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Fall 2015

COMP 152: Computer Programming & Literacy

Session 1: Designing Your Research Question

Teaching Notes

1. Introductions
   1. Purpose – 3 separate sessions
   2. Different content from other library sessions – integrated, chance to explore, discuss
   3. Knowledge survey – thanks for completing!
2. The Research Process [SLIDE]
3. Today’s session
   1. First 3 stages of the research process: Defining & Refining your topic and choosing a question
4. **Step 1: Define your topic**
   * 1. Start with a broad idea
     2. Brainstorm related topics (mind map)
     3. Scan headlines
     4. Follow assignment criteria [instructor input here?]

* Sample topic: **social media**

1. **Step 2: Refine your topic**
   * 1. Narrow the focus
     2. Mind mapping
     3. Background reading/preliminary research
     4. Talk to instructor! [instructor input here?]

**Activity (in class)**

Provide topic and have students brainstorm related topics/concepts [e.g. **social media**]

* Whole class together
* Write on white board or flipchart or PPT slide [ask instructor for help]
* Can create concept cloud [sample on slide]

1. **Step 3: Turning your topic into a question**
   * 1. Research topic vs. research question

Topic = Technology

Question = How is technology changing the world?

* Turning a topic into a question
  + I am studying ………. In order to find out………..
    1. Hands up:
       1. *Q. How many of you are* ***Business*** *students?*

2.  *Q. How many of you are* ***Environmental Technology****?*

3. *Q. How many are Psychology students?*

Is this an **open** or **closed** question? *What’s the difference?*

* + Closed questions are:
    - Simple
    - Limited
    - Informational
    - Objective
  + Open questions are:
    - Complex
    - Broad
    - Researchable
    - Objective, subjective or speculative
  + Summarize responses from survey (Q#3)
  + Q. Which is an example of a good, open-ended question?
    - A. What does the term "internet privacy" mean?
    - B. **Why should Canadian citizens be concerned about internet privacy?**
    - C. What type of personal information does Facebook collect?

Open or closed?

What is a database? (closed)

How does a database work? (open but limited)

Why is it important for me to understand how databases work? (open and broad)

* Examples of informational questions:
  + What is the population of Victoria?
  + How many students are enrolled at Camosun College?
* Examples of open-ended research questions:
  + What is the environmental impact of the disposal of plastic bottles?
  + What impact does social media have on college students?
    - Narrower: which specific social media platform?

1. Your research question should be:

* Interesting (to you and others)
* Relevant (avoid “fad” topics)
* Original (if possible; may combine ideas)
* Manageable (within given time and resources)
* Focused (not too broad, not too narrow)
* Consider: what type of information would help answer this question?
  + Where might I find this information? (Sources)
* Stuck for ideas? Scan news headlines (incl. social media) for topics that interest you
  + Eg. <http://www.pewinternet.org/> (American)
    - Topic trees/hierarchy
    - Topics: Mobile OR Social Media OR Internet activities
* Sample questions:
  + What – “What are the effects….?”
  + Why – “Why is social media use increasing….?”
  + When – “When did social media….?”
  + Where – “Where …..?”
  + Who – “Who are the biggest users of social media?” [too narrow]
  + How – “How has the [increase or decrease] in social media use impacted [xx] society?”

**Activity (in class, groups)**

* Groups of 3 or 4
* Students come up with 1 or 2 questions using this topic [social media] + 1 subtopic of choice
* Instructor helps moderate
* If time, have students exchange their question with another group and decide whether each would make a good research question.
  + Use the following questions as a guide:
    - Is it interesting to you?
    - Does it have a focus?
    - Is it too broad or too narrow?
    - Can it be researched?

**Activity (take home – bring for next session)**

* Locate at least **one piece of information** on your chosen topic (technology + career area)
  + website, book, article, podcast, etc.
* Make note of:
  + where you looked
  + which search terms you tried
  + which search terms were most successful
* Bring to next session and be prepared to discuss (week 4)