CL Librarians' "Best Practices:"
Lessons Learned Through Observation
D'Arcy Hutchings, Spring Semester 2011

Communicate with Professor

Ask to see the students' assignment as early as possible before the session.

Negotiate for readings, tutorials, ILL/Refworks account creation, a short free-write about their library experience, etc. to be assigned prior to the session.

Ask the professor during the session if he or she has anything to add.

Ask the professor for feedback, formal or informal, following the session.

Offer to help develop assignments in the future.

Connect With the Students

Greet students individually as the gather or enter the classroom. Use the empty time!

Ask student's their names, their experience using the library or attending library sessions, and/or their topics.

Introduce yourself.

Make eye contact with each individual student.

Emphasize the benefit of the session at the beginning.

Make use of your space! Get out from behind the podium and wander around.

Guide Them Through the Content

Provide them with an overview – a roadmap – of the session's content and flow up front.

Briefly review the assignment near the beginning, if there is one, so the students have focus during the session.

If students don't come in with an assignment, create an exercise they can work on in class.

Use handouts (or a custom LibGuide). They may include supplemental information, an outline of the class session, and/or notes that help them repeat the process later on their own.

Encourage Engagement

Allow them to have a say in the content in some way. Ask them whether they can handle another topic toward the end if you are concerned about overload. Ask them if they would like you to cover topic *x*.

Ask the class very specific questions and *wait* for a response. If you wait long enough, someone will speak!

Incorporate active learning, such as breaking the class into groups and having them share with the class.

Allow for hands-on time! "Now you try!" "Now I'll stop talking and let you play!"

Incorporate hands-on time and/or activities throughout so they enforce each major concept you discuss, rather than lumping it all at the end.

Keep Their Attention

Don't hesitate to request their attention. "Eyes up front for a moment."

Use Vision control software as appropriate. Consider asking them if they would like you to use it so they can see what you are doing and/or asking if it's ok to take back control (empowers them). Also consider not using control software...

Incorporate relevant videos and/or other media to break up the monotony of lecture.

Connect the Dots

Be sure to tell them *why*. Why is this useful to them? Why is this better than the way they've been doing it? Why shouldn't I use the full-text checkbox all the time?

Define all jargon. Better yet, ask *them* to define terms like peer-reviewed, full text, database, catalog, etc.

Let them know when one might use a book versus a journal, a scholarly article versus a popular one, a particular database versus ASP, a database versus Google, etc.

Be clear about what a subject term really is, why they are valuable, and how to use them in searching.

Point Out the "Obvious"

Let them know how to get to the Consortium Library website.

Explicitly state that the resources on the website are available 24/7.

Let them know there is far more than just what is covered in this session.

Use Helpful Analogies

The folder in ASP and other databases is like an Amazon shopping cart. You must decide what to do with the contents. The folders in RefWorks, on the other hand, are like folders in a filing cabinet.

Library research is like fishing. You may not catch something on the first cast, but keep trying with different bait or at a different fishing hole (different search terms, strategies, and databases).

Databases are like Facebook.

Don't Ignore Google

Validate that they know how to find things. It's just that they are now expected to find an entirely different kind of information (academic vs. recreational). Google is great for many things!

Point out how searching catalogs and database is different from Google since they expect it to work the same.

Address why they can't just Google this stuff, lest they be saying to themselves throughout your session, "Sure whatever, I'll just Google it later."

Let them know they can use Google Scholar but it's best to go through the library website to do so.

<u>Reduce Their Anxiety and Sense of Failure</u>

Mention asking a librarian frequently through the session. If they remember nothing else, this will get them through their research. Consider giving them concrete examples of questions to ask or appropriate times to stop and ask (i.e. spinning wheels for 10 minutes). We are here to help!

Tell them that they may feel a little overwhelmed because there is so much to learn. Just remember that such things exist – you can practice with them later and ask a librarian for more help.

Tell them you make it look easy but in real life, it can be a challenge – even for you!

Tell them that there is no one "right way" to do a search.

Embrace your mistakes. If you make one in front of the class, use it as a learning opportunity.

<u>Other</u>

Incorporate some sort of short assessment. This can be as simple as asking: What was the most useful thing in this session? What is still confusing?