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Objective Research? Information Literacy Instruction Perspectives

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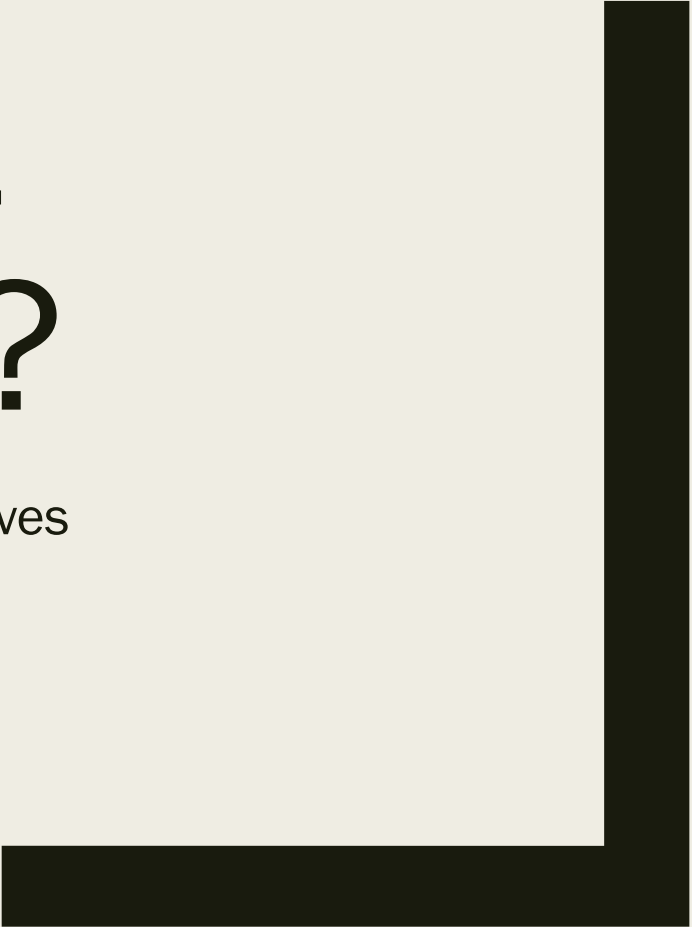
OBJECTIVE RESEARCH?

Information Literacy Instruction Perspectives

Michigan Academy, March 4, 2016

By Terry Dwain Robertson

Andrews University



Anchor Points:

- Framework for Information Literacy, ACRL (2015)
 - *“The Framework opens the way for librarians, faculty, and other institutional partners to redesign instruction sessions, assignments, courses, and even curricula.”*
 - *“Scholarship as Conversation: Communities of scholars, researchers, or professionals engage in sustained discourse with new insights and discoveries occurring over time as a result of varied perspectives and interpretations.”*

- Documentality, Maurizio Ferraris (2013)
 - *Classify, not construct*
 - *Objects, not subjects*

Presentation Outline and Objectives

- I. Reflect on a reframing of how we think about “research”
- II. Suggest applications for library instruction

A thick black L-shaped frame is positioned on the left and bottom edges of the page, framing the central text.

PART I: REFRAMING RESEARCH

Alternative Framing of “Objective” Research

Objective research is the grounded, intentional and savvy analysis of an “object” in conversation with a community of peers/experts for the purpose of creating knowledge.

Ferraris' Ontology

- Natural objects
 - *Trees, tables, tibias*
- Ideal objects
 - *Triangles, time, space*
- Social objects
 - *Money, marriage certificates, passports*
 - *Responding to the notion that knowledge is socially constructed*
 - *Argues that ontology precedes epistemology*
 - *Documents are social objects*

Grounded

- Sufficient knowledge to identify, understand and appreciate the “object”
- Sufficient awareness of appropriate methods

Objective research is the **grounded**, intentional and savvy analysis of an “object” in conversation with a community of peers/experts for the purpose of creating knowledge.

Intentional

- Purposeful – an appropriate research question
- Methodological rigor
- Learning driven
- Audience sensitive

Objective research is the grounded, **intentional** and savvy analysis of an “object” in conversation with a community of peers/experts for the purpose of creating knowledge.

Savvy

- Attentive to the *ethos* of the disciplinary community
- Charitably, but not naively, allowing for the normal constraints on veridical communication through commodified documents
 - *Author's time, place, language*
 - *Language*
 - *Technology*
 - *Document parameters*

Objective research is the grounded, intentional and **savvy** analysis of an “object” in conversation with a community of peers/experts for the purpose of creating knowledge.

Analysis

- Positioning oneself outside the object
- Careful, thorough, examination
- Established disciplinary methodologies

Objective research is the grounded, intentional and savvy **analysis** of an “object” in conversation with a community of peers/experts for the purpose of creating knowledge.

Conversation

- Most knowledge received from others
- Engaging trustworthy sources
- Conversation is good faith contribution of informed experts relating to the object

Objective research is the grounded, intentional and savvy analysis of an “object” **in conversation with a community of peers/experts** for the purpose of creating knowledge.


Creating Knowledge

- Knowledge is justified true belief
- A belief is considered justified if it
 - *Corresponds to reality*
 - *Is coherent with other justified beliefs*
 - *Works*
- Creating new knowledge transforms the learner, clarifies some point, fills a gap, adds to the collective knowledge of the community, connects ideas, solves a problem, etc

*Objective research is the grounded, intentional and savvy analysis of an “object” in conversation with a community of peers/experts for the purpose of **creating knowledge**.*



PART II: LIBRARY INSTRUCTION



“Framing the Conversation”

- Information Literacy has emerged at the confluence of
 - *Consumerism – the more choices, the better*
 - *Technologism – computers can deliver more and more choices*
 - *Post-modernism – performativity vs authority, whatever works*
- Epistemic cognition – how perspectives of knowledge mature
 - *Realist – Absolutist – Multiplist – Evaluativist (Greene & Yu, 2016)*
- Critical Thinking vs. Discernment (Coleman, 2009)

Information Literacy Instruction

- Includes strategies on managing abundance using both critical thinking and discernment
- Includes skills on effectively using technology for purpose
- Includes assessment abilities on two levels (Budd, 2009):
 - *Instrumental*
 - *Transformational*

Overview

OBJECT

METHOD

FUNCTION OF DOCUMENTS

LIBRARY RESOURCES

NATURAL OBJECTS

- Scientific Methods

- *Literature Review*

- Primary Literature – reports of first hand research (colleagues)
 - Secondary Literature – discussions of research (mentors)
 - Tertiary Literature – status quo (collective memory)

IDEAL OBJECTS

- Logic and Rhetoric

- *Tertiary Sources – language and context*
- *Secondary Sources – enrich the conversation, help fill gaps*
- *Primary Sources – exemplars of method*

Social Objects (Documents)

- Social Science Methods
 - *Qualitative and Quantitative*
- Historical Research
- Literary Analysis
 - Primary Texts – the documents
 - Secondary Texts – scholarly discussions of the texts
 - Tertiary Texts – necessary background information

Novice Researchers

- Accomplished Researchers “get it” tacitly at the level of evaluator
- Novice Researchers may (Brabazon, 2013)
 - *begin at a lower level of epistemic cognition*
 - *have confused expectations with regard to the type of source*
 - *be overwhelmed by the abundance of knowledge*
 - *be unclear as to when and why citation is needed*

Picturing Documents

- Documents are like maps (Stackhouse, 2014)
 - *Each map is a representation of reality, not the reality proper*
 - *Each map is a reified construction of the map maker's perception*
 - *A map is considered accurate if it functions as intended*
 - *A map is useful if user needs align with the mapmaker's intent*
- Discernment – perceiving and learning the contribution of each map, and correlating the insights for creating new knowledge, a new map

Conclusion

- The “redesign” of course research assignments with regard to using the library warrants taking into account:
 - *Focused rather generic library instruction that:*
 - fits the object of the research the student is engaging
 - provides a rubric for categorizing and evaluating the sources to use them appropriately and effectively
 - privileges the evaluativist epistemic cognition level
 - *Working with faculty to construct assignments that reflect these considerations*

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