Designing for Adaptability
A Modular Approach to Library Instruction

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About Us

My name is Leila and I'm a librarian at Queens College. My PhD is in English, and prior to joining the library faculty, I taught in the English Department and collaborated with the QC Digital Fellows to develop pedagogical resources for teaching writing and digital literacy.

I'm Max Thorn, adjunct librarian at Queens College. I'm interested in library instruction and information literacy.

About English 110

- Firstyear writing course
- Primary goal: "to help students develop the research skills and rhetorical conventions they need to write well in all of their courses"
- Varies dramatically from section to section
- Library instruction provided by library faculty & adjuncts of varying academic backgrounds
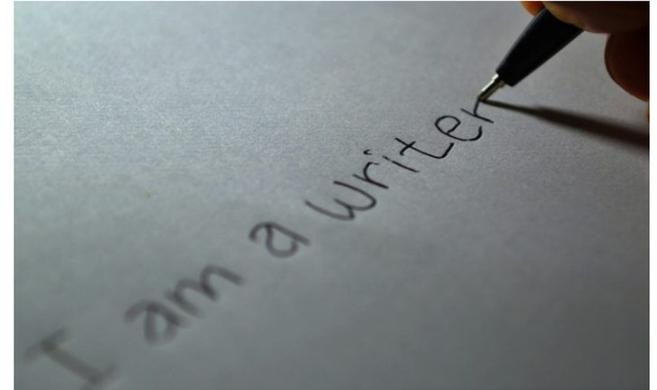
Planning Stage

Goals

- Identify and articulate learning objectives tied to English 110 objectives
- Provide more standardized instruction across sessions
- Maintain intellectual & pedagogical freedom of instructors
- Develop asynchronous materials to support a "flipped classroom" approach
- Measurable outcome (2-3 sources by end of session)

First Iteration: A Modular Approach

- Clearly identifies purpose of each exercise
- Provides consistency across instruction sessions
- Leaves space for individual approaches
  - Instructor can rearrange order of lessons
  - Instructor can adapt materials to personal style
  - Focus can shift depending on needs to a particular class
- We don't have to roll out everything at once!

First Iteration: Teaching Toolkit

- [6 in-person lessons](#)
- Focus on active learning and modifiable activities
- How-to guide for instructors
- Option for students to submit results of in-class research
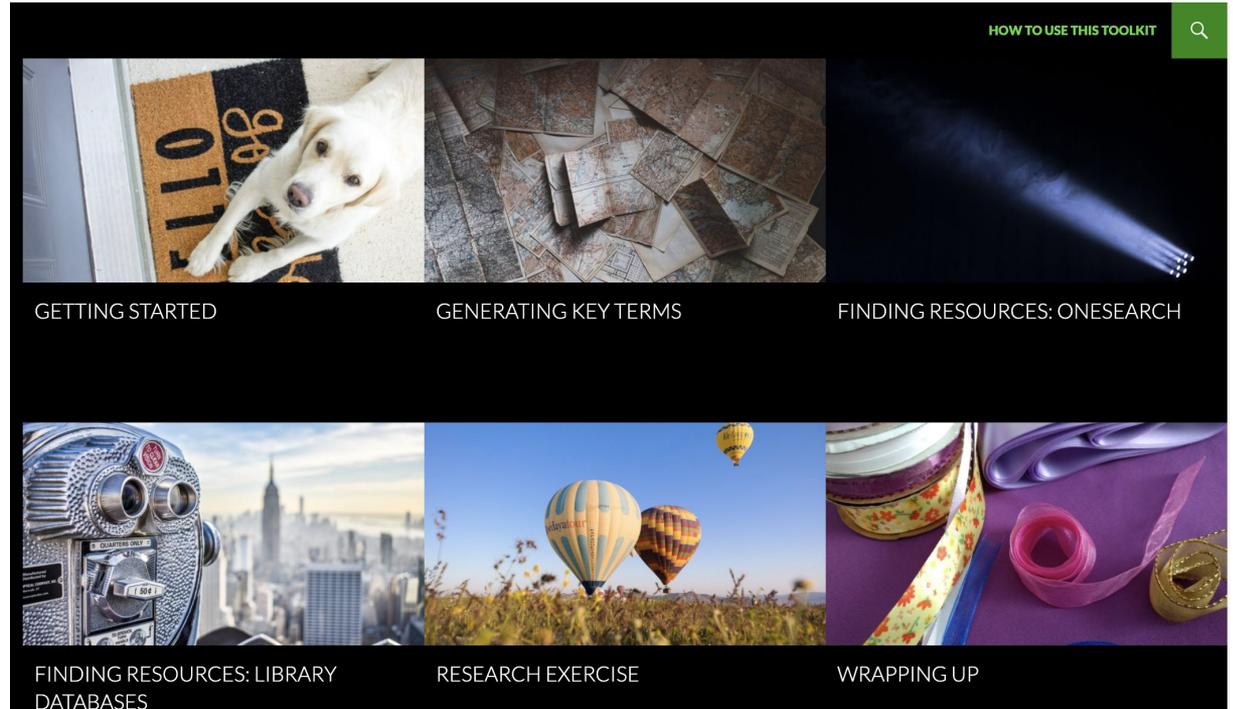
First Iteration: Evaluation

- In-class individual research exercise designed to guide students in finding and evaluating peer-reviewed sources
- Created in Google Forms
- Students are automatically emailed a copy of their answers
- Student answers feed into a Google Sheet so we can evaluate what students are learning effectively and what concepts need clarification

Research Exercise (individual)

Find & Evaluate Sources

Find a peer-reviewed article relevant to your research topic.
Copy down the citation, including the database or resource you used to find them.

Your answer

Find a second peer-reviewed article relevant to your research topic.
Copy down the citation, including the database or resource you used to find them.

Your answer

Evaluate the sources.
Which do you think is the best fit for your topic, and why?

Your answer

Plans for a Second Iteration Underway Early 2020

- Evaluation of first iteration materials based on student research exercise results
- Revision of activities to better support developing effective keywords
- Research deep-dive into asynchronous materials for library instruction
- More asynchronous materials
  - Video introductions to the library
  - Pre-workshop activities
- More points of contact

March 2020: In-Person Classes Canceled

- Classes canceled for 5 days to give faculty time to pivot to remote
- Faculty encouraged to develop entirely asynchronous materials
- Modular lessons enabled rapid development of asynchronous materials in LibGuides
- Continued using research exercise in Google Forms
- Librarians available to answer questions over chat

Second Iteration: Fall 2020

- Most instruction sessions now synchronous over Zoom
- Multiple points of contact
  - 5-minute intro early in the semester
  - 45-minute instruction session at start of research assignment
- Expanded English 110 LibGuide created in early pandemic
- Modularity facilitated rapid response to changing policies and library access
- Developed workbook for students to complete in Google Docs before instruction session

Second Iteration: Fall 2020

Meet-and-greet successes:

- Positive reactions from faculty; helped establish rapport
- Provides place for "housekeeping"

Meet-and-greet failures:

- Additional scheduling work
- No assessment of student opinion

Second Iteration: Fall 2020

Workbook successes:

- Positive reactions from faculty
- Established new possibilities for instruction

Workbook failures:

- Low completion rate
- Responses suggest exercises were confusing

Second Iteration: Fall 2020

Workshop successes:

- Workbook enabled more targeted instruction
- Early synchronous & asynchronous contact made black boxes more familiar
- Interactive presentation tools engaged students

Second Iteration: Fall 2020

Workshop failures:

- Lack of structure led to lecturing
- Student engagement difficult
- Too ambitious - Difficult to resist impulse to use all possible modules
- Librarian experiences varied by volume (failure of scaling)

Third Iteration: Future Goals

- Greater collaboration with English Department
- Revised workbook activities
- Deadlines for workbooks
- Increased points of contact
- More pedagogical training for library instructors