

THE THING ABOUT FAILING: EXPLORING A RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT FOR RE-ADMITTED STUDENTS

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**LEARNING & INSTRUCTION LIBRARIAN
DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY**



OUTLINE

The context – Refining Your Learning Skills

The IL session

The Wikipedia assignment

**REFINING YOUR LEARNING SKILLS FOR RE-
ADMITTED STUDENTS (RYLS)**

**THE
CONTEXT**

REFINING YOUR LEARNING SKILLS

- Helps students apply for a waiver of academic dismissal
- 80% required to pass; one chance only
- 30 classroom hours, daily assignments

Register early. Space is limited.

Description

This course includes 30 classroom hours, plus daily assignments and some afternoon appointments. The course is practical and experiential and is designed to enhance your learning skills for the purpose of achieving academic success in university. Students who attend this course will have experienced academic success in high school; however, the study skills applied may not have been sufficient for the intense demands placed on students in the early years of university. To help you refine your skill set, we have selected a range of topics that aim to secure



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What will I learn?

Session	Topic
1	Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviours
2	Time Management
3	Learning from Lectures and Note Taking
4	Coping Strategies
5	Procrastination and Alternative Thinking
6	Goal Setting and Academic Integrity
7	Learning Styles
8	Assertive Communication and Exam Anxiety
9	Exam Preparation and Survival Tips
10	Mindfulness and Your Future

DALHOUSIE & RETENTION

- **Initiatives to increase retention**
- **FASS first year seminars**
- **Dalhousie Libraries Research Assistance Program**
- **RYLS opened to FASS students in 2015**

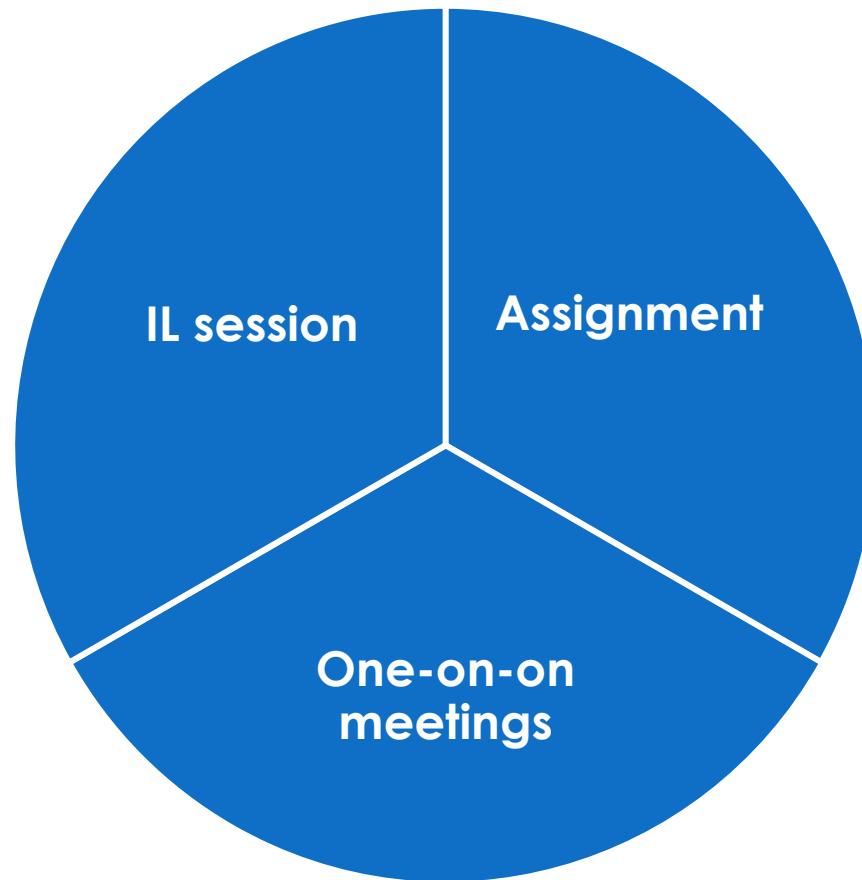
“THE THING ABOUT FAILING...”

It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all — in which case, you fail by default.

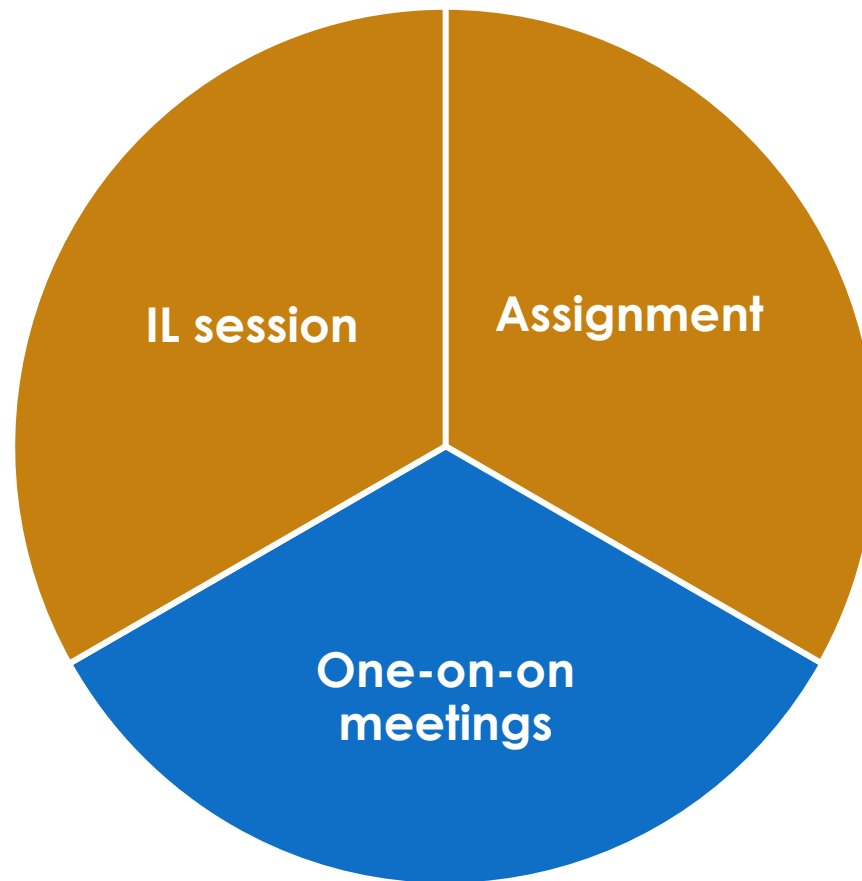
J.K. Rowling



RYLS – OUR APPROACH



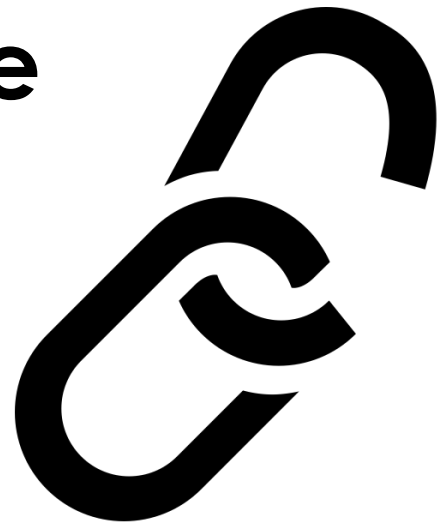
RYLS – OUR APPROACH



HABIT-BREAKING

Information literacy: uncritical belief

Study skills: leaving research papers until the last minute



Created by Stephen JB Thomas
from Noun Project

THE INFO LIT SESSION

Refining Your Learning Skills: Research session

What we like about research

- Learning new information/things
- Finding lots of sources
- Learning HOW to research

What we find most challenging about research

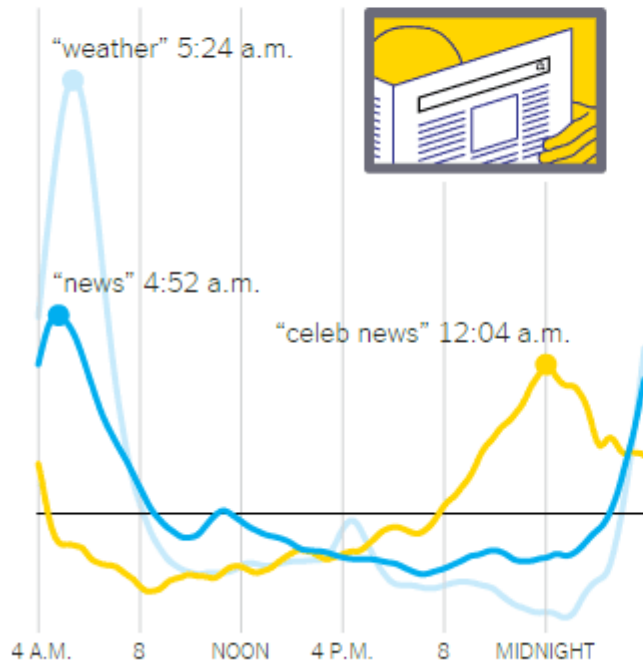
- Finding relevant info
- Determining a source's legitimacy
- Getting started!
- Dryness of the material



I SEARCH, THEREFORE I AM

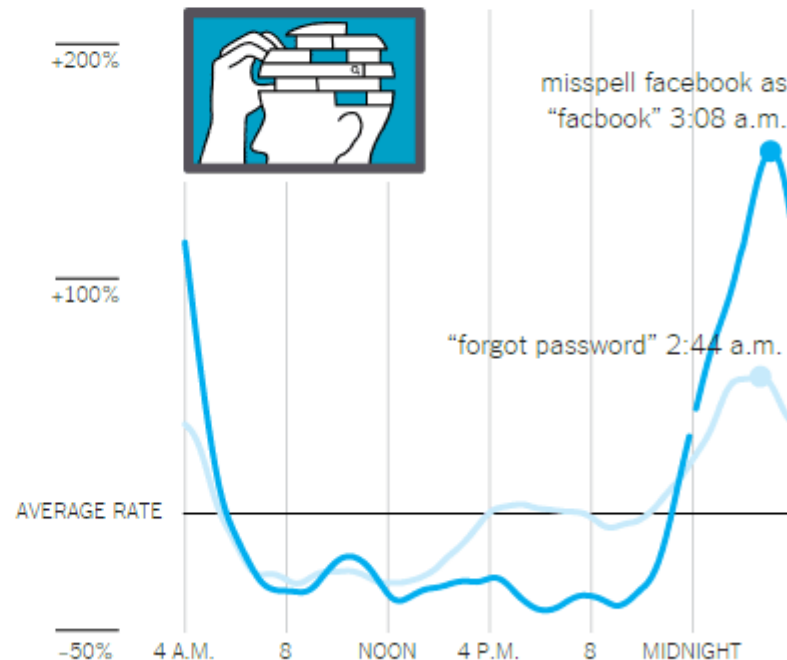
THE MEDIA MENU

After beginning their day with forecasts and the news, many swiftly lose interest. At night, bring on the Kardashians.



IT'S BEEN A LONG DAY

Lapses and forgetfulness peak when you would expect: well after midnight.



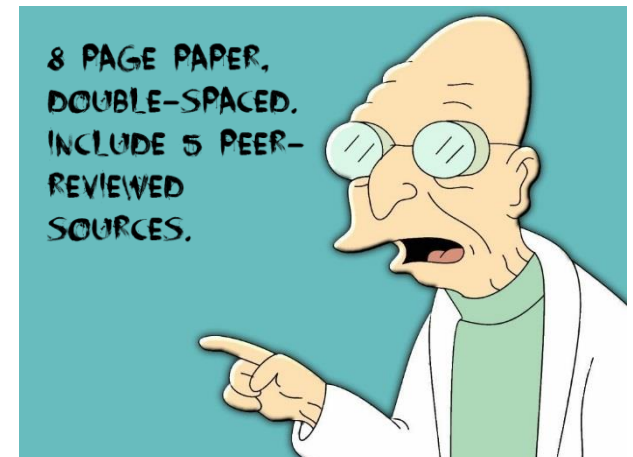
Stephens-Davidowitz, S. (2015, July 4). Days of our digital lives. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://nyti.ms/1KHbGzd>

HOW DO WE DECIDE WHAT TO BELIEVE?

- **Emotion**
- **Prior knowledge**
- **Evidence**

TOPIC – RESEARCH IS ITERATIVE

- Choosing a manageable topic
- Initial research
- Narrowing/changing the topic based on results
- Creating searchable parts



NOT FINDING MUCH?

Break down your research topic into researchable chunks

"I want to research selfishness in the works of Kurt Vonnegut."

selfishness

- Research selfishness in other literature
- Read up on selfishness from other perspectives (ie. Psychology)

Vonnegut

- Read his books closely for similar patterns

NOT FINDING MUCH?

Be open to broadening your topic

“I want to research the use of Instagram at funerals by university students.”

Instagram

funerals

students

Remove a variable. Try:

Instagram use at **funerals**

OR

Instagram use by **students**

Google

In the news



Oregon shooting: Jeb Bush says 'stuff happens' as left calls for gun control

The Guardian - 17 hours ago

"I know there is way to have sensible gun control me that prevent violence, prevent ...

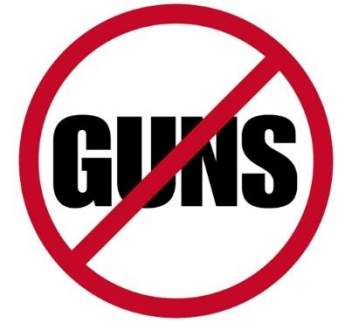


Donald Trump almost made a really good point about mass shootings

Vox - 17 hours ago

If not now, when? America's endless gun control

Yahoo News - 10 hours ago



The screenshot shows the Wikipedia article for "Gun control". The title is "Gun control" and it includes a sub-header "From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia". The main text discusses gun control laws and policies, mentioning that they vary greatly around the world. It notes that some countries, like the United Kingdom, have very strict limits on gun possession, while others, like the United States, have relatively few restrictions. It also mentions that proponents of gun control generally argue that widespread gun ownership increases the danger of gun-related crime, homicide, and suicide, while opponents argue that gun control does not reduce gun-related injuries, murder, or suicide, and some argue that certain regulations violate individual liberties. A small image of a gun show in Houston, Texas, is visible on the right side of the article.



WHAT MAKES A GOOD SOURCE?

Refining Your Learning Skills: Research session

What makes a good source?

- The author's credentials
- Found on a university website
- Government source
- Well-known
- Unbiased
- References other sources

Remember that authority is contextual!

Reading academic articles

- Abstract
- Background
- Methods
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- References

Information, Communication & Society, 2015
Vol. 18, No. 3, 255–268, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2014.987152>



#Funeral and Instagram: death, social media, and platform vernacular

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(Received 31 August 2014; accepted 7 November 2014)

This paper presents findings from a study of Instagram use and funerary practices that analysed photographs shared on public profiles tagged with ‘#funeral’. We found that the majority of images uploaded with the hashtag #funeral often communicated a person’s emotional circumstances and affective context, and allowed them to reposition their funeral experience amongst wider networks of acquaintances, friends, and family. We argue that photo-sharing through Instagram echoes broader shifts in commemorative and memorialization practices, moving away from formal and institutionalized rituals to informal and personalized, vernacular practices. Finally, we consider how Instagram’s ‘platform vernacular’ unfolds in relation to traditions and contexts of death, mourning, and memorialization. This research contributes to a broader understanding of how platform vernaculars are shaped through the logics of architecture and use. This research also directly contributes to the understanding of death and digital media by examining how social media is being mobilized in relation to death, the differences that different media platforms make, and the ways social media are increasingly entwined with the places, events, and rituals of mourning.

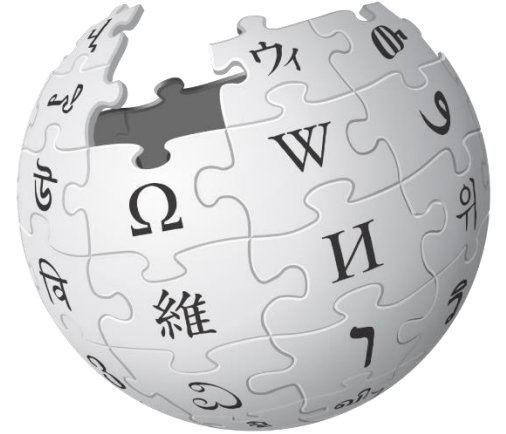
Keywords: Instagram; platform vernacular; hashtag; funeral; photo-sharing; selfie

Introduction

There is a growing body of research examining the ways death is addressed in online environments. Following the emergence of online memorials or ‘virtual cemeteries’ (Roberts, 2004) in the 1990s, and the more recent popularity of memorialized profiles on social media platforms, scholars from a range of disciplines have become increasingly interested in the digital mediation of death, commemoration, and memorialization. This work has examined how grief and social support take shape in online networks (Brubaker & Hayes, 2011; Moss, 2004; Williams & Morton, 2009), and how the dead persist and continue to participate as social actors through

THE RESEARCH PAPER PROCESS

- **Get a topic**
- **Research the topic**
- **Determine whether your sources are any good**
- **Read the sources and take notes**
- **Form an argument**
- **Fit the sources in with your argument**
- **Write the paper**
- **Cite your sources!**



WIKIPEDIA ASSIGNMENT

WIKIPEDIA: INFORMATION HAS VALUE; AUTHORITY IS CONSTRUCTED & CONTEXTUAL

Char Booth: “We can engage learners to leverage paywalled library resources, empower participation in public discourse, and improve their powers of inquiry, evaluation, and attribution, all while creating a better Wikipedia.”

Heidi Jacobs: interrogating a familiar source like Wikipedia may encourage students to be critical of other sources.

WHY I USED WIKIPEDIA

- **To problematize Wikipedia in a tangible way**
- **To tie research to responsibility**

WIKIPEDIA & THE ONE-SHOT

- **John Thomas Oliver (2014):** “Let Wikipedia through the gates!: A Trojan horse approach to information literacy”
- The Wikipedia edit-sprint
 - 30-minute intro to library resources
 - 20-minute critical discussion of Wikipedia
 - 10-minute Wikipedia editing demo
 - 30-minute Wikipedia edit sprint

ASSIGNMENT OBJECTIVES

- **Define an information need (an unverified Wikipedia page)**
- **Search relevant resources (Searching is strategic; Research as inquiry)**
- **Use and document the information to improve the Wikipedia article (Information has value)**

THE ASSIGNMENT (4 PARTS)

- 1. Find a topic**
- 2. Research the topic**
- 3. Edit Wikipedia**
- 4. Reflect**

THE ASSIGNMENT (4 PARTS)

1. Find a topic

Find a topic

2. Research the topic

- Site search Wikipedia

3. Edit Wikipedia

4. Reflect

site:en.wikipedia.org “needs additional citations” keywords

THE ASSIGNMENT (4 PARTS)

1. Find a topic

2. Research the topic

3. Edit Wikipedia

4. Reflect

Research the topic

- 3 books or journal articles
- Meeting with librarian
- Mini-annotated bibliography
- Consult RYLS LibGuide

THE ASSIGNMENT

(4 PARTS)

1. Find a topic
2. Research the topic
3. **Edit Wikipedia**
4. Reflect

Edit Wikipedia

- Watch instructional video
- Cite an uncited claim OR
- Add/cite new information
- Provide before & after PDFs

THE ASSIGNMENT (4 PARTS)

1. Find a topic
2. Research the topic
3. Edit Wikipedia
4. Reflect

Reflect

- Thoughts on the assignment? On Wikipedia?
- Confidence as a researcher?
- Personal connection with the library & university?
- Suggestions for improvement?

STUDENT FEEDBACK

- **General increase in students' confidence as researchers and connection to the library**

THOUGHTS ON WIKIPEDIA

Student comments	#
Surprised at how easy it is to edit Wikipedia; understand why professors revile it; feel that this needs to be discussed more in high school	6
Still find Wikipedia to be a useful resource when used correctly	2
Newly impressed with Wikipedia	4
Perceptions unchanged	2

“I felt like I could add a piece of my new found knowledge to society. At first I thought Wikipedia was really bad to use, but now I think as long as you look into the citations it can be a very useful tool.”

SUGGESTIONS FROM STUDENTS

- **Provide a list of topics (added on second round)**
- **More instruction on editing Wikipedia**
- **Students should be encouraged to pick topics in their own disciplines**

ARE THE EDITS STILL THERE?

For the most part, yes!

- **18 students have completed this assignment**
- **14 edits are still there; 1 has been built upon**
- **2 unsure**
- **2 removed**

SITE TRAFFIC

**From Nov. 2015 until Jan. 18th
2016**

- **Lowest was 822 views**
- **Highest 106,468 views**

THINGS TO DO DIFFERENTLY

- **Stress the importance of source evaluation**
- **Try for a debriefing**
- **Insist on students choosing topics prior to the one-on-one meetings**
- **Consider in-class searching**
- **More focus on Wikipedia to reinforce nuances**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- **Susan Holmes & Eleanor Hornbeck, Refining Your Learning Skills, Dalhousie U.**
- **Linda Bedwell, User Experience & Assessment Librarian, Dalhousie U.**

SOURCES

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THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?

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