Facilitator Guide: Learning to Search & Searching to Learn

Overview

The Internet has changed how we find out what we need to know. We can now find information in a matter of seconds. The key is, is it good information? Good information is found through good searching skills and good critical appraisal skills. This module will explore how to search for resources effectively and make sense of the vast amount of information you are able to access.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, learners should be able to:
- Use Boolean and other advanced search techniques to find information efficiently
- Examine the characteristics of popular, scholarly or academic sources to determine the quality of the information it contains.

Topics & Subtopics

- Finding (good) information
- Boolean logic
- Evaluating sources

Teaching and Learning Activities
(Online but may be easily adapted to face to face)

Content Delivery:

Learners view:
- "Searching Effectively" video
- "Critically Evaluating Information" video

Activity: Internet Search

Description: Effective information-gathering techniques are integral to successful interactions with online content. By gaining a more in-depth understanding of how search engines like Google operate, we can find more extensive answers to our questions in a shorter period of time. This activity will challenge you to construct relevant research questions surrounding a topic of your choice. You will be sharing your research questions with a partner, and answering them by accessing various Internet resources. Finally, you will provide a brief reflection on the question development and answering experience. The Internet Search Question Activity Forum will be where you and your partner will post your exchanges & reflections.

Guidelines:

Step 1 – Search techniques and topic selection

You've watched the "Searching Effectively" video and should be familiar with Boolean and Google operators and search techniques,

Now, watch the three short videos provided at the link below:

http://www.powersearchingwithgoogle.com/course/aps/class?class=1&lesson=1

In this activity, you will develop a multi-part question regarding an area of interest to you. Potential topics may include (but are not limited to) a specific technology, organization, location, or person - or something as simple as your love of avocados. The more obscure the topic, the better (so long as there is adequate information about the topic available online!). Familiarize yourself with the extent of available, relevant online information before selecting your specific topic.

Step 2 – Question development and answering

Provide a brief (2-3 sentences) description of your topic (consider the example questions provided in the "power searching with Google" videos). Try to give enough information to point your partner in the right direction without giving away specific details.

EXAMPLE DESCRIPTION:

This summer I travelled to a particular city. One of the city's titles incorporates a particular weather condition. There is a distinct piece of polished art in the city.

Next, you are to develop three questions that can be answered through Internet search. In forming these questions, try to draw on a wide range of online resources; Amateur webpages, official sites, videos, and academic articles in databases are all fair game. However, ensure that any information you have found can be verified by multiple sources.

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS:

1)   What is the name of this city, and how did it get its unofficial name?

2)   If you look at this artwork from the northwest, you can see a reversed image of a building owned by which wealthy political figure?

3)   How often is the artwork cleaned?

As shown in the *Power Searching With Google* videos, the questions you ask should have specific answers. Consider who/what, when, why, how, and where when you form these questions. You will exchange questions/descriptive statements with a partner in this Internet Search Activity (Unit 1), and attempt to answer your partner's questions exclusively through online research.

Step 3 - Reflect

In the final portion of this assignment, you are to briefly reflect on the question-formation and information-gathering experience. Describe how advanced techniques (i.e. use of Boolean operators) directed your research as you attempted to answer your partner's questions. Also describe the variety of resources you accessed (i.e. videos, journal articles, etc.), as well as how the incorporation of new information (pertaining to the questions you are trying to answer) directed your search as it progressed.

Activity: Discussion Board

Create a discussion thread for learners to exchange their search questions and answers as detailed in the guidelines above. Randomly pair or assign pairs of students when creating the thread.

Additional Resources

[McMaster Library Module on Searching Effectively](#)

[McMaster Library Module on Critically Evaluating Information](#)

[Resources and Search Strategies](#)

[Colorado State University Evaluating Information Module](#)

References

Appendices