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Just Google It-Bringing Students’ Information Literacy to the Composition Classroom

Susanna Coleman
Auburn University at Montgomery

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Just Google It

Bringing Students’ Information Literacy to the Composition Classroom

Susanna Coleman
Auburn University Montgomery
Panel 34 – Saturday – 11:00-12:30
Introduction

• Students gain information literacy through daily digital activities:
  • Text messages – cell phones, AIM, ICQ , MSN
  • Search engines – Google, Yahoo
  • Wikis – Wikipedia, Wikia
  • Social networking – Facebook, MySpace
  • Virtual pet sites – Neopets, Subeta

• Teach students to locate, evaluate, and utilize information
Introduction

• May neglect these existing skills in the classroom

• Instead, help students transfer existing skills to research-based writing courses:
  • Text messaging leads to keywording
  • Searching the Internet leads to database searching
Text Messaging

Internet skill: text messaging

Information literacy skill: keywording

• Students text using as few words as possible

• Choose to include only most important words— the *keywords*
Text Messaging - Application

• Ask students to imagine “texting” research topic
• Words they choose to include are *keywords*
• Keywording = picking out words most important to topic
Text Messaging - Problems

• “Chat speak” abbreviations/alternate spellings
  • “u” for “you”
  • “thru” for “through”
  • “ppl” for “people,” etc.

• Remind students to avoid “shortcuts” when keywording
Web Searching

Internet skill: using search engines
Information literacy skill: searching databases

• Students already familiar with
  • Submitting a search query
  • Layout and elements found on database search pages
Web Searching
Web Searching - Application

• Ask students to find song lyrics online using only title and artist
  • Query will consist of song title, artist, and “lyrics”: viva la vida, coldplay, and lyrics

• Work, author, topic strategy also works for academic searches:
  • inconvenient truth, gore, and climate change
  • everyday use, walker, and theme
Web Searching - Problems

- Boolean operators no longer used in search engines
  - Instruct students how to duplicate internet search queries with operators:
    - Google query: *inconvenient truth* gore *climate change*
    - Database query: “*inconvenient truth*” AND *gore* AND “*climate change*”
  - Differences among database layouts
Web Searching - Problems
Conclusion

• Most curricular information literacy skills have extracurricular equivalent

• Explain skills in terms of equivalents to help students understand how to locate, evaluate, and use information