Findings Quality Instructional Resources

Published March 2022, Updated June 2025

PURPOSE

This job aid is focused on curating quality instructional resources. This job aid will prepare you to:
- Identify factors to consider before searching for instructional resources; and
- Conduct an online search strategy using effective techniques.

BACKGROUND

Instructional resources are teaching and learning materials that communicate course content or information. Instructional resources are aligned to elements of the course including learning outcomes or objectives, assessments, activities. The use of instructional resources requires thoughtful planning, selection, and organization. For example, an instructor must examine the breadth and depth of the instructional resources content to ensure it is appropriate for the course and student learning.

Curation is the ability to purposefully and effectively find, evaluate, and share resources with your learners (Deschaine & Sharma, 2015). Curation is an increasingly important skill because we now have access to more instructional resources and information than ever before! However, quantity does not necessarily equal quality. Also, with so many freely available resources online, it can be overwhelming to select which ones to use. Following the steps in this job aid can improve your search results and save you time when searching for instructional resources.

HOW TO

Task 1 – Identify the purpose of your search

Select one of your courses and inventory the current instructional resources that are used. What is used? How was it selected and why? What new instructional resources would you like to search for? Next, ask yourself: Why do I want to search for new instructional resources? There are many reasons instructors might look for new instructional materials, including to:
- Reduce costs for students: Textbooks can be costly, therefore, provinces are working together to reduce costs for students through the adoption of open textbooks. Finding an open textbook for your course can save your students money! A textbook becomes "open" when its copyright-holder grants usage rights to the public through an "open license," which typically includes the right to access, reformat, and customize it without having to obtain copyright clearance. The open textbook author retains the copyright to the content, not the publisher as is traditionally the case. (Adapted from Campus Manitoba CC-BY 4.0)

*This information is available in alternate formats upon request. Please contact **cli@assiniboine.net**.*

- Address bias in the curriculum: Educators and education leaders must be critical consumers of instructional materials. It is necessary to engage in reflective practice to recognize bias and address it in your course materials. One way to do this is to ask yourself questions like the following: Do the instructional materials I use portray diversity in terms of race, culture, gender, ability, nationality, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, etc.? Are the instructional materials authored by and include the perspectives of historically underrepresented students and communities? Do the instructional materials acknowledge the contributions of historically underrepresented people and communities to various content areas? (Adapted from New America CC-BY 4.0)
- Improve accessibility for all students: Some instructors may look for instructional materials that are more accessible for their students. A proactive approach in which we "identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility" can reduce the need for retroactive accommodations (The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, 2013). Depending on when and how the instructional materials you use were created they may create barriers for your students. Take for example a video without transcripts and/or closed captioning. A Deaf or hard of hearing student may not be able to access the information portrayed in this video. As a result, they may need to seek accommodations from Accessibility and Disability Services, and wait on the transcription of this video, potentially delaying their progress in the course. Providing transcriptions and/or closed captioning benefits all students, regardless of disability. Instructional material accessibility can also include properly formatted documents that can be read by screen readers.
- Increase relevancy: Relevance is a central principle of adult learning. Adult learners benefit from resources that they can relate to and apply in their own lives. Bringing in new instructional materials can be a way to incorporate student interests, current events, and topics that matter to your learners.
- Reduce academic misconduct: One way to reduce avenues for this form of academic misconduct is to regularly revise and update assignments and learning activities. You can do this by finding new instructional materials to incorporate into your course.

In the appendix of this job aid you can find a Search Log, which is a document that tracks your search process. This helps ensure our search stays aligned with our purpose. It also helps us monitor the search process and find ways to improve. Once you've identified the purpose of your search, fill out column 1: Why am I looking? Save your Search Log, as you will be returning it again as you work through your resource search.

Task 2 – Examine contextual issues

When choosing resources to be used in your class, it is important to consider the context of your course within a program, as well as students personal contexts. Before choosing your resources, consider:
- Who are my students (i.e., age range, program of study, year of study, experience)?
- What are their interests? What are their needs? What are their goals?

- What are their expectations of this course?
- What are my students' goals? How can I incorporate them into the course content?
- How can I respect the diverse abilities and needs of my students (i.e., language or cultural differences, or students who learn in different ways)?
- What instructional resources have been used in the past (i.e., textbooks, reading packages, notes packages, computer packages, etc.)? Are my students the same as those for whom the resources were prepared?

Add your notes to the Search Log under column 2: Who is it for?

Task 3 – Identify the topic of your search

Before you search, you need to identify your topic. To do this, select a learning outcome or objective from your course. Then identify the main topic contained within that learning outcome.

Let's look at the example learning outcome of:

- Examine the impacts of the digital divide on access to health care in Canada.

The main topic of this learning outcome is:

- digital divide
- health care
- Canada

Return to your Search Log and mark down what the topic of your search is.

Task 4 – Identify sources of information

You can find instructional resources using search engines and resources available through the Assiniboine Library. We also encourage you to reflect on the sources of information you already know and use:

- How do you keep current in your field and with the changes that are happening?
- What are the key trade or professional publications for your field? Are any of these sources of information available digitally? Does the Library subscribe to any of these?
- Who are the leading innovators, researchers or scholars in your field? Where do they share their ideas and research? Does the Library subscribe to places where ideas and research in your field are shared?

Read the Where to Look for Information suggestions from the Assiniboine Library, and then add your ideas to column 4 of the Search Log: Where Can I Look?

Task 5 – Identify key words

Keywords, also referred to as search terms, are words that represent the main ideas of your topic. These words are considered the most important, (or the key), ideas, concepts, or subjects about which you're looking for information. Keywords are what you want to use when searching databases and other sources for information. Using key terms in search engines like Google, instead of natural language (e.g. typing in an entire question), will often eliminate many of the undesirable websites that would otherwise appear in the search results. Generally, it's recommended to use 3 to 5 keywords. The more keywords you use, the more specific your search and the narrower your results will be.

What keywords will you use for your search? Add them to the Search Log, under column 5: What keywords did I use?

Task 6 – Search

Conduct your initial search for instructional resources. Record the results in the Search Log under column 6: What did I find?

Not finding what you're looking for? The Assiniboine Library staff have lots of tips and tricks for improving search strategies! You can also find tips, such as how to use Boolean Operators, in the Search Strategies section of the Research Help Library Guide.

REFERENCES

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APPENDIX: SEARCH LOG

Use this log to guide and record your search for digital resources.

Why am I looking?	What is it for?	What is the topic?	Where can I look?	What keywords did I use?	What did I find?	What will I use?	How will I share it?
EXAMPLE Integrate social justice issues into the curriculum. Integrate current topics that are of interest to the students and align with course learning outcomes.	Digital resources to use in asynch s online activities (e.g., discussion forums, readings)	Impacts of the digital divide on health care	Google Scholar EBSCOHost PubMed	digital divide health care	Journal articles Videos News articles Policy documents	Cukier, A. (2020, November 17). *Left out of this equation: Why virtual health care is leaving some Ontarian behi*nd. TVO. https://www.tvo.org/article/left-out-ofthisequationwhy-virtualhealth-careis-leavingsome-	URL link in Moodle course page.