

# HOW IT GOT HERE

## Teaching “Format as Process” in an Era of Web-Scale Discovery

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# LEARNING OUTCOMES

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1. Define “Format as a Process”
2. Apply the Concept to Information Literacy Instruction

# WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

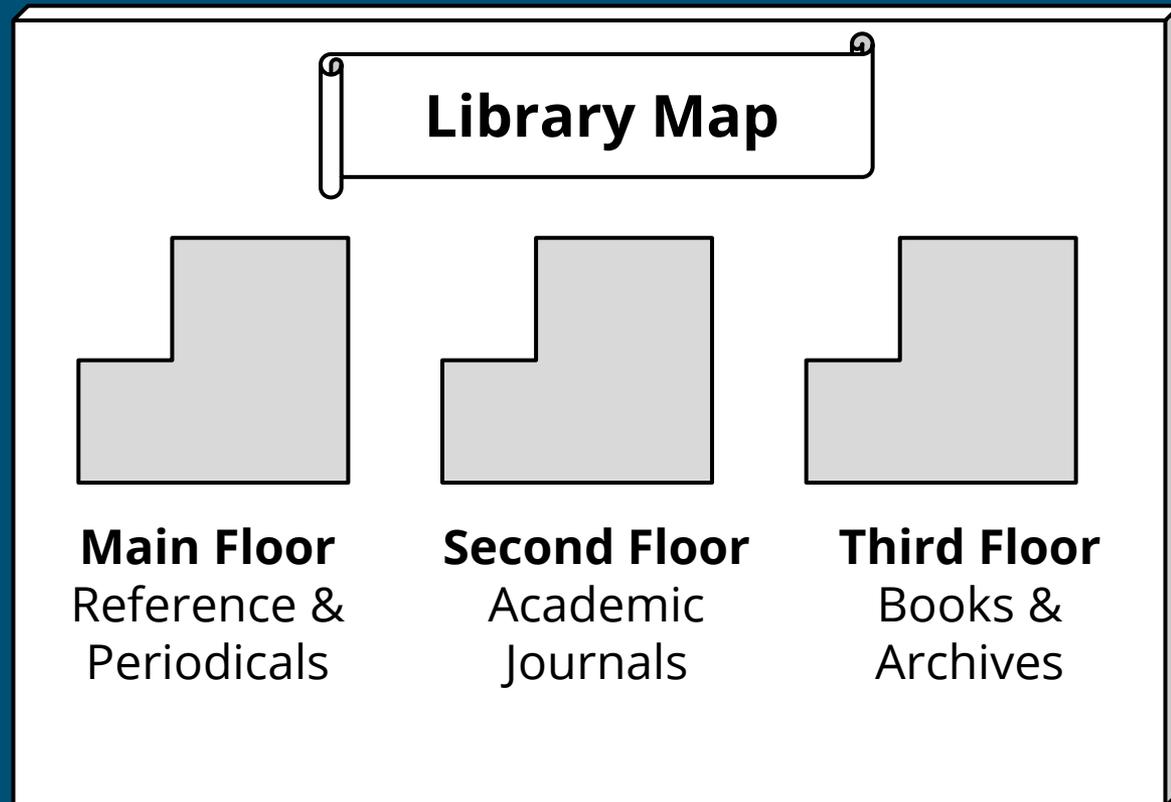
The way we  
search keeps  
**changing.**

We need to  
teach things  
which are  
**constant.**

THE OLD WAY OF  
DOING THINGS...

# LIBRARY INSTRUCTION AS GEOGRAPHY LESSON

“I want students to know how to do research, so could you give them a tour of the library?”



# LEARNING OUTCOME

Students navigate **the building** to locate appropriate sources.

# ASSESSMENT

Are students able to find appropriate sources **on the shelf**?

Effective when:

Students are in a specific library.

Collection locations are static.

Print sources are enough to meet needs.

# LIBRARY INSTRUCTION AS GRAPHIC DESIGN SEMINAR

“I want students to know how to do research, so could you show them what good sources look like?”

## Scholarly Article

A. Scholar, Ph.D.  
University of Examples

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# LEARNING OUTCOME

Students identify sources based on **visual cues** and **formatting**.

# ASSESSMENT

Can students distinguish **one type of source** from another?

Effective when:

All sources follow set formatting rules.

There is a limited number of source types.

Every format can be explained.

# LIBRARY INSTRUCTION AS DATABASE TUTORIAL

“I want students to know how to do research, so could you show them the library databases?”

*Library* SEARCH

■ ■ ■

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# LEARNING OUTCOME

Students **manipulate a database** to locate appropriate sources.

# ASSESSMENT

Are students aware of **database functions**?  
Do they apply them?

Effective when:

Database interfaces are static.

Every database can be demonstrated.

Library databases are the only tool used.

SO WHAT  
CHANGED?

The shift to  
Web-Scale  
Discovery  
has put more  
sources into  
simpler  
interfaces.

LIBRARIANS ARE **DIVIDED** ON  
THE VALUE OF WEB-SCALE...

...but many users prefer the  
simpler interfaces, and more  
and more libraries are  
implementing these platforms.

So what is  
“library instruction”  
in an era of  
web-scale discovery?

Now we can focus  
on just teaching  
the one interface...

...right?

# WRONG.



**Kevin Seeber**

@kevinseeber

Ebsco is 86'ing Visual Search. I learned this fact ~40 min before a class where, yes, I had planned on demo'ing visual search. New plan!

↩ Reply 🗑 Delete ★ Favorite ⋮ More

12:36 PM - 16 Jul 2013

Reply to @kevinseeber

# THE EPIPHANY:

Any instruction based  
on static interfaces,  
locations, or  
appearances  
is not **sustainable**.

# WHAT'S MORE:

Search tools keep getting simpler, while pulling in more and more types of results.

THE

SOLUTION: Don't teach  
the interface,  
teach the  
results.

# WE NEED TO FOCUS ON CRITICAL EVALUATION

Information Literacy is  
not about knowing “how.”

It’s about knowing “why.”

[ENTER THE FRAMEWORK]

# FORMAT AS A PROCESS.

“What makes a book a book and a newspaper article a newspaper article has nothing to do with how one accesses it (print/digital), but with the process that went into creating it. Understanding this principle helps students navigate the information they find online and evaluate it according to the process underlying its creation, rather than by a set of memorized, constantly changing, inconsistent characteristics.”

Hofer, A.R., Townsend, L. and Brunetti, K. (2012), “Threshold concepts and information literacy: Investigating threshold concepts for IL instruction.” *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 387-405.

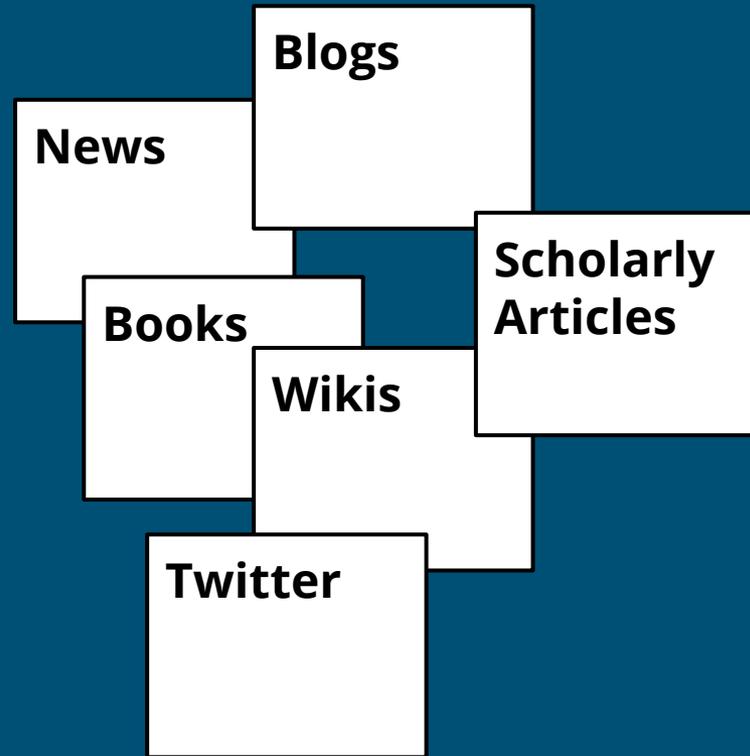
# WHY FORMAT AS A PROCESS WORKS:

It does not rely on a fixed interface or location. It's applicable in any information seeking context.

HOW DOES THIS  
WORK IN PRACTICE?

# LIBRARY INSTRUCTION AS DISCUSSION OF PROCESS

“I want students to know how to do research, so could you show them why some sources are better than others?”



# FOCUS ON THE PROCESS

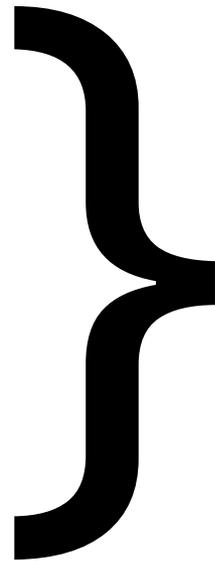
not the  
format.

Discuss  
processes  
objectively.

NO FORMAT  
IS ALWAYS  
THE "BEST"  
SOURCE.

# IDENTIFY HOW PROCESSES MAKE SOMETHING BETTER OR WORSE.

Editing  
Research  
Time



These all  
have benefits  
and  
limitations

Use process to discuss  
**AUTHORITY.**

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Why are some processes  
**privileged**  
over others?

AVOID VISUAL CUES.

Four thick white horizontal lines are positioned in the middle of the slide, separating the top text from the bottom text.

Process is invisible.

ENGAGE  
IN A  
PROCESS.

Blog.  
Tweet.  
Edit Wikipedia.  
Create  
information.

USE FORMATS  
TO EXPLAIN  
THE INTERFACE

(not vice versa)

# PEER REVIEW IS NOT A FACET

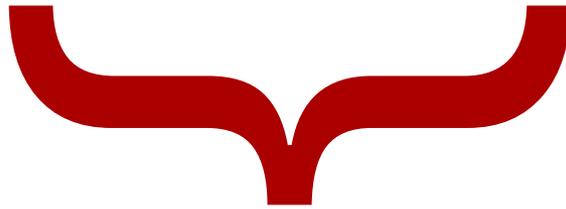
It is a process  
represented by a facet.

(Ceci n'est pas une pipe, etc.)

# CONNECT SKILLS TO OTHER SEARCH AREAS.

Web-Scale  
Discovery

Search  
Engines



These have a lot in common.

ASSESS  
THEIR  
THINKING,  
NOT THEIR  
SOURCES.

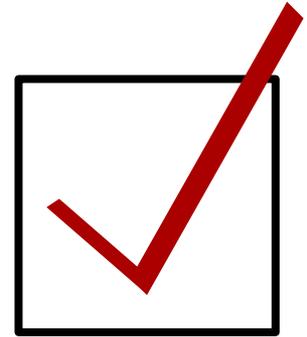
A  
bibliography  
does not tell  
us what they  
learned.

# SAMPLE ASSESSMENT

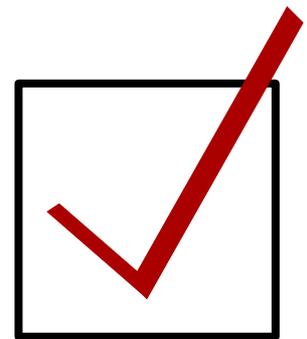
“What can you tell about how this source was made?”

“What about that process makes this a ‘good’ source for you to use?”

# SAMPLE RUBRIC



Can students **identify** a **formative process** inherent to the format?



Can they **qualify** how that process contributes to the **authority** or **relevance** of the source?

STUDENTS DO NOT  
NEED TO KNOW EVERY  
FORMAT.

They only need  
to recognize the  
role of **process**.

# LEARNING OUTCOME

Students **reflect on formative processes** when evaluating sources.

# ASSESSMENT

Do students **consider process**, and does that reflection influence source selection?

Effective when:

They search in multiple environments.

Formats take on a variety of shapes.

Students are capable of critical reflection.

IN TIME, THIS CRITICAL  
REFLECTION EXTENDS BEYOND  
THE SOURCE TO EXAMINE THE  
PROCESSES WHICH CREATE AND  
DISTRIBUTE THOSE SOURCES.

ELMBORG  
TELLS US  
THAT:

# Information Literacy

“is more than a set of acquired skills. It involves the comprehension of an entire system of thought and the ways that information flows in that system.”

“ULTIMATELY, IT ALSO  
INVOLVES THE CAPACITY TO  
CRITICALLY EVALUATE THE  
SYSTEM ITSELF.”

Elmborg, J. (2006), “Critical information literacy: Implications for instruction practice,” *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, Vol. 32 No. 4, pp. 311-29.

The lessons they are  
learning are

**SUSTAINABLE.**

Critical evaluation is a  
**lifelong skill.**

# WHAT'S THE CATCH?

This is not the kind of learning that happens in a one-shot.

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