

Designing Effective Research Assignments

What Effective Library Assignments Can Do For Your Students & You

- Introduce resources and research methods of your discipline
- Teach information-seeking and critical thinking skills
- Contribute to student retention
- Make for pleasurable projects

Some Frequent Experiences with Library Assignments

- Information overload
- Anxiety and frustration
- Perception of irrelevancy or "busy work"
- Competition for resources
- Last-minute work

Suggestions for Successful Library Research Experience

Based on experiences of your peers, these suggestions will make library research assignments a more successful learning experience for your students:

1. Consult with a Reference librarian before making an assignment.

Collaborate with a librarian in designing an assignment. A librarian can advise on the availability of library resources, suggest appropriate library resources or a more efficient resource, perhaps point out potential problems with an assignment, etc.

2. Check to see whether the library has the resources students will need.

Make sure the library owns or has access to articles, books, or other documents students will need for an assignment. We are more than happy to order a specific book for our collection or to expand our collection in a particular area. Just notify your library liaison of your resource needs.

If a particular database or resource is required, consider asking a librarian to instruct students in how to use a resource effectively.

3. Share the assignment with the Reference staff.

Provide us with a copy of your assignment so that we can assist students in finding appropriate and effective resources. Use our "Assignment Alert" forms to notify us of assignments or mail, email, phone or just drop by with your assignment. This helps librarians understand what is required.

4. Indicate what resource formats you require or ban.

Clarify your definitions of resource formats and tools (WWW vs. Internet, Web sites vs. research databases, online catalogs, electronic journals, periodicals, scholarly vs. popular journals, etc.) Be sure to use correct terminology when referring to resources. If uncertain, please check with a librarian and clarify terminology with students.

5. Avoid specifying number of resource formats to use.

Encourage students to find the best resources, not just a certain number in one or more formats. Students need to explore and evaluate all information resources, selecting the most appropriate based on the relevancy, validity, authority or currency of content, not format.

6. Alert the library's reference department by filling out a Research Assignment Alert form. (See below.)

Research Assignment Alerts

Help us help you by letting us know about assignments that require your students to use library resources.

Librarians will be better able to assist your students if they are aware of the assignments they will be working on.

We have **Research Assignment Alert Forms** available to help you notify us. These forms offer you the opportunity to give advance notice to the library staff for assignments. This is especially helpful when a large group of students will be working on the same assignment.

On the Assignment Alert form, you will be requested to supply the following information:

- A brief description of the assignment
- The date it was assigned
- The date the student work is due
- Types of research sources students are required to find or use
- Restrictions on types of sources used (ex: no popular magazines)

**Assignment Alert forms are available online at
www.ohiodominican.edu/library/faculty or at the Reference Desk.**

Send email to refdesk@ohiodominican.edu or call **251-4754** if you have any questions.