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
Cont’d

• 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 2\textsuperscript{nd} exercise.

Typical scatter of article results for 1\textsuperscript{st} exercise.
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 I
White sheets 1st exercise
Green sheets 2nd exercise
Results of Exercise II
White sheets 1\textsuperscript{st} exercise
Green sheets 2\textsuperscript{nd} exercise