either individually or with their presentation group, for a minimum of one hour prior to their group presentation.

CONCLUSION:

1. In the Post-Assessment, students were able to clearly identify resources located in the Weinberg Memorial Library.

2. All students were able to demonstrate the capability to develop a concept map or web, as well as effectively use it.

3. Students' presentations were critiqued based on creativity, clarity, flow of ideas, and topic completeness, as well as the thoroughness of their research. On average, students' projects included nine (9) articles cited, compared with four (4) articles cited in previous years.

4. The majority of students listed the library classes and individual meetings with Bonnie Strohl as "very helpful" or "extremely helpful" in researching their topics.

Thank you to Bonnie Strohl and the Weinberg Memorial Library at The University of Scranton for the wonderful opportunity to participate in the Information Literacy Program. It was a rewarding experience, both academically and creatively, for me and my students.