

# Case Study: Lucy Atherton, Head Librarian, Wellington College, Berkshire

## Y9 Research Skills Course – Information and Digital Literacy Skills to support Project-Based Learning

Wellington College is a co-educational day and boarding independent school with approximately 1,100 pupils between the ages of 13 and 18 years. In 2016, the school moved away from a curriculum focused heavily on content to a more skills-based approach in Year 9. With greater emphasis placed on developing independent learners throughout their school career from Year 9 to Year 13, Lucy put a proposal to her line manager, Deputy Head Academic, to plan a short research skills course for all Year 9 students, led by the professional librarians.

The aim was to teach them information and digital literacy skills to support the enquiry-based projects they would be undertaking throughout the year. This was also intended to lay the foundations for the research skills needed for the HPQ (Higher Project Qualification), EPQ (Extended Project Qualification) and Extended Essay of the International Baccalaureate, higher up the school. The lessons are taught in groups of around 15 – 16 students and are very interactive.

These skills are essential for life beyond the classroom, projects and coursework; it is crucial for the whole of society to be digitally and media literate. Universities and schools are important drivers in developing students' digital capabilities. The JISC Digital Capabilities Model (Digital capabilities framework, ©Jisc, CC BY-NC-ND) is very instructive in this area and includes 6 elements:

1. ICT proficiency
2. Digital communication, collaboration and participation
3. Digital learning and development
4. Information, data and media literacies
5. Digital creation, problem solving and innovation
6. Digital identity and wellbeing.

The JCS Conference 2019 – Digital Literacy in Schools: building capabilities, provided librarians and teachers with a wealth of information and discussion on this subject and you can explore the presentations at <https://jcsolineresources.org/jcs-2019-digital-literacy-in-schools-building-capabilities>.

The research skills course took place over three lessons covering the following aspects:

### Lesson 1 (Discovery and search skills) – 55 minutes

- Learn how to use the library catalogue – look for and find a book in the library.
- Interactive 'Research Race' in teams.
- Exploring aspects of the AccessIT catalogue (Reading lists, reservations, loan history, etc.).
- Accessing the e-book platform – Browns Books for Students VLeBooks.

### Lesson 2 (Evaluation) – 55 minutes

- Evaluating information – thinking critically.
- Authentic and fake websites: Looking at information on websites. (Disclaimer, About Us, FAQs, Legal, domain names. Using the C.R.A.A.P test to evaluate sources). There are so many models for evaluating sources and although the C.R.A.A.P test isn't perfect the students do find it memorable and a useful checklist.
- Discussion of newspaper bias/ advertorials/opinion pieces, etc.
- Discussion of search engines and the Google filter bubble.
- Card sort game – pros and cons and characteristics of different sources. For example, the concept of peer-reviewed articles in Academic Journals was introduced.
- Exploring the e-Library resources.

Thanks to Dr Vanessa Hill and Dr Adam Edwards, librarians at Middlesex University for sharing this excellent idea. They have developed a wide range of hands-on activities which form useful bases for discussion and group work. All their resources can be found here: <http://libguides.mdx.ac.uk/MDXGames>.

The lessons instigated some interesting discussions about what a parody was and the meaning of the word 'veracity'. Lucy found it interesting to observe that the students were not as proficient at spotting fake websites as they thought they were – thus emphasized the need to cross-check information elsewhere and to critically evaluate information rather than simply going on a gut feeling about a website or source.

### Lesson 3 (Academic Honesty and Referencing) – 55 minutes

- What is plagiarism? What is Academic Honesty?
- Referencing your sources.
- Discussion of academic honesty and avoiding plagiarism.
- How and why to cite sources. Particular emphasis was placed on the positive aspects of referencing, such as demonstrating the depth and breadth of a student's research and the authority of their sources.
- Using Word to generate a bibliography and references.
- Showing students that many online resources provide the citation for them to import into the bibliography

For this final lesson the Newcastle University Study Skills for 6th Form website was very useful <http://sixthformstudyskills.ncl.ac.uk>. The library has run the plagiarism quiz and video with the classes, and found it very accessible and fun for the younger year groups.

After the research skills course the Year 9 students used their study periods, known as 'Lab Time', to research and write 3 mini projects relating to History, Science, Art, English and Geography. There was a large element of choice in these projects so that the students could explore topics that interested them. This was also an opportunity to use the digital resources on the extensive e-Library to

research the projects as well as the library printed book stock, magazines and journals.

In Year 10 and Year 11 all the students undertake the HPQ (Higher Project Qualification) which develops independent study skills further and the librarians support this research with refresher workshops on the e-Library resources and how to find relevant books and articles. Lucy is working on greater analysis of the impact of this course but has noticed a marked increase in searches undertaken on the library online catalogue and book reservations placed online. She will also be looking at the quality of bibliographies and the referencing of the projects, modifying the course each year to keep it up to date and respond to feedback from the students.

### Useful Websites

- Wellington College Library Blog  
<http://wellingtoncollege.edublogs.org/>
- CILIP Information Literacy Group  
<https://infolit.org.uk/>
- CILIP School Libraries Group  
[www.cilip.org.uk/page/Schools](http://www.cilip.org.uk/page/Schools)
- FOSIL – <https://fossil.org.uk/fossil-cycle/>  
Darryl Toerien, Head of Library at Oakham School has done a huge amount of work on inquiry learning and Lucy would like to adopt the ideas in the FOSIL model over the coming years.
- IFLA How to spot fake news infographic  
[www.ifla.org/publications/node/11174](http://www.ifla.org/publications/node/11174)
- JCS Conference 2019 – Digital Literacy in Schools: building capabilities - <https://jconlineresources.org/jcs-2019-digital-literacy-in-schools-building-capabilities/>
- JCS Conference Presentations 2018 From Digital Literacy to Independent Learning - <https://jconlineresources.org/jcs-2018/>
- JISC Building Digital Capability  
[www.jisc.ac.uk/rd/projects/building-digital-capability](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/rd/projects/building-digital-capability)
- Middlesex University Library  
<http://libguides.mdx.ac.uk/MDXGames>
- Newcastle University Study Skills  
<http://sixthformstudyskills.ncl.ac.uk/>
- The School Library Association - [www.sla.org.uk](http://www.sla.org.uk)