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Did It Help?: The Effects of Research Consultations on the Quality of Sources Used in an Undergraduate Class

Jennifer Maddox  
*University of North Alabama, jmaddox1@una.edu*

Leigh Thompson Stanfield  
*University of North Alabama, dlthompson@una.edu*

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Did it work?

THE EFFECTS OF RESEARCH CONSULTATIONS ON THE QUALITY OF SOURCES USED IN AN UNDERGRADUATE CLASS
Jennifer Maddox
Instruction and User Engagement Librarian
University of North Alabama
jmaddox@una.edu

Leigh Stanfield
Instructional Services Coordinator and Instruction Librarian
University of North Alabama
dlthompson@una.edu
Overview

- Research Consultations at UNA
- Our project – a citation analysis of sources used by:
  - Two sections of an upper level, undergraduate education class
  - Different semesters
  - 1 section with required consultations and 1 without
  - Same instructor
  - Same assignment
The Assignment

- Paper on the Professional Philosophy for Teaching in the students discipline
- Minimum of 7 pages
- Minimum of 8 required sources
  - 5 professional sources relating to the importance of the discipline, learning theories that inform instructional decision making, and assessment
  - 3 peer-reviewed journal articles (from education journals) on instructional methods or strategies
Librarian Involvement

- No consultations – Brief, One shot instruction session (16 students)
  - Librarian went to the classroom and gave an brief overview of resources
  - Students given the librarian’s contact information
  - Students told about research consultation service as part of the instruction session

- Required consultations - (11 students)
  - Students were required to attend a one-on-one consultation with specific librarians
  - Librarians developed and followed an outline for each meeting
Outline for Research Consultation

- Discussion of discipline specific resources
- Discussion of the assignment
- Discussion of the types of sources needed
- Discussion of locating sources
- Overview of source evaluation
- Citing in APA format
- Encouraged students to follow-up if they had questions
Citation Analysis

- Anonymizing the papers
  - 16 papers in the no research consultation class
  - 11 papers in the required research consultation class
  - Sources provided by the instructor were not scored
- Adapted existing rubric
- Tested rubric using a sample paper
Rubric

Six criteria examined for each source

Scored 1, 2, or 3

Total Quality Score = Total points/(# of citations * 18)

Adapted with permission from Tom Reinsfelder. Reinsfelder, T. L. (2012). Citation analysis as a tool to measure the impact of individual research consultations. College & Research Libraries, 3, 263 -277.
Examples of Criteria and Possible Scores

- **Relevancy** – is the source cited relevant to the selected paper topic and does it support the thesis?
  - 3 – Relates directly to the topic and supports the thesis
  - 2 – Somewhat relevant and supportive of the thesis
  - 1 – Is not relevant to the topic and does not support the thesis

- **Level (Scope)** – is the source written at an appropriate level and for the appropriate audience for the assignment? Is the information too basic, i.e., dictionary or short encyclopedia entry or too technical, i.e., legal analysis?
  - 3 – The information is presented at an appropriate level (college/undergraduate) for the assignment
  - 2 – The information is presented in overly technical or complex level for the assignment
  - 1 – The information is presented in a simplistic way, with not enough detail for the assigned task
## Completed Rubric

### Rating Criteria

- **Student 2**
- **Discipline:** English Language Arts

**Maximum Points for each citation = 18**

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<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
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**Average**

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<td>Purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Currency</td>
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</table>

- **Score for each category**
  - 95.83%
  - 91.57%
  - 95.83%
  - 66.67%
  - 91.67%
  - 83.33%

- **Total number of citations**

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</table>

**Total Quality Score**

87.50\%
Is the source cited relevant to the selected paper topic and does it support the thesis?
Is the source written at an appropriate level and for the appropriate audience for the assignment? Is the information too basic, i.e., dictionary or short encyclopedia entry or too technical, i.e., legal analysis?
Who is the author(s) of the information and are they qualified to speak on the subject?
What is the purpose of the source to educate, entertain, inform, etc.?
Where was the information published or shared and is it supported by evidence or other research. Can it be verified? (For the purposes of this research the publication/information can appear either in print or in electronic format).
Is the information up-to-date or is it outdated?

Currency

- Research Consultation: 81.48
- No Research Consultation: 83.37
Real Findings

- Students are good at using filters (peer-reviewed, date for currency)
- Students are not engaging with the sources
Limitations

- Time-consuming
- The rubric did not account for how a student was using (or misusing!) a source
- Could be difficult to ascertain relevancy because there was no clear thesis
- The level did not account for the fact that students should use dictionaries or encyclopedias for definitions
How Have We Changed

- We’re spending more time working with students on how to evaluate and “read” sources
- Working on developing in-class, hands-on exercises
- Not assuming certain knowledge
- Discussed findings with the professor
Questions?
Reinsfelder, T. L. (2012). Citation analysis as a tool to measure the impact of individual research consultations. *College & Research Libraries, 3*, 263-277.