

Moving Library Instruction Sessions Online

By Renee Kiner and Kelly Safin

During the summer of 2020, administrators at the University of Pittsburgh implemented a hybrid course model for the fall semester at all five campus locations. Instructors had the ability to choose to teach fully online or in the classroom, with COVID-19 precautions in place. Students also had the option to decide if they wanted to attend classes online, in person when conditions permitted, or both. Adjustments were also made to the start and end dates of the term—the semester started a week earlier and no longer included a fall break—so students living on campus could finish classes and return home by Thanksgiving. This was a major adjustment for campus faculty, who had taught primarily in-person prior to the pandemic. Librarians at the Greensburg campus had to quickly revise lesson plans to bring group activities to an online setting. Almost all of the classes that librarians would be working with remained online for the entire semester, with a few meeting both in-person and online.

All Composition 2 classes on the Greensburg campus include a library component. Before the pandemic, librarians held one 50-minute session on evaluating sources in our library classroom, along with a 20-minute follow-up on another day in their classroom for a database searching refresher, as requested by the instructors. The session on evaluating sources was group-work focused. We provided each group with a file folder which included three short articles they were asked to skim, a copy of the PROVEN test by Ellen Carey, and a blank grid for each group to complete with their observations about how well each article matched PROVEN criteria. We would discuss the answers as a group.

Source evaluation is an important component of the Composition 2 course, and we wanted to keep our learning outcomes when we moved online. However, to accommodate the virtual setting and the additional time that teaching online can take, we simplified some aspects of instruction. The result was a new Composition 2 lesson plan with similar objectives but very different elements of engagement. Before we met with each class in Zoom, instructors asked their students to read one short MSN article that referenced a peer-reviewed study. Students were also asked to review our Composition 1 and 2 LibGuide and complete a short online questionnaire about what they learned. To make this easier for instructors, the MSN article and link to the LibGuide were placed in a module created for their course Canvas.

Before starting the source evaluation lesson, librarians address any questions or provide clarification on any confusion noted in students' questionnaire answers. We begin the discussion by asking if the MSN article contained any useful information for someone writing a paper on this topic, and we point out the study listed in the article would be a helpful source for them to locate. We then do a short demonstration of searching our catalog, focused on locating the peer-reviewed study mentioned in the article. This short exercise acts as a brief catalog search refresher.

Once the peer-reviewed study is found, we explain the group work activity. Students are placed into four Zoom breakout rooms with a link to a Google Doc. The Google Doc has a section for each of the four rooms with prompts based on the PROVEN criteria: Purpose, Relevance, Objectivity, Verifiability, Expertise and

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Newness. Students complete their portion of the document, answering questions about each of the PROVEN criteria for the two sources. Librarians bounce from room to room to make sure students understand the exercise, encouraging conversation if a group is particularly subdued. We can also monitor the Google Doc for signs the groups are wrapping up. After about 20 minutes, we get back together to discuss all of the groups' observations.

We have found that the Google Doc has been an effective collaboration space for our students in the online environment. Most students are familiar with Google Docs, and they like that the document can be updated synchronously so one person isn't solely responsible for adding information. For the Spring of 2021, we have been able to resume the additional 20-minute database refresher, via Zoom, as requested by instructors. When librarians return to in-person instruction, we will keep the Google Doc option, because it's paperless, allows us to monitor progress, and is easier to read than handwriting. Most importantly, students seem comfortable with the technology.

Of course, we adapted other instruction to the online environment, including first-year seminar courses. With those classes and Composition 2, having a "flipped" (pre-class) component has provided opportunities for students to share questions via those activities and for us to address them synchronously. Faculty expressed appreciation for the way librarians responded to the campus' virtual learning needs. The authors consider these positive outcomes as an avenue to continue and expand this method of engagement with students in their courses.

Reference

Carey, E. (2017) P.R.O.V.E.N. Source Evaluation Process. CORA (Community of Online Research Assignments). <https://www.projectcora.org/assignment/proven-source-evaluation-process>

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