



Library Instruction Program

Tips for Effective Library Assignments

Tisch Library at Tufts University

The Tisch Library serves instructors, staff, and students through individual and group instruction on the effective use of the library's print and electronic resources.

The library staff encourages faculty to integrate library research into students' educational experience, believing it offers a particularly valuable means of advancing continued self-directed investigation and learning. We are happy to work with you to further the intended aims of the research projects you assign. From our perspective, the best library assignments—those that enable students to avoid unnecessary frustration and thus, to enjoy the process of learning through library research and inquiry—have the following characteristics. We present these traits as suggestions, reminders, and aids to instructors planning library assignments.

- **Preparation:** We encourage you to schedule a presentation given by a librarian so that students may receive advance guidance on the effective use of library resources; alert the reference staff of upcoming assignments requiring heavy library use; place materials on Reserve or request the purchase of materials we do not own.
- **Clarity:** Are the goals and objectives of the research skills component of the assignment clearly stated? What types of sources do you suggest/require they use?
- **Feasibility:** Does the library hold adequate resources for the assignment? If you're in doubt, call the reference desk (x7-3460) and we will search the catalog.
- **Variety:** Offer students choices for their research topics. Nothing is harder on our resources than 25 students needing the same material at the same time.
- **Critical thinking:** Design realistic assignments that require integration of knowledge rather than scavenger hunts. For example, consider an assignment that requires students to evaluate the nature of the source (is it a primary source, reference or secondary source? is it popular literature or academic literature? etc.).
- **Library services:** Do students know about Document Delivery and the Reserve Desk? Professional librarians are available at the reference desk and by appointment for consultation. Remind students to stop by the circulation desk to obtain a card that allows them borrowing privileges at all 16 Boston Library Consortium libraries.
- **Prior experience:** Be aware that students bring a variety of library skills with them. Some are very advanced, whereas some students' abilities may be inadequate.
- **Ubiquity of the Internet**— Stress to your students that the Internet is just a different format, albeit a huge one, for research materials. While the Internet can be an excellent source of unique material, it is no more authoritative or comprehensive than other library resources.

To schedule a session or for more information, complete the form below and send it to Laurie Sabol, Coordinator of Instruction, Tisch Library. We will confirm your appointment. You may also contact Laurie at 617-627-5167 or laurie.sabol@tufts.edu.

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Name *Department* *Email/Phone*

Preferred time to schedule appointment/session:

(1st choice) *date* *time* *(2nd choice)* *date* *time*

A. Course number/title/academic level of students/number of students in class:

B. Briefly describe the assignment(s) your students will complete which involve(s) library research:

C. What do you want your students to learn in the library instruction session?