Information Literacy Research Portfolio Guidelines

Information literacy is a component of lifelong learning. To be information literate a person must possess several skills: an understanding of how information is created and organized and an understanding of the political, economic and social context(s) in which knowledge is created and used; the ability to formulate research questions; the ability to translate questions into a search strategy; the ability to select appropriate tools to locate desired information; and the ability to evaluate material for its credibility and authority, as well as its capacity to meet the information need.

Assessing Student Research
One way to assess research skill is to have students submit a research portfolio with their research project, or paper. A research portfolio should include the following items:
1. Documentation of how students searched for books, periodical articles, reference material and web pages (i.e., the type of searches conducted--keyword, subject heading, etc., and the techniques used in searching).
2. Explanation of how the resources support the research focus and research questions.
3. Evaluation of resources for credibility and authority, and an explanation of why the student trusts the information.

Students Develop a Draft Research Focus Paragraph & Research Questions
Have students submit a thesis paragraph, or research topic focus paragraph. The thesis, or topic focus paragraph, should present the major issues and ideas that they plan to address in their research project/paper. Students should develop research questions that allow them to adequately focus their topic on specific issues and sub-aspects of the topic. The questions should be open ended and should help them to explore the major ideas, issues, and/or controversies surrounding the topic.

The instructor should critique the draft and provide the student with feedback that allows the student to reshape the research focus and questions.

Students Develop a Search Strategy
Have students submit a list of keywords and keyword phrases that they think might be useful in searching for books, articles, and web pages. Have students attempt to combine these keywords into search strings that might be useful to enter into databases to retrieve items related to their topic. The goal is to help students develop search words and phrases that will actually work to locate material in library databases and on the web. If students did a good job developing their research focus paragraph and research questions, they should be able to locate and extract search words and phrases that could be used alone, or in combination to locate material supporting their topic. This exercise helps students realize why it is important to have a somewhat clear understanding of a topic before they attempt to actually search for information.

The instructor should evaluate the student's search words and phrases and provide feedback and suggestions for additional words and phrases. The teacher should also point out possible ways students can combine search terms and phrases to help focus or narrow their search results.

Students Create a Final Research Portfolio
Have students submit a typewritten research portfolio. When handing out the assignment provide students with a copy of the grading rubric so they understand how they will be graded. The research portfolio should include the following items:
1. A final version of their topic focus, thesis statement, research questions and keywords and subject headings useful for locating material on their topic.
2. Detailed documentation of how the student searched for a specific number of books, periodical articles, reference resources and web pages. Documentation of 25-50% of the required items is sufficient, depending on the number of items required to locate. Have students tell you which databases they searched for each selected item, the specific type of search they did for each selected item (i.e., keyword search, subject heading search, author search, etc.), and have them write out the exact search for each selected item so that you can evaluate it for its usefulness and appropriateness.
3. Have students explain how each selected item helps support their research focus and questions. Students should provide detailed answers explaining how specific information in each item supports specific aspects of their topic.
4. Have students evaluate each selected resource based upon specific criteria. Students should explain why they consider the author and/or publisher to be a credible source of information. Students should explain why they trust the author or publisher, and identify biases. Students should consider and reflect upon the credentials of the author, their position in an academic discipline, a news organization, government, and/or society. Students should also reflect upon the political, economic, and social status that the publisher occupies, and what types of material the publisher produces.

Using the Research Portfolio Assessment Rubric
1. The rubric is designed to score the research journal. You can also use parts of the rubric to score the draft thesis statement and keywords if you like. Give students a copy of the rubric with the assignment so they understand how they will be graded
2. To use the rubric for grading, assign a total number of points to the research portfolio. Then divide the total points by the four competency assessment areas. You can divide the points evenly or assign different point values to each area. Once you have decided on the point value for each competency area, distribute the point values to reflect A, B, C, D/F grade levels for each competency area.

Sample Student Research Portfolio

General topic: AIDS in Africa/Orphans' of AIDS

Primary focus: The social consequences of AIDS in Africa with an emphasis on the children who lost their parents.

Questions: What can be done to stop the AIDS epidemic, especially in Africa? What can be done to prevent African children who have lost their parents to AIDS from becoming AIDS victims themselves? What future do these children have? What role do developed countries have in fighting the epidemic? Moreover, what role should the whole of society play towards these orphans?

Thesis statement: Millions of children in African have to face life alone without parents. Poverty, ignorance, wars, and AIDS are taking their toll on African peoples. We have a role as humans and as nations to provide the needed help to Africa and its people. We cannot ignore this duty, and if we do, then we are ignoring part of our humanity. We need to think about the pain and sorrow of others, and governments and non-profit organizations should work to eliminate and reduce this pain and sorrow, especially the suffering of AIDS orphans.

Subject Headings: AIDS (Disease) in adolescence, AIDS (Disease)—Africa-Sub-Saharan, Sexually transmitted diseases —Africa, Prostitution—Cross-cultural studies, and Social Conditions—Africa

Keywords: AIDS, africa, orphans, parents, victims, consequences, children, epidemic, society, death, assistance.

Search Process & Resource Review:
The AIDS issue in Africa has been covered lately by many magazines, newspapers, television stations, and online resources. It was not difficult for me to find many valuable resources, but the dilemma that I faced was how to narrow the topic. The AIDS issue that touches our lives is the image of children and their pale faces of despair. I was really affected by this issue, so I decided to focus my research on it. The most suitable keywords for my topic were AIDS, Africa, and Orphans. I was not able to find as many books as I wanted that cover the topic. Maybe the international community is to blame because it hasn't given more media attention to such a devastating disease.

Magazines and journals cover the topic well, with many sad pictures that provide a closer look at the orphans with AIDS. The harsh reality of AIDS in Africa forced me to focus my research on the ethical and social aspects of the topic. In the next step, I will summarize the resources that I used in my research.

Book:
I used the PALS Library Catalog. I did a keyword search using the keywords *aids* AND *Africa*. I had six matches, but only three of them were close to my topic. The other books were newer but this was the only book that dealt specifically with orphans.

➢ Barnett, Tony, and Piers Blaikie. <u>AIDS in Africa: Its Present and Future Impact</u>. New York: Guilford Press, 1992.

This source provided a detailed analysis about the dimensions of the AIDS epidemic in Africa. It discussed the impact of the AIDS epidemic on all facets of life in Africa. I was impressed with the book and its contents. The book analyzes the impact of AIDS on African lives and includes an analysis of basic societal structures. It also discusses how AIDS combined with all the other problems in Africa affect the

lives of African peoples. The most important chapter of the book is chapter 7, which deals with the problem of orphans. The book contains an index and references that might be helpful for more resources. Tony Barnett is a professor at the Development Studies Institute at the London School of Economics. The information on the LSE web site states that his research interests "centre around the effects of HIV/AIDS on rural livelihoods in Africa and Asia and the social and economic effects of the epidemic. He has made an audit of the impact of HIV/AIDS on commercial, voluntary and public organisations. He has also worked on the availability and costs of anti-retroviral treatments in Africa" <http://www.lse.ac.uk/people/a.s.barnett@lse.ac.uk/>. His specialty seems to be the economic and social costs of AIDS in Africa. He has also authored and co-authored other books and scholarly journal articles dealing with the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa. This lends credibility to the book and helps me trust the information. Piers Blaikie was a professor at the School of Development Studies at the University of East Anglia, in England. He has published many books and scholarly articles related to issues in the developing world, including crisis in the developing world.

Periodical article:
I used the Academic Search Premier database to search for an article, and I was able to find 153 matches using the keywords *orphan** AND *aids* AND *africa**. The article that I picked for my topic is from *Newsweek* magazine.

➢   Masland, Tom, and Rod Nordland. "10 Million Orphans: For the Children Who Have Lost Their Parents to AIDS, Grief is Only the Beginning of Their Troubles." Newsweek 17 Jan. 2000: 42+. Ebscohost: Academic Search Premier.

The article has some startling facts about the horrible effect of AIDS in Africa. It also shows that the AIDS epidemic increased the number of orphans in some countries by 10%, which is a huge number. This article will provide me with a good overview of the current situation and will help me to understand the impact that AIDS has had on African children and the family structure in Africa. I did an author search for Tom Masland and he has published 19 other articles in Newsweek, most of them on Africa. Newsweek is a mainstream news magazine that discusses current political and social topics. I would locate scholarly journal articles in addition to this popular resource to give me more in-depth information.

Web page:
To locate the web page that I need for my topic, I used Google. I did a keyword search with the keywords *AIDS orphans poverty Africa*. Google automatically inserts AND between the words. I located 195,000 web pages. Since I am specifically interested in Sub-Saharan Africa, I redid my search adding the words *Sub-Saharan* which narrowed my results to 55,000 web pages. The most suitable page was:

➢   Fredriksson, Jenni and Annabel Kanabu. "AIDS Orphans in Africa: HIV/AIDS Orphans Statistics." AVERT.org. 23 Sept. 2003 < http://www.avert.org/aidsorphans.htm> (24 Oct. 2003).

This web page contains news reports and statistics on African AIDS orphans. It provides information on the scale of the problem in Africa, and the difficulties faced by AIDS orphans. It also discusses what specific African countries are doing to address the problems faced by AIDS orphans. This web page will help me address what is being done for AIDS orphans by specific African countries. The information on this web page is based on reports from UNAIDS, USAID, and UNICEF, which are official organizations of the United Nations and the United States. AVERT is an international HIV and AIDS charity based in the UK, with the aim of averting HIV and AIDS worldwide. While government and official international organizations can manipulate information for political purposes, after looking over the material I find it to be trustworthy. If I were to do more research I would want to compare the data to other non-profit organizations to see if there were any discrepancies.

Research Portfolio Assessment Rubric

Requirement	Insufficient (D or F level work)	Basic (C level work)	Proficient (B level work)	Advanced (A level work)
The student specified the dimensions of the topic appropriately. • *Clearly states the focused topic.* • *Developed an appropriate working thesis.* • *Took appropriate steps to narrow and focus the topic.* **(TOTAL POINTS)**	Topic has an imprecise or unclear focus. The focus needs to be narrowed or clarified. Thesis statement does not clearly state a focused topic, lacks precision. Thesis statement does not clearly lay out the main ideas and issues. Research questions are too broad or vague and do not adequately focus the topic. **(POINT RANGE)**	Topic has a discernable focus but lacks precision. Thesis statement addresses the topic but needs more precise focus and precision. There is an argument but it needs to be more clearly stated. Research questions address the topic but need more focus and precision. **(POINT RANGE)**	Clear focus on the topic which is adequately precise. Thesis statement that is clear and focused and adequately precise. The argument is adequately stated and precise. Clear, focused and adequately precise research questions. **(POINT RANGE)**	Very clear focus that is precise, appropriately narrow, and well articulated. Thesis statement that is very well focused and concise. The argument is clear, focused and well stated. Very clear, concise and well focused research questions. **(POINT RANGE)**
The student had a clear articulate research strategy. • *Clearly articulated the process used to identify and locate resources.* • *Used search techniques appropriate for the topic.* • *Used specific and effective search techniques.* **(TOTAL POINTS)**	Research process is not clearly stated or is confused in its application. Research process does not adequately take account of the topic focus and is much too broad in application. Consistent mistakes are made in applying basic search techniques. Confusion related to application of search terms and search techniques. Keywords, keyword phrases, and/or subject headings were not useful for the topic focus. Misapplication of keywords and subject headings. Shows a lack of understanding of what subject headings are and how they are to be used. **(POINT RANGE)**	Research process is articulated but needs more focus and clarity. Basic search techniques are adequately applied but no or little demonstration of advanced search strategies, or errors are made in the application of search techniques. Keywords, keyword phrases, and/or subject headings used in searching relate to the research focus. Keywords and subject headings may be too broad or need to be combined to be effective. **(POINT RANGE)**	Clear research process that adequately takes account of the issues related to the topic. Clear use of basic and advanced search techniques. Minor errors in application of search techniques, or lack of connection in search strategies across library resources. Many useful keywords, keyword phrases, and/or subject headings that clearly relate to the research focus. Indication that the keywords and subject headings have been combined in useful ways to help focus searching. **(POINT RANGE)**	A clear, concise, and well focused research process that takes into account all the relevant issues related to the topic. Used basic and advanced search techniques very well and has applied the search techniques consistently well across all the library resources. Very useful keywords and subject headings that clearly relate to the research focus. Used keywords that located specific sub-aspects of the topic, or located sub-headings and connected them appropriately with main subject headings. **(POINT RANGE)**

The student selected resources that were appropriate for the topic and demonstrated how each resource supported specific aspects of the topic focus.	Most resources selected were not appropriate for supporting the topic focus. Little to no consistency in the selected resources and the research topic focus. Little or no demonstration of the appropriateness of resources for topic relevance, or confusion related to resource relevance.	Most of the resources selected are appropriate for the topic. Demonstration of the appropriateness of resources for topic relevance is adequate for most resources.	All of the resources selected are appropriate for the topic. Demonstration of the appropriateness of resources is well documented and clearly stated. Good level of detail provided concerning relevance of resources to thesis statement, research questions, and topic focus.	All of the resources selected are very well focused on the topic or specific sub-aspects of the topic. Demonstration of the appropriateness of resources is very well documented with in-depth analysis of each resource. Clear and detailed explanation of how each resource supports the thesis statement, research questions, and the various aspects of the topic focus.
(TOTAL POINTS)	**(POINT RANGE)**	**(POINT RANGE)**	**(POINT RANGE)**	**(POINT RANGE)**
The student evaluated each resource according to specific evaluation criteria. The student provided clear and specific evaluations.	Little or no evidence of evaluation of the resources. Attempts at evaluation were not based on any criteria but were mere assertions of credibility without evidence to support claims.	Clear evidence of evaluation of most of the resources, but evaluation lacks depth.	Clear evaluation of resources based upon specific criteria of authority, reliability and bias.	Strong and in-depth evaluation of all resources based upon specific criteria. Clear understanding of the bias, authority, reliability, and credentials of the author, publisher, or web site sponsor.
(TOTAL POINTS)	**(POINT RANGE)**	**(POINT RANGE)**	**(POINT RANGE)**	**(POINT RANGE)**