

Library Instruction Program Learning Outcomes Portland State University

Introduction

The Portland State University Library is committed to supporting student learning through its instruction program. There are many ways students learn about information and the research process at the library. They may have an interaction with a reference librarian, attend a library instruction session, arrange a consultation with a subject librarian, visit the library, or visit the website. The librarians at PSU have developed learning outcomes for students that will inform our instruction regardless of the mode. These learning outcomes were based on and designed to support PSU's Campus-Wide Learning Outcomes, particularly in the areas of Critical and Creative Thinking and Ethics and Social Responsibility. These outcomes are focused on student learning and will help guide ongoing individual and program-level assessment of our instruction. Some of this assessment will, by necessity, be conducted collaboratively with disciplinary faculty.

While library instruction in any specific discipline will be unlikely to cover all of these outcomes, they do represent the breadth of instructional activities provided by the library to students across the curriculum.

Strategize

Definition: Students will develop the dispositions and skills to develop a realistic topic and plan for research; determine what types of sources they should seek, develop an effective search strategy and ask for help when needed.

Rationale: In order to find the information they need, students must first be able to clearly define their information need and understand what resources are available to them.

Specific Outcomes:

- Identify library services and availability of resources in order to develop a realistic overall plan for research.
- Use general information resources to increase familiarity with the topic and disciplinary vocabulary.
- Define the research topic, question or thesis to achieve a manageable focus appropriate to the assignment criteria, available resources, and evidence needed to support thesis.
- Identify keywords, synonyms and related terms in order to flexibly search information resources.
- Identify the range of information source types available (such as peer-reviewed journals, newspaper articles, books, reference sources, etc.), their distinguishing characteristics and intended audiences, in order to select those appropriate based on the information need.
- Identify the features and content of different research tools (such as databases, catalogs and websites) in order to search those most appropriate to the information need.
- Develop a strategy for persisting in information seeking despite challenges in order to overcome potential roadblocks in research.

Gather and Organize

Definition: Students will effectively search information resources, modify their search or topic when necessary, seek out sources from diverse perspectives and record what they have found.

Rationale: In an era of information abundance, students need to be able to zero in on the appropriate sources and target their search effectively in order to find the most relevant information. It is also important that they seek out diverse points of view in order to broaden their perspectives.

Specific Outcomes:

- Identify and use search language, controlled vocabulary or search features appropriate to the research tool in order to retrieve relevant results.
- Narrow, broaden, or modify their search, research topic, question or thesis based on initial search results.
- Seek resources from diverse perspectives in order to broaden their frame of reference.
- Select appropriate means for recording or saving relevant sources in order to retrieve them when needed.
- Observe and use pointers to additional information (authors, footnotes, bibliographies, controlled vocabulary, etc.) in order to locate additional sources.
- Devise a system for keeping up with the latest research on their topic(s).

Analyze and Evaluate

Definition: Students will critically evaluate information sources for relevance, accuracy, quality, timeliness, authority, and context as well as appraising whether they have sufficient support for their argument.

Rationale: In order to develop an informed community, users of information must be able to critically evaluate what is presented to them.

Specific Outcomes:

- Examine a work's citation and abstract in order to determine its relevance to their research.
- Critically examine sources for depth of coverage, quality, and validity in order to select those appropriate to the information need.
- Recognize the cultural, physical, social and historical contexts of an information source in order to understand how they influence the content.

Use Information Ethically

Definition: Students will demonstrate ethical behavior through their use and creation of information.

Rationale: Cognizance of one's ethical responsibility to others is critical to developing social responsibility.

Specific Outcomes:

- Recognize issues related to privacy, ethics, intellectual property and copyright in order to respect the rights of others, comply with laws and contracts, or safeguard personal information.
- Provide attribution using an appropriate documentation style when quoting or paraphrasing the ideas of others in order to acknowledge the research sources used.
- Apply the author's intended meaning when quoting or paraphrasing in order to accurately represent content.