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Curation: The best resources on the Internet don’t float to the top for easy pickings. Curation is a focused effort to analyze, categorize, emphasize, and contextualize the best of the Internet, making it a useful learning tool. It is an act of higher-order thinking, and what being “literate” in any field of content is about. Curation has been popping up more and more frequently as I research other topics, and it’s being realized as a major tool in helping your students become better researchers and better members of the broader Learning Community. This edition of my newsletter will show some ways that you can use curation tools to produce graduates who are more prepared to be experts in their fields.

Are you a curator?
Helping your students navigate the content

A museum curator’s job is to comb through huge store rooms of seeming junk, and turn hand-selected objects into a learning guide by applying a meaningful context. Curators can teach a breadth of information by selecting just a few key items.

Instructors have a similar task when dealing with the huge store room of junk and treasures that is The Internet. If you’re not guiding your students through it, then random_dude88@blog.com is more than willing to share his opinions. And I really don’t trust him that much.

The average person will believe a “fact” if he/she has heard it just three different times. Is that true? I don’t know, I saw that on the Internet somewhere. But if you hear that from two colleagues in the next week then you might believe it. In the long-run, your one-time lecture might have a hard time standing up against a dozen tweets. But you can use the Internet, too, and make sure that the other info your students see is good.

So let your students know about the websites that you have bookmarked on your computer or the blogs that you follow. Show them, the real industry journals that they will be reading when they are in the workforce. Make a “Recommended Resource” page in Blackboard or through your own blog so that students can see the quality you expect in their sources.

And don’t forget about the actual, professional curators on campus. Talk with the WAW librarians about how they can be an embedded resource in your course or how they can develop a LibGuide of hand-picked resources for your students. They have several workshops as part of the U-Innovate series, that you can check out here: [http://www.emporia.edu/tcs/learning-technology/info-research.html](http://www.emporia.edu/tcs/learning-technology/info-research.html)

Building Experts
Does the world know your students?

Trusted experts deliver the most useful information, based on a great depth of knowledge. They have a reputation of never letting down their followers. They show authority and utility in sharing information with their peers.

Curation projects are a great tool to develop student-experts who exhibit these traits. If your class is frequently built around student-led, in-depth discussions, you already understand the basics, and adding a little bit of technology can exponentially grow the impact of the in-class experts you have been building.

Student-created blogs, Pinterest boards, Scoop.it, Learnist, Storify, and Twitter accounts, among others, can all be used to build a set of resources that students can take with them once your course is complete. While your course’s discussion board is abandoned at the end of the semester. The Personal Learning Network that your students have built, full of like-minded peers and current industry experts, can continue their interaction.

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Building Experts (cont.)

Using curation projects to develop utility and authority in students...

Remember when research papers started by compiling a stack of notecards, each with a quote snatched from a book or journal? We categorized each notecard, sorted, ranked, found gaps that needed more research, and eventually, we used our own insights to tie the information into a great paper. On Bloom's Taxonomy, this process would involve the highest-order thinking skills. Today's technology puts this work online in a way that is easily shared with others, inviting collaboration, and letting others benefit from the quality curating that your students have done. This is their chance to build a showcase of their work, throughout their college career and beyond. And they can build a devoted following by delivering the high-impact, trusted resources to others, not just within the confines of your course. I strongly encourage you to attend the Wordpress and Pinterest U-Innovate courses from Rob Gibson to get an idea of how easily you can get yourself and your students started with these and similar online tools.

“How do I incorporate this into my class?” Your students may not intuitively understand how to be good researchers, so their skills should be assessed informally before you assign the big mid-term paper. They need some freedom to try out new resources without a graded penalty, and they need to explicitly see the value of one resource over another. In my class (online or face-to-face), I would turn this into a game.

**Step 1:** Don’t be the provider of all information. Tell your students the topic and give them a few days to find two or three quality resources to bring to class (or to post online).

**Step 2:** As students discuss the topic, have them judge the utility and trustworthiness of each other’s resources. This evaluation (higher-order thinking, again) will teach your students a valuable research skill, in being able to judge whether a resource is credible and helpful. Throughout the semester, your students will learn where to find the best content, and their subsequent work in class should reflect this. You have also helped them discover the value of journal databases, content experts, and other resources to tap into in the future.

**Step 3:** Motivate students to become the Class Experts. Use a non-graded point system to reward students for bringing the best resources to contribute to the class.

- Students receive 1 point each for bringing the requested number of resources for the class discussion.
- 1 bonus point for any unique resource that nobody else found. This will steer them away from Wikipedia and basic Google searches
- 4 bonus points if the class judges a resource as that day’s “Most Trustworthy” or “Most Helpful”
- Whatever else you want to add... Using computers in class? Points for the best “On-the-Fly” discovery that came from following up on a discussion point made in class. If students are posting their resources online with a blog or other account, give points for gaining followers, comments, or likes, and building their Personal Learning Network. Bonus points for utilizing the helpful WAW Library staff.

**Step 4:** Create a Leader Board. Let your class see who is building an Expert Reputation, and showcase their resources to help everyone else see what the class (not the teacher) has decided is the best.

**Step 5:** Not to forget the point of research... Have your students create something from their findings.

Visit my blog to see more Curation resources.