Strengthening Skills: Hosting a Research Boot Camp

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STRENGTHENING SKILLS
Hosting a Research Boot Camp

NEED
In 2014, the religious studies department approached instruction librarians to build a program to strengthen their graduate assistants’ research skills.

ANSWER
Together, the two departments created a “boot camp” for the graduate assistants, delivered the week prior to the start of the school year.

PREPARATION
Survey of faculty research interests
Faculty needs assessment for graduate student skills
Graduate student self-assessment of research skills

FACULTY NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH SKILLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Locating journal articles</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting appropriate search keywords</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using library catalogs</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using discipline-specific databases</td>
<td>81.1%</td>
<td>85.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locating primary sources</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating resources through internet search</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating bibliographies in Turkish style format</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STUDENTS’ SELF-ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH SKILLS
Students rated their own research skills highly in a pre-workshop survey, except for citations.

WORKSHOP DESIGN
6 contact hours, 3 days
Daily assessment and skills practice
Graduate student self-assessment of learning gains

Day 1: physical library tour, library website, catalog, book citations
Day 2: keyword formulation, Boolean logic, databases, Google Scholar, journal article citations
Day 3: primary sources, subject-specific citations

Bootcamp Guide: libguides.udayton.edu/gradstudents

CHANGES FROM YEAR 1 TO YEAR 2
• Dropped RefWorks
• Add manual work on Chicago style citations
• Add more daily active learning components
• Faculty invited to sessions

RESULT AND ASSESSMENT
Participant Quote: “Please, if you do nothing else, please give out another copy of that Chicago style guide and do that activity again. Consider laminating and/or framing one of the guides for our office. Mine has frequently come in handy!”

Participant Quote: “Learning how to use Google Scholar was the most helpful. In the past, I avoided it because I could not make it specific enough to be helpful.”

A survey conducted eight months after the first workshop showed long-term benefits for the students.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
The Religious Studies Department has observed….

• GAs much more likely to reach out for help. They know the library staff and believe in the staff’s willingness to help.
• GAs are better prepared to do research from the beginning of their time here at UD.
• Faculty have observed an increase in GA research skills since the first boot camp.

The librarians and the Religious Studies Department have:
• A shared interest in the domain of improving the students’ research skills
• Learned and experimented together as a community
• Established shared practices for conducting an effective instruction workshop.