

Encourage Students to Evaluate the Quality of Information Sources

Students are notorious procrastinators. Assigning an annotated bibliography early in the term helps students structure their time. For example, if we expect students to cite primary sources in a literature review paper, students who delay locating sources might scramble to locate the required number of sources and cite sources of marginal relevance.

The annotated bibliography can encourage students to evaluate the quality of sources located in a data base if we require students to locate a larger number of scholarly sources than we require the students to cite in the final paper. The annotated bibliography assignment might require each student to identify 2-3 sources they located in a data base search that they thought would be useful but decided were not relevant or not useful. Ask students to explain in their annotations why a rejected source looked promising at first but was ultimately rejected.

When students identify and examine more materials than they are required to include in the final submission, they can break away from the habit of including every remotely relevant source they locate to meet minimum citation requirements for an assignment. Students can then begin to evaluate the merit of materials as cited sources. Students need practice making these decisions to build their information literacy skills in the analysis and evaluation of evidence.

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