Researching my role for myself: Reacting to the Past and information literacy

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Reacting to the Past and information literacy
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RTTP in action
What is Reacting to the Past?

In most classes students learn by receiving ideas and information from instructors and texts, or they discuss such materials in seminars. “Reacting to the Past” courses employ a different pedagogy. Students learn by taking on roles, informed by classic texts, in elaborate games set in the past; they learn skills—speaking, writing, critical thinking, problem solving, leadership, and teamwork*—in order to prevail in difficult and complicated situations. Reacting roles, unlike those in a play, do not have a fixed script and outcome. While students will be obliged to adhere to the philosophical and intellectual beliefs of the historical figures they have been assigned to play, they must devise their own means of expressing those ideas persuasively, in papers, speeches, or other public presentations and students must also pursue a course of action they think will help them win the game...

https://reacting.barnard.edu/about

* skills that develop information literacy
"In July, 1791, the National Assembly was locked into furious debate. Some claimed the revolution had gone too far, others that it had not gone far enough. At issue was the new constitution. There were three main factions: the Jacobins who sat on the left, the conservatives who sat on the right, and, in the middle, the moderates."

-French Revolution on the Hudson
Rousseau, Burke, and Revolution in France, 1791

• Receive your role
• Join your Faction
• Factions formulate strategies to persuade group to vote your way (e.g. win the game)
• Factions each give a short speech
Under Debate: Obligatory Oath in Civil Constitution of the Clergy

“Those bishops, former archbishops [etc.] who shall not have taken the oath... shall be reputed to have renounced their office and shall be regarded as enemies of the French people, and thus shall be guilty of treason and so punished. If clergy refuse to profess that they are united with the people of France, then they are likely against the people of France.”
LibGuides for further research/resources
Participants reactions to playing the mini game---

How did you feel while playing the game?

Any knowledge, skills needed/developed in play?

How might this fit with your teaching?
Our Experience with Reacting to the Past, as

Students

Teacher

Librarian
Research as Inquiry

Engaged by the pedagogy and the ideas under debate, students critically read texts and seek out further information resources. Research is used to answer questions, learn.

Searching as strategic exploration

The games encourage strategic thinking and students’ agency. Searching for information and finding meaning is a winning strategy chosen by the students.
Developing skills while having fun

Experience with inquiry, strategic and critical thinking are essential to IL. Engagement, practice, performance are needed to develop skills.

RTTP games create an educational environment where such skills are developed.

Students complete at Reacting to the Past debate on the U.S. Constitution in Bridget Ford’s U.S. history survey course at California State University at East Bay.
Library support & RTTP

- LibGuides with additional resources about period
- Understanding the game, strategies, sources for instruction/helping students
- Research help for faculty designing games
Questions? Comments?

What is your experience of and with reacting to the past? Do you think it would engage your students? Develop their skills? What looks intimidating? What looks easy about it? How can librarians support this curriculum? Does it develop information literacy skills? How do you feel about primary sources being provided rather than researched?
Reacting to the Past Information Resources

Overviews of the concept/curriculum, news, links to popular and academic articles on RTTP. Also a source for instructor resources: links to game books published by Norton, games in development and an online collection of supplementary course materials, restricted to registered users (send a request to register.) RTTP is sustained by the Reacting Consortium, an alliance of colleges and universities.

An exploration of the development, uses and impact of RTTP by one of its founders.