

## Ideas for Library Research Assignments

### 1. Popular versus Scholarly

Read a popular magazine article, and a scholarly article on the same subject. Compare the two articles for content, style, bias, audience, etc. Include whether the source is popular or scholarly.\*

Learning Outcomes: students can identify popular and scholarly sources and explain the difference between them.

### 2. Source Comparison

Select a topic of interest to you from the course. Search for information about that topic in a book, journal article, newspaper article and on the web. Cite each source, briefly summarize each source and write a short essay about the differences between each source. (Note: You can choose whichever mix of sources you want or have them identify the types as part of the assignment.)\*\*

Learning Outcomes: students can choose appropriate tools; students can construct and refine searches; students can identify different types of information; students can evaluate sources; students can describe how information sources differ; students can format citations correctly.

### 3. Primary Sources

Locate primary sources from the date of your birth. You may use one type of material only once, i.e., one newspaper headline of a major event, one quotation, one biography, one census figure, one top musical number, one campus event, etc. Use a minimum of (fill in number) different sources. Write a short annotation of each source and include the complete bibliographic citation.\*

Learning Outcomes: students can identify and describe primary sources; students can locate primary sources; students can recognize the elements of a citation; students can format citations correctly.

### 4. Best Source

Write a brief essay annotating the best source found to date for their research project. Essays should include a description of how they found the source, and why they think it is the best source. The latter should include issues of authority, bias, currency, accuracy, etc. \*\*

Learning Outcomes: students can choose appropriate tools; students can construct and refine searches; students can evaluate sources based on a variety of factors.

### 5. Web Evaluation

Evaluate web sites based on specific criteria.

Learning Outcome: students can evaluate web sites for authority, bias, currency, and accuracy.

### 6. Company Information

Assemble background information on a company or organization in preparation for a hypothetical interview. Describe how information from each source differs.\*

Learning Outcome: students can choose appropriate tools; students can locate company information; students can describe how information sources differ.

### 7. Primary versus Secondary

Students use bibliographies, guides to the literature and the Internet to find primary sources on an issue or historical period which they are studying in class. They can contrast the treatment in the primary sources with the treatment in secondary sources including their textbook.\*

Learning outcomes: students can identify and describe primary and secondary sources; students can locate primary sources; students can describe the difference between primary and secondary sources.

## 8. Biographical Information

Students write a biographical sketch of a famous person they are studying in class. They use biographical dictionaries, popular press and scholarly sources, and books to find information about the person.\*

Learning outcomes: students can locate biographical information in a variety of types of sources; students can use a biographical dictionary; students can differentiate between popular and scholarly sources; students can choose appropriate tools; students can describe how information sources differ.

## 9. Web Searching

Students search for information on a topic in a variety of search engines, or in one search engine, one metacrawler, and one directory. (Note: you can formulate this in many different ways, including having them search a topic on the web and in a database.) Students record the searches they did, the results they got, any modifications to their searches and describe the difference between the information they found using different tools. Their evaluation should address the validity of information.

Learning outcomes: students can identify the difference between various search engines/search engines and directories, etc.; students can conduct web searches using advanced search feature; students can evaluate web sites.

## 10. Supporting an Argument

Students find (or are given) a letter to the editor from the local paper. They identify statements which are potentially suspicious and research these statements. Students should write down the suspicious statements and under each one, explain where and how they found information about that statement and whether the statement could be supported by the facts they found.\*

Learning outcomes: students can identify an information need; students can select appropriate tools for finding different types of information; students can evaluate information.

## 11. Identifying Bias

Students find a journal article or editorial from recent publications reflecting conservative and liberal tendencies. They write a brief essay describing the differences and include citations for each article/editorial.\*

Learning outcomes: students can identify bias in different publications; students can format citations.

\*Adapted from University of Puget Sound Collins Memorial Library,

<http://library.ups.edu/instruct/assign.htm>

\*\*Adapted from Pace University Library,

<http://www.pace.edu/library/pages/instruct/effectiveassignments.htm#General>