

RUNNING HEAD: INSTRUCTION REFLECTION

American Memory Instruction Session:
A Reflection

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The online instructional session I presented in LIBR 287 is the first formal teaching experience I have had, although for a number of years, I served as a college writing tutor. In reflection, the experience in teaching fellow students as though they were history undergraduates was very valuable for me, as it allowed me not only to introduce the Library of Congress' American Memory project as an important resource in historical research but to demonstrate some knowledge of teaching techniques and lesson planning. The experience also revealed areas in which I need to improve my teaching methods, primarily working with a variety of online tools and creating more efficient class activities.

My main goal was to introduce the class to the American Memory: what it is and how to search the database. Although the class exercise that allowed for individual students to discover a specific collection within an assigned topic was interrupted because I reached the twenty-minute lesson time constraint, I do feel that the students were able to gain a sense of the value of American Memory as a resource to find primary sources. I received many nice compliments about the topic of my lesson, which made me feel that it was worthy to be taught for the particular type of students I had in mind when designing the lesson.

Comment [MHS1]: Absolutely.

I also felt that although I had to quickly cover the different types of browsing and searching options, I did a good job showing the students where the main search functions were located through application sharing of the American Memory website. I was pleased that I decided to share the search functions from the source directly rather than focus on the slides I had prepared. The slides focusing on each search function individually are important for reference use, but pictures are not as powerful as a live demonstration. I did experience a slight problem with sharing the website because I accidentally clicked on the option to share my whole desktop, and although I did slightly panic, I knew I had shared the website properly in my

Comment [MHS2]: Good idea

practice sessions. However, with some guidance, I was able to get back on board and continue my demonstration. I must have shown some composure because a few students commented that I held my ground.

Comment [MHS3]: You did a great job—you did not seem flustered at all.

One aspect of my presentation that I was not satisfied with was the execution of my class activity. In planning my session, I thought it would be a good idea to assign each student one of the collection categories listed on the American Memory homepage as a way for the students to get a feel for the collections that were included in that particular section. In my presentation, I included a slide with student names and their assigned topics. I also pasted the American Memory homepage web address in the chat window for students to click on for easy access to the categories. Each student was asked to find something of interest in their assigned subject and then share their find with the class. While the idea was good in theory, I now realize that some students needed to have the directions written down in a step-by-step order. During my session, one student asked for clarification, and I immediately panicked. In my panic, I just started talking, which I tend to do rather aimlessly when I am nervous. (Interestingly, I practiced my session with my husband who also did not understand what it was I was asking him to do, and although I attributed it to his difficulty with auditory learning, it still did not dawn on me that I should write down instructions!)

Comment [MHS4]: I love your reflection here! And yes, I remember when I was learning to be a high school English teacher a century or two ago, one of my professors told us that directions should always be delivered orally and written. I had never really thought about it much before that, but since then, I can see that he was really right on. Almost inevitably, if directions are delivered only orally, some students will miss what they are supposed to do.

Ultimately, I was running low on time when I got to the activity portion of my lesson, and my lack of written instructions did not do me any favors. I was disappointed that I had to cut students off from sharing their discoveries. To improve the session, I would include the following instructions in my PowerPoint presentation:

1. Find your name on this list, and note down the topic area I have assigned.

2. Next, copy-paste the following link (to American Memory's homepage) into your browser: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>

3. Find your topic area on the webpage and click on the link to that topic.

4. Look for something (anything) of interest in any of the collections that belong in your topic.

Comment [MHS5]: Smart directions.

5. Once you find something interesting to share, raise your hand. We will go in order of raised hands. Once I call on you, please provide an image of what you found on the whiteboard or paste a link in the chat box and take the microphone to share what you found.

The class activity would go much smoother with written instructions.

Another way to improve the activity is to side-step the process of finding one's name and topic area on the slide and then clicking on the link to the American Memory homepage. In observing the instructional sessions of other classmates, several of them used the web tour tool rather than application sharing so as to give students the opportunity to interact with the webpage displayed rather than simply view it. (I had not considered using the web tour tool, partly because I am not confident using all of the tools the Elluminate software provides.) After displaying the instructions (and pasting them into the chat box), I would use the web tour tool and ask for two students to volunteer to take control of the webpage to browse collections in a category of their choosing. One drawback to this approach is that not all students would get hands-on experience. In the design of my original lesson, I paid particular attention that my activity be both a social and active experience for each student.

Comment [MHS6]: Yep

Still another idea would be to share the American Memory homepage in web tour mode so that students could simply click on any of the topics already displayed on their computer screens. Students would then raise their hands when they found something of interest and would share their find when called upon. This is similar to my original activity except that students would be able to choose whatever topic they would like from the list displayed, thus eliminating the need for students to find their assigned topic on a slide and the need to click on the American Memory link in the chat box. Eliminating steps would save some time and also make it easier on the students' end. This solution also allows all students to participate while maintaining the group discussion dynamic.

Although I had some problems in teaching my instructional session, I do feel that I have the ability and confidence to teach information literacy skills as a future librarian. Observation and evaluation are important aspects of learning to be a good teacher. Seeing and participating in fellow student presentations helped me see new ways to provide material and create class activities, and the suggestions I received to improve my session were all very helpful and can be easily incorporated with some extra planning and creativity. Through observation of other teachers, practice, and evaluation of sessions I teach (along with implementation of suggestions for improvement), I know my skills will continue to grow.

Comment [MHS7]: ☺

Comment [MHS8]: Yay!

SJSU LIBR 287
Summer 2011

Information Literacy
Holschuh Simmons

Instruction Session Assignment Sheet
Due during the last two weeks of class

(sign up for a date and time in our GoogleDoc)

Presentation to be done via Elluminate;

written portion to be submitted through D2L dropbox

30% of final grade

The project includes the following components:	Superior Adequate Insufficient 5 3 1
Lesson plan rationale: The lesson plan includes not just the “what” and the “how” but also the “why” tying the author’s pedagogical decisions to the learning theories and best practices from the course material.	
Lesson plan effectiveness: The lesson employs some kind of active learning or involvement so that the instructor is able to assess the students’ understanding and so that the students are engaged.	Great job thinking about learning theories in your discussion at the end. (Tiny note—be sure you are spelling Kuhlthau’s name correctly.) I hope you use this lesson plan for comp J (info-seeking behaviors) in the eport.
Planning and preparation: The presenter has delivered the slides by 6:00 PM Pacific on the evening of the session and has logged into Elluminate by 6:00 to test the technology with Michelle and the Elluminate assistant.	
Organization and presentation of lesson: The lesson is well-rehearsed and stays within the time limits assigned.	
Composure and professionalism: The teacher displays appropriate professionalism in his or her language usage and demeanor in the teaching session.	
Visual component: The visual is well-organized, attractive, and informative.	
Reflection: The reflection is thoughtful, insightful, and analytical of the instruction session.	

Written presentation: The author demonstrates a facility with the conventions of written English in the handout, in the lesson plan, and in the reflection.	
Total	40/40 (30% of final grade)

Comments:

Lindsay,

You did a great job in your instruction session. I feel terrible that I messed up your session when I raised my hand—and then couldn't manage to take the mic because of my connection! It was painful for me because I could hear you calling on me, but I couldn't do anything. Ugh! I am sorry! You handled the whole session gracefully and confidently, even though you ran into a few little snags.

It was clear that you planned your session carefully, incorporating many of the learning theories we discussed in class. I hope you hold onto this assignment to use with comp K (teaching), comp M (oral and written communication), and/or comp H (technology) for your e-Portfolio. Thanks for your good work. Below are the notes I took during your session:

- Nice to thank us at the beginning
- On a few occasions you used the phrase "you guys." You might rethink this usage. It might come across as overly informal in an instruction situation, and it might be seen as sexist since we weren't all guys. At the very least, you might think of an alternative if you are teaching as part of an interview in case there are language grouchies in the crowd who would notice this sort of thing (like me!).
- Pamela indicated that she was a history major with a smiley face but you missed it.
- Nice pacing, nice voice.
- Attractive slides
- Nice objectives slide
- As an IL person myself, I appreciate your reference to the ACRL standards, but I'm not sure that people outside of our field necessarily care about what standards they are meeting. It's smart for you to have in mind as you are planning, but you not need to tell your students.
- Great way to recover from little tech problem. Nice enthusiasm with "yay!"
- Your timing was tough at the end—but that was partially my fault because of my inability to take the mic. I'm sorry!
- I think that Jessica might have shorted you a bit with the timer. I'm sorry for the mix-up.