

An inquiry based workshop on undergraduate research for teaching assistants and peer tutors

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Scenario:

Librarian: I would love the opportunity to train your TAs/tutors/peer mentors. Would you be interested?

Response: Sure you can talk to our TAs/tutors/mentors! Research skills are very important, and we really want to help our students be successful.

We can give you *an hour*.

Agenda

- Description of workshop
- Inquiry-based learning
- Support Material
- Feedback
- Future Goals & Applications

Description

- Workshop for TAs, tutors, and mentors on helping undergraduates (in the Humanities and Social Sciences) with basic research problems
- Created at Carleton University by Sarah Fedko and Heather Berringer (2006-07)
- Participants included ArtsOne TAs, writing centre tutors, and peer mentors

Description

- Why did we create this workshop?
 - Increasing size of undergraduate classes makes it difficult for librarians to provide one-on-one assistance
 - Many undergraduates do not take advantage of reference services
 - We hypothesized that TAs/tutors/mentors could be a positive advocate for library use amongst undergraduates

Description

- What were our goals for this workshop?
 - Take advantage of TAs position in courses, and peer-to-peer relationship of tutors/mentors
 - Train TAs/tutors/mentors to assess and answer common elementary research problems & to refer students to appropriate services for further assistance if needed

Inquiry-Based Workshop

- What is inquiry-based learning?

There are a wide variety of definitions of inquiry-based learning. Basically, students learn by questioning.

Inquiry-based Workshop

- Why base workshop on this model?
 - We felt inquiry-based learning would help us establish a relationship of respect for the expertise of our TAs/tutors/mentors
 - Inquiry-based learning scenarios helped us to simulate 'real life' scenarios

Inquiry-based Workshop

- How does the workshop incorporate inquiry-based learning?
 - Break participants into groups of 3 to 5. Each group gets a package of questions from imaginary students
 - These questions include many common research problems
 - Each group is assigned to be an 'expert' for one question

Inquiry-based Workshop

- Groups brainstorm possible responses
- Groups present responses, and a conversation ensues between the librarian(s) and participants
- At the end of the workshop, participants receive a cheat sheet, '*Common Problems in Student Research*'

Inquiry-based Workshop

- EXAMPLE QUESTION:

From: Steve_Bower@carleton.ca

To: MayCanadianStudiesTA@carleton.ca

Subject: No treaty information – am I doing something wrong?

Inquiry-Based Workshop

- I have a question about my paper. I chose the **topic about first nations treaty rights in Canada**. I can find all kinds of books at the library about the current situation, but **I can't find anything about how all of it started**. When I put **"first nations and treaties and canada"** into the catalogue I get lots of stuff but **none of it talks about treaties in the 1800s and stuff**. Did I type the wrong words into the catalogue search or does the **library just not buy books about first nations history**? Why did the prof assign this topic if there wasn't enough information?
SB

PS-Half the stuff has a **weird call number like DDV CA1**. What's up with that? Does that mean I have to use it in the library?

Support Material

- **Introduction to Library Research:** Produced some generic guides for TAs/tutors/mentors to use while working with students
- **Teaching Assistants Welcome to Carleton University Library:** Created a hand-out with key referrals and a list of ways to improve their experience working with the library

Feedback

- TAs/tutors/mentors :
 - were pleased with the workshop and reported they felt more comfortable talking to students about library research
 - appeared to refer to the library more often than others (who had not participated in the workshop). They frequently brought students for assistance or referred to the relevant subject librarian for support.

Future Applications

- Continue to offer workshop for interested groups. Formally evaluate the workshop
- Develop discipline-specific workshops
- Develop more in-depth training programs
- Discuss the possibility of approaching the Teaching Assistants' Training Program to offer training

For more information:

- Please contact me for materials used in this project or if you have any questions/comments:

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