Suggested Library and Research Assignments

We continue to have faculty create some top assignments for students to complete. Using these strategies to write great library assignments will ensure your students a successful library research experience. We welcome other ideas, suggested assignments and strategies; contact a librarian or email us at reference@aims.edu.

Writing the Assignment:

1. **Send a copy of your assignment to your library liaison in advance.** [http://www.aims.edu/kieferlibrary/liaisons/](http://www.aims.edu/kieferlibrary/liaisons/) Library collections are constantly changing and what was available in previous semesters may have changed. The librarians will also have your assignment in mind when selecting new materials.

2. **Do the assignment yourself OR ask a librarian to do the assignment.** Make sure the Kiefer Library has the resources you require. Check the catalog for books and DVDs [https://tlc.aims.edu/](https://tlc.aims.edu/) and for articles, check E-Resources [http://www.aims.edu/kieferlibrary/database/database](http://www.aims.edu/kieferlibrary/database/database). Ask a librarian if you need assistance.

3. **Give students the assignment in writing** and ask them to take it with them to the library. Librarians can be more helpful to students who are confused about terminology or who have forgotten to bring the assignment with them.

4. **Create real-life projects** that encourage students to find and apply information to real circumstances. E.g. Arguments for or against a current piece of legislature or how a recently changed law or policy personally affects their life.

5. **Sometimes to is best to avoid scavenger hunts.** Librarians often must give students the answers. If you wish to include a scavenger hunt, please work with your librarian who will know where students can locate the answers.

6. **Use a Library Webpage “Find It” assignment.** If your intent is to have students learn more about their college library, often the best method may be for them to locate information on the Library webpages. A librarian may have already created such an assignment; just ask a librarian.

7. **Use clear language to define the task:** Does your use of "library computer" mean the online catalog, a database, or something else? Do your students understand what "peer-reviewed journal" and "primary sources" mean in your discipline? If you recommend specific books and journals, write out their full titles. Again, a librarian will be happy to assist you and your students.

Planning to use the Library Resources

1. **Students often think that using Google and getting information off the web is sufficient research.** The Library wants to be a partner with you in teaching research skills. It is vital that our students learn how to find authoritative and scholarly sources.

2. **Require a variety of resources.** It is recommended the assignment include a minimum number of sources which include a set number of scholarly articles. You may also wish to include books, journals, newspapers, subject encyclopedias, primary sources and more.

3. **Teach evaluative strategies** and require that students evaluate the quality of all resources, particularly web sites. The librarian can be a full partner with you. Please contact us if you wish us to work with you or your students. Cornell University provides excellent information [http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/webeval.html](http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/webeval.html) that will help students to evaluate web sites.

4. **Address plagiarism.** We can work with you to show students how easy it is for instructors to locate their sources in books, databases, and on the Internet. [www.aims.edu/student/online-writing-lab/sources/plagiarism](http://www.aims.edu/student/online-writing-lab/sources/plagiarism)

5. **Assignments requiring primary resources.** [www.aims.edu/student/online-writing-/sources/primary-vs-secondary](http://www.aims.edu/student/online-writing-/sources/primary-vs-secondary) Students often need help in understanding and locating primary sources. Encourage them to ask a librarian for help. When doing a Google search it is important to use keywords: journal, letters, diary, interview, first-hand account, or document.
6. **Stress the fact that research takes time** and encourage students to start early. Good quality web-based resources are not always faster to find and use than books and articles. Or the “perfect” book may be checked out until next week or located at another library.

7. **Emphasize the use of Kiefer library resources.** Our college library has a vast array of resources most of which are available in electronic 24/7 access form. We will also interlibrary loan or purchase needed materials. Often a book is able to be purchased on the same day, loaded onto a Library Nook and immediately checked out.

8. **Avoid giving a large class the same topic.** All the books may soon be checked out. Allow variations on the theme, with instructor approval.

9. **Put limited materials on the library reserve shelves.** If several students need the same item (book, article or DVD) checking out the material for a limited time frame may be the best answer. Contact library staff.

10. **Don't assume that students have used a college library.** Encourage your students to attend a Quick Start Library Session. They may also contact the Library staff to set up an individual session. We also welcome you contacting the Library to schedule a course-related library instruction for your class. Use the Request for Library Instruction form OR contact the library: Phone: (970) 339-6458 Email: reference@aims.edu

**Suggested Alternatives to the Traditional Research Paper**

1. Develop an annotated bibliography on a topic in which students identify primary and secondary sources, popular and scholarly publications, and detect and comment on forms of bias.

2. Compare and contrast discussions of the same topic in a scholarly journal and a popular magazine.

3. Identify and analyze key issues in a discipline, or compare the way two different disciplines handle the same topic.

4. Use an assignment from the suggested Core Language Arts Standards.

5. As an alternative, have research paper information presented in a multi-media presentation.

6. Assign students to prepare a guide for introducing their classmates to several essential sources or literature on a given topic. If assigning topics, include several choices.

**Suggestions for Research Assignments from other Libraries:**

Many college libraries offer suggestions for creating research assignments. One recommended site is University of Pennsylvania: [http://gethelp.library.upenn.edu/faculty/researchassignments.html](http://gethelp.library.upenn.edu/faculty/researchassignments.html)

**Internet and Web Sources**

If you tell students not to use the Internet, do explain the difference between "free" Internet sources and the library's electronic database. [http://www.aims.edu/kieferlibrary/database/database.php?id=1](http://www.aims.edu/kieferlibrary/database/database.php?id=1) such as Academic Search Premier and ProQuest. The Kiefer library databases are accessed via the Internet but they contain authoritative full-text articles from print magazines, newspapers, journals, and reference books. Library databases provide first-class research content. In addition, many free web sites contain reliable content. Often links to useful web sites can be found when using the Kiefer Library LibGuides, [http://libguides.aims.edu/](http://libguides.aims.edu/)

**Utilizing the Tutoring Services**

Students are encouraged to work with tutors in our Writing Center as the need arises. For hours and information, [http://www.aims.edu/student/learning-commons/tsi/](http://www.aims.edu/student/learning-commons/tsi/) Tutors will NOT proofread paper but library staff can provide a web site that provides free proofreading.