

February 4, 2013

Dear Mentor for the "Practice into Research, Research into Practice" professional development program,

Thank you for agreeing to mentor a participant in the program! Your work will be influential in the development of a research proposal and in the professional development of a librarian!

These are guidelines for mentoring. Please review the learning resources available for the program (orientation, syllabus, handouts) carefully. The participant should be familiar with these. They form a self-directed learning program. At certain points in the program, indicated in the Syllabus, the participant should contact you to discuss or review assignments. These are the assignments, with guidance on how you might review or assess them. These guidelines will help to provide consistency among the mentors for the program.

Responsibilities of the mentor:

Respond to the participant soon after you receive an assignment or question. If you cannot review and comment or discuss immediately, send a response indicating that you received the request and provide an estimated date when you will provide feedback.

Provide constructive comments. Indicate what the participant did well, and how the work could be strengthened. This will help the participant gain confidence and be receptive to soliciting and receiving feedback.

Guidelines for Responses to assignments:

Module 1. Assessment. The participant will ask you to provide feedback on these questions.

- ▶ *What are the criteria for a good research question presented in the learning resources?*

Criteria are on p. 15, paragraph 1

- ▶ *What is your research question? Does your research question meet those criteria?*

Apply each of the criteria to the participant's research question.

- ▶ *Do you clearly build a case for proposing your research question, based on existing evidence?*

The participant should explain why the research question is important by citing relevant literature and identifying gaps and/or inconsistencies in the literature.

- ▶ *Is your research question innovative? Is it confirmatory? Is it feasible?*

The participant should cite the literature to answer the first two questions. S/he can discuss feasibility with you.

- ▶ *Please discuss your research question with your mentor. You and your mentor should come to agreement on the research question that will be the foundation for your research proposal.*

The participant should identify the topic and the research question. You should guide the formation of the question.

Module 2.

Questions for Reflection. The participant will ask you to provide feedback on these questions.

1. *What types of investigation do the video indicate are best suited to a qualitative research method?*

Studies that elicit thoughts and experiences; the researcher's desire to empower individuals as participants in a study

2. *What types of investigation do the video indicate are best suited to a quantitative research method?*

Studies that use numbers, test scores, measurements; researcher's desire to make generalizations about a population; desire to develop a normed test

3. *Some of the blog comments accompanying this video criticize it for biases. What are some of those possible biases?*

The qualitative researcher is female and from an under-represented group and is interested in thoughts and experiences; the quantitative researcher is a white male.

Assignment:

- ✓ *Select several of the research questions on the handout "Examples of Research Questions in Library and Information Science" (handout posted on course web site). What design do you think would be the most appropriate for answering each question? Why?*

Qualitative designs are appropriate when the investigator needs to develop an understanding of a phenomenon. Observation, interview, surveys are appropriate devices used to gather the information (numeric or alphabetic). Once the data are gathered, the intent is to describe the phenomenon. New research questions develop from that description.

Quantitative designs are used to determine differences or relationships among variables in a known structure. A part of this research process involves estimating values of structures.

While quantitative uses numbers, qualitative research also can use numbers, e.g., Likert scales. What's different is the intent or the prior knowledge about the system to be studied. Qualitative is an exploratory process. It is the formalization of the backroom in which new ideas and insights are born. Quantitative research is based on the assumption that the structure is known and specific ingredients need refinement. The difference between quantitative and qualitative can be simply described in terms of existing knowledge about an information structure. If the structure is unknown or poorly described, qualitative research can be useful. If the structure is known, quantitative research can be used to describe its characteristics and the relationships among them.

Research question	Methods
<i>How frequently were social media sites, such as online forums, Facebook, Twitter, and/or YouTube, used by students in relation to carrying out coursework and studying during the entire term?</i>	<i>Quantitative design, if collecting data on use Interviews of students</i>
<i>What is the role of the library in contributing to doctoral institutions' reputational scores?</i>	<i>Quantitative design; secondary data analysis using reputational scores and library variables</i>
<i>What do future school library administrators believe is an appropriate title for their position?</i>	<i>Qualitative design using interviews, focus groups, or surveys to identify "beliefs" and to establish information structure. Becomes basis for new research.</i>
<i>Do ALA-accredited graduate library education programs offer their students the knowledge they will need to enter leadership and management positions within the library profession?</i>	<i>The question suggests lack of information. Qualitative design using interviews, focus groups, or surveys of program graduates or library supervisors/leaders. Would be used to develop understanding.</i>
<i>How do everyday Second Life users go about finding needed information?</i>	<i>Qualitative design using interviews, focus groups, or surveys of "everyday Second Life users"</i>
<i>How can human expertise be effectively and efficiently incorporated into information systems to answer user questions?</i>	<i>Qualitative design using observation, interviews, surveys</i>
<i>Do social scientists read and need e-prints?</i>	<i>Qualitative design using surveys, focus groups, or interviews</i>
<i>Is there value to cataloging freely available Internet resources in the OPAC?</i>	<i>Cost-benefit analysis or qualitative design using surveys, interviews, focus groups</i>
<i>When entering the first year of undergraduate study, how information literate are the students?</i>	<i>Quantitative design through administration of standardized test; Qualitative design using interviews; focus groups; surveys of students, faculty</i>
<i>What are the variables that influence the outcome of challenges to school library materials in secondary schools?</i>	<i>Quantitative design using "variables"</i>
<i>How do students perceive their ability to locate information for school purposes on the Internet?</i>	<i>Qualitative design using surveys, interviews, focus groups</i>

- ✓ Select a method that will answer your research question.

The participant can review the relevant methods chapters, listed in the syllabus, and select one or more that seem particularly relevant to the research question; then study those chapters further.

Assessment:

- ▶ *Justify your choice of method for answering your research question. Will the information gathered specifically answer your research question?*

The participant should use information from the textbook that will justify the choice of method. You and the participant should discuss whether the information gathered through the selected method will answer the research question.

- ▶ *Please review your methodology with your mentor and come to agreement.*

Module 4. The participant will ask you to critique her/his responses to these questions and come to consensus:

- ✓ *Do your interpretations of the findings portray a clear path from question to answer?*

The participant should provide a convincing argument that the findings of the study will answer the research question.

- ✓ *Will your method provide insights and/or understanding of the problems posed in your research question?*

The participant should explain what insights and/or understanding of the problems the study should reveal.

- ✓ *What new issues might be revealed as a result of your study?*

The participant should explain new issues that could be uncovered through this study.

In qualitative research – did the investigator really translate the views of the respondents or did s/he provide pre-existing descriptions or conclusions reflecting the investigator’s perceptions? In quantitative research – is the research design appropriate? Is the sample size adequate? Are the measurements/observations used accurate and precise? Are there justifications for the measurements used?

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