How It Got Here

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

Kevin Seeber
Library Instruction Coordinator
Colorado State University-Pueblo
kevin.seeber@colostate-pueblo.edu
@kevinseeber
1. Define “Format as a Process”

2. Apply the Concept to Information Literacy Instruction
The way we search keeps changing.

We need to teach things which are constant.

**Why is this relevant?**
The Old Way of Doing Things...
“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.
“I want students to know how to do research, so could you show them what good sources look like?”
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.
“I want students to know how to do research, so could you show them the library databases?”
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?
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!

12:36 PM - 16 Jul 2013
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
“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.”

It does not rely on a fixed interface or location. It’s applicable in any information seeking context.
How Does This Work in Practice?
"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.

These all have benefits and limitations.
Use process to discuss **Authority**.

Why are some processes privileged over others?
Avoid Visual Cues.

Process is invisible.
ENGAGE IN A PROCESS.


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.

These have a lot in common.

Web-Scale Discovery

Search Engines
A bibliography does not tell us what they learned.

Assess their thinking, not their sources.
“What can you tell about how this source was made?”

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

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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