

Workshopping the Workshop: Applying Char Booth's USER model of assessment to one-shot instruction sessions

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UNDERSTAND

The ACRL's latest framework, adopted in 2016, defines information literacy as the ability to critically evaluate authority, understanding that information is valuable, develop a conversational understanding of academia, and create nuanced and iterative search strategies. The general assumption is that students learn these skills as undergraduates and are able to enter graduate school with a solid foundation. However, many graduate students, advanced scholars, and faculty are not achieving the expected level of literacy. Chen et. al (2015) found that graduate students were only slightly better at vetting information shared through social media than undergraduates. Even when informed that they had previously shared misinformation, they justified it for the following reasons: it is interesting information, it is a way to start a conversation, and sharing news articles is a way to interact with peers. This study demonstrated how important it is to teach people that authority is constructed and contextual (ACRL #1) and that information has value (ACRL#3).

STRUCTURE

Most information literacy workshops are too narrow. They tended to show specific examples of websites and offered strategies to identify the misleading information in very limited contexts. The tactics were not easily translatable to other contexts. False information in academic texts would be difficult to identify using those techniques. Instead, my workshop addressed one of the root causes of information illiteracy – the inability to identify biases and fallacies. To do this, I created a 50-minute lecture with limited interactivity, a handout, and printed handouts created by the School of Thought. A LibGuide was also eventually developed.

ENGAGE

The first iteration of the workshop, titled "Understanding Bias: Evaluating News & Scholarly Sources" was presented in Fall 2017. There were two sessions that semester, each with only two attendees. The workshop was divided into two sections – one that focused on news sources and another that addressed scholarly materials. This was an attempt to address the issues of only examining one context. The workshop finished with an examination of how data can be distorted by graphs and charts.

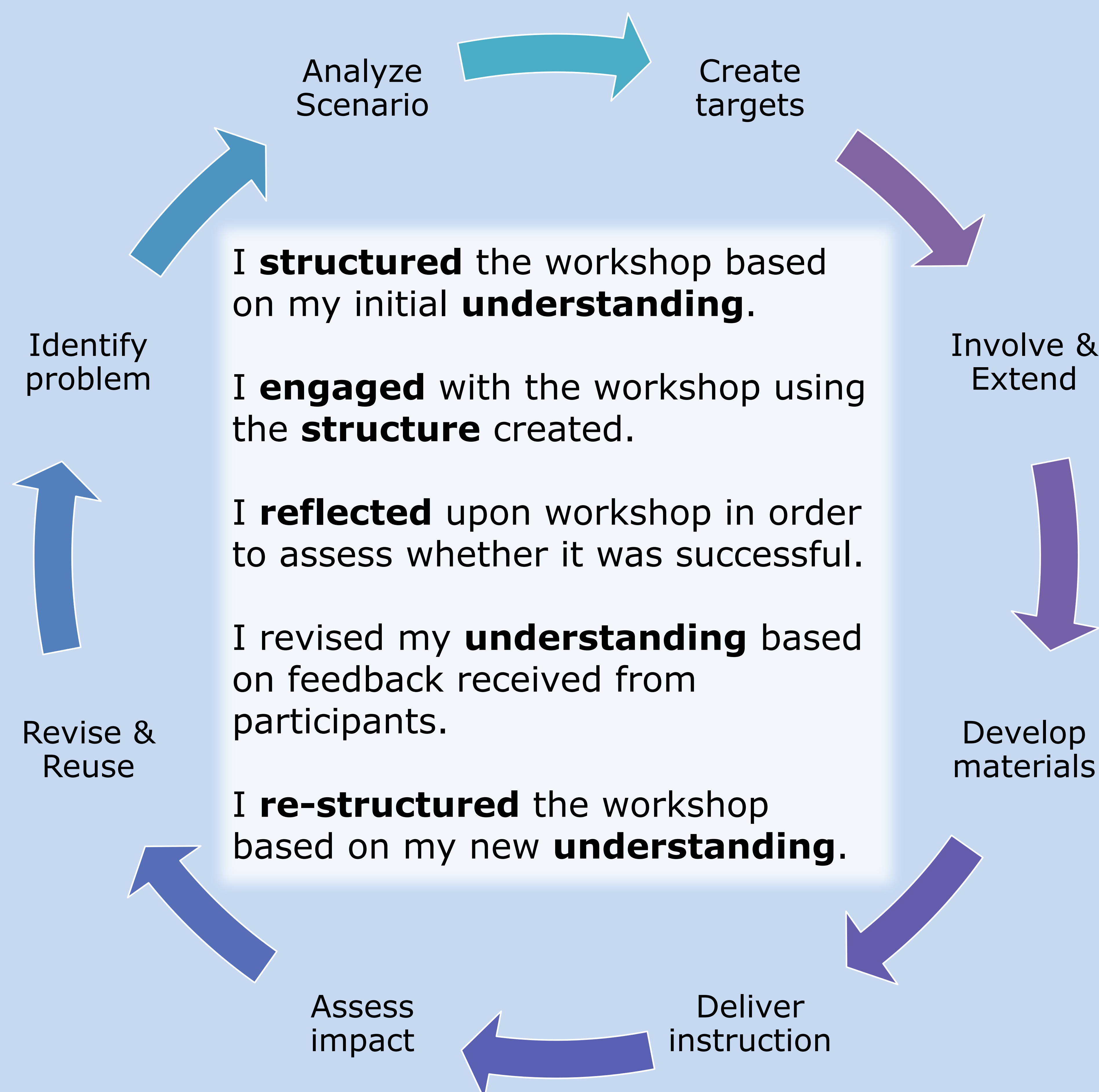
REFLECT

The feedback received was that the workshop was repetitive, disjointed, and lacked interactivity. I re-arranged the workshop to be in four sections: bias, fallacy, graphs, and the APPLES assessment model. The workshop became "Choosing the Right Sources: Identifying Biases and Fallacies." The entire workshop was re-vamped including new learning goals, activities, and structure. This version of the workshop used examples from many different contexts to demonstrate how biases and fallacies affect the ways in which research is conducted, presented, and ultimately interpreted in the media. The workshop relied more heavily on active learning. Only 20 minutes was allotted to lecture, which was used to give definitions, present examples, and give context to the topic.

MOVING FORWARD

The Savvy Researcher workshops are primarily taught by graduate assistants in the Research and Information Services department in the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's Main Library. Upon graduating this spring, the workshop will be passed to a graduate assistant entering their second year of the program. With the latest feedback, I have adjusted the workshop to increase the amount of time given to the APPLES method section and combined similar fallacies into a more streamlined set of examples. This workshop and accompanying LibGuide will continue to be adjusted to meet the needs of attendees and any other changes that the next GA will deem important.

Information literacy will continue to be an important topic in every aspect of librarianship. This workshop is an opportunity to re-examine how information literacy is taught in one-shot library sessions and proposes a different solution to the issue of information illiteracy and apathy. It is not enough to present lectures that only apply in specific contexts. Instead, teaching people how to assess information will enable them to critically evaluate any form of information they encounter. Identifying biases and fallacies is a more dynamic, versatile, and important skill than identifying fake news websites, de-contextualized quotes, and photoshopped images because it does that and much more. I will continue to explore how information literacy instruction can be improved and use this workshop as a jumping off point for future endeavors.



For more information:



<http://tiny.cc/prager-USER-poster>