Using Quality/Time Graphs to Teach Freshman English Students How to Assess Journal Quality

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Using Quality/Time Graphs to Teach Freshman English Students How to Assess Journal Quality

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Outline

• The Problem:
  – Teaching students how to assess journal quality

• Traditional Methods
  – Lecture
  – Pass around journals
  – Tear apart the article
  – iClicker and discuss

• Their benefits
  – Lecture is simple
  – Pass around gives concrete examples
  – iClicker promotes feedback
  – Tearing apart the parts of an article is fun
Their Problems:

– Lecture is boring
– Passing around journals can be ambiguous
– iClicker demonstrates who doesn’t get the instruction, but not why
– Tearing apart articles requires a supply of surplus journals
The Solution

• Graph student understanding of journal quality!
The Q-T chart

• An adaptation of the traditional popular, trade, scholarly distinction
• Is graphic
• Encourages group work
• Sets a baseline that all students can see for their understanding of journal article quality
• Allows students to demonstrate understanding of article quality
Explaining popular-trade-scholarly

• Popular
  – Illustrated
  – advertisements

• Trade
  – Focus on one industry
  – advertisements

• Scholarly
  – Written by scientists
  – Citations
However...

Journal Continuum

Popular Trade Scholarly

People Aviation Week Science
Elements of Quality

- Accuracy
- Authority
- Sources cited
- Timeliness
- Neutrality/Bias
How it is done

• Divide class into teams of 3-5 members
• Give teams 2 minutes to answer a question
  – This question is deliberately broad
  – Aimed at getting the students to reveal what sources that they usually use in research
  – Encouraged to question each others choices for articles to find the best one
How it is done, cont’d

• The groups then print out the first page of the item they found and tape it on a Quality/Time graph, with Q on the y axis and T on the x axis.

• The graph can be on any whiteboard

• The students make relative judgments of each article’s quality, and absolute judgments of the date.
How it is done, cont’d

• The instructor then reviews the groups choices and adjusts the positions of the pages to make them more accurate
• The instructor explains any changes
• This constitutes the first instruction on assessing journal article quality.
• The class then continues on with database instruction
Conclusion of class

• After database instruction
  – Students reform groups
  – Answer the question they were given at beginning of class
  – Incorporate what they have learned
  – Cannot use the articles that they used the first time
Results

- There has been a distinct improvement in sources selected
- Even better, the students seem to grasp better, why they should want better sources
- Students more willing to use older sources
Future

• Add Quantitative measures
• Teach my colleagues this method
• Maybe go online
Example graph

Typical scatter of article results for 2nd exercise.

Typical scatter of article results for 1st exercise

Time

last decade, last year, last month, last week, Present
Conclusions

• The Q-T graph
  – Gives instructors a baseline for their students understanding of journal article quality
  – Gives students an active learning exercise
  – Provides an assessment at the end of class of how well they understand journal article quality
  – Still being refined
Results of exercise 1
White sheets 1st exercise
Green sheets 2nd exercise
Results of Exercise II
White sheets 1\textsuperscript{st} exercise
Green sheets 2\textsuperscript{nd} exercise