

# The Craft of the Historian (HIST 140)

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**Project Summary:** This grant was used to integrate an information literacy component into *History 140: The Craft of the Historian*, the department's required methodology and research

monograph, a primary source and a website that related to their research topic. Finally, students were assigned a larger, research project in which they were expected to draw on what they had learned in the information literacy lessons. In addition to the actual paper students were required to present their findings to their classmates during formal class presentations, which included a discussion of the actual research process.

### **Assessment:**

The pretest was given at the first library session before class began and the post-test in the first class after the library sessions. The pretest and post test included the following questions (results are listed below each question):

1. What is a primary source?
  - a. Pretest correct: 10/18
  - b. Post-test correct 18/18
2. What is a secondary source?
  - a. Pretest correct: 10/18
  - b. Post-test correct 18/18
3. What is the name of the style historians use in citing references?
  - a. Pretest correct: 2/18
  - b. Post-test correct 16/18
4. What is the difference between an academic and popular publication?
  - a. Pretest correct: 7/18
  - b. Post-test correct 17/18
5. How do you access the quality of information on a website?
  - a. Pretest correct: 6/18
  - b. Post-test correct 17/18

**Analysis of Assessment:** In all cases the tests indicate a level of improvement in student knowledge. While a reasonable number of students knew how to define primary and secondary sources coming into these sessions, the library component clearly helped all of the students improve their understanding of the differences in the types of sources. Knowledge of proper citation for historical research witnessed the greatest improvement as a result of these sessions and is a critical component in the development of students writing skills. These tests also suggest a great deal of improvement in student ability to judge the quality of sources. Another indication of the durability of this material was the overall quality of the student's historiographic essays. In almost every case students made strong choices in their selection of sources and offered strong analysis.

### **Conclusion:**

Following the library sessions and through a continued integration of information literacy focuses assignments throughout the semester students demonstrated improvement in core information literacy competencies. Students enrolled in History 140 made better and more technical use of library resources, were better able to share discuss their research in writing and in the classroom, and demonstrated a deeper understanding the research process as a whole. I would like to thank Kevin Norris for his assistance in preparing these sessions and for his efforts in presenting them. I would also like to thank the library advisory sub-committee on information literacy for awarding me the literacy grant. My students took a great deal from these sessions and I look forward to doing this again.