Connecting with Students: Using Case Studies to Teach Research Skills

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Our Scenario
A “one-shot” lecture introducing new students to library research

Sound familiar?

What did we do?
• UB Librarian and School of Nursing instructor teamed up
• Used case studies for 3 years to introduce and foster research skills to 90 freshman nursing students each Fall semester

What’s a Case Study?
Case studies are stories with an educational message
(Clyde Freeman Herreid)

Our Objectives
• Engage students in recognizing when information is needed
• Foster their ability to find, retrieve, evaluate, and professionally apply it
(Information Literacy Defined – ACRL Web Site)

Our Vehicles
• UB’s award-winning National Center for Case Study Teaching in Science
http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/projects/cases/case.html
• Library wiki
• 2 hour class

These vehicles were jumpstarts to help students...
• Refine research questions
• Explore library and internet resources
• Constantly ask: 
  *Is this resource credible? Trustworthy? Does it add to my knowledge base?*

• Use another case study to hone research skills

• Understand ethical and legal usage of information

**Sample Case Studies**

- Not an Old Person’s Disease
  
  http://www.sciencecases.org/melanoma/melanoma1.asp
  
  (Miskowski & Galbraith, University of Wisconsin – La Cross)

- Andrea: The Death of a Diabetic
  
  http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/projects/cases/diabetic/diabetic.html
  
  (Herreid, University at Buffalo)

- And many others
  
  http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/projects/cases/ubcase.htm

  *National Center for Case Study Teaching in Science, University at Buffalo, State University of New York*

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**The Results**

- Engaged students
- Improved quality of research papers
- Random, anonymous, index card sampling of students – uniformly positive comments
- Structured but flexible approach

**Conclusions**

- Successful model to teach effective research skills
- Fun for instructors and students
- Librarian/instructor/student partnership a “win-win” solution