

Student Considerations in Source Selection

Assessment

Guiding questions:

What words do Writing 121 and Writing 122 students use to describe why they select one source over another?
What do Writing 121 and Writing 122 students value in a source?

Assessment design:

After a fall pilot, an optional online student survey was sent to all Writing 121 and Writing 122 faculty in Winter 2013. The survey presents students with a thesis/claim and a list of four sources, including links out to each source. Students were asked to **select the "best" source to support the claim** and then prompted to explain why.

Writing faculty asked students to take the survey around the 10th week of the term, post instruction, and 38 known courses participated, representing all campuses and courses taught online, with an approximate 20% response rate (n206).

Sara R. Seely, Ashley Downs & Andrew Grewell

Portland Community College

Sara.Seely@pcc.edu

pcc.edu/library/know-your-sources

Threshold Concepts

Threshold Concepts (Hofer, Townsend & Brunetti, 2012)

"As described by Jan Meyer and Ray Land, threshold concepts are the core ideas and processes in any discipline that define the discipline, but that are so ingrained that they often go unspoken or unrecognized by practitioners. They are the central concepts that we want our students to understand and put into practice, that encourage them to think and act like practitioners themselves."

Format as a Process (ACRL, 2014)

"Format is the way tangible knowledge is disseminated. The essential characteristic of format is the underlying process of information creation, production and dissemination, rather than how the content is delivered or experiences."

A nuanced understanding of the process of creating and publishing an information product is essential to effectively navigating a changing information landscape.

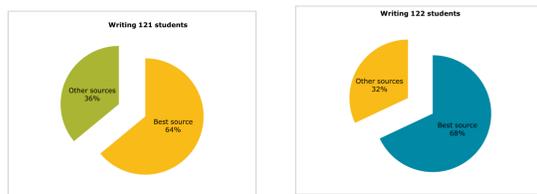
Association of College & Research Libraries (2014, June 17). *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education: Draft 2*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ala.org/acrl/aboutacrl/directoryofleadership/taskforces/acr-ftlichs>

Hofer, A.R., Townsend, L., & Brunetti, K. (2012). Troublesome concepts and information literacy: Investigating threshold concepts for IL instruction. *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 12(4).

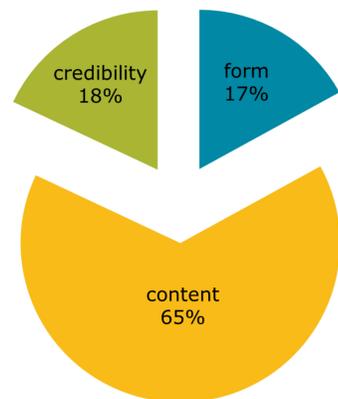
Student Considerations

form & utility of the text	content & information in the text	credibility & quality of the text
<i>statements considering:</i> accessibility, language, vocabulary, format, length, navigation, active links, features of the text	<i>statements considering:</i> level of detail provided, relationship of information to the claim/thesis, type of information provided, "usefulness"	<i>statements considering:</i> author expertise, reputation of publisher, domain (.edu), quality of works cited, publish date, bias or lack of bias

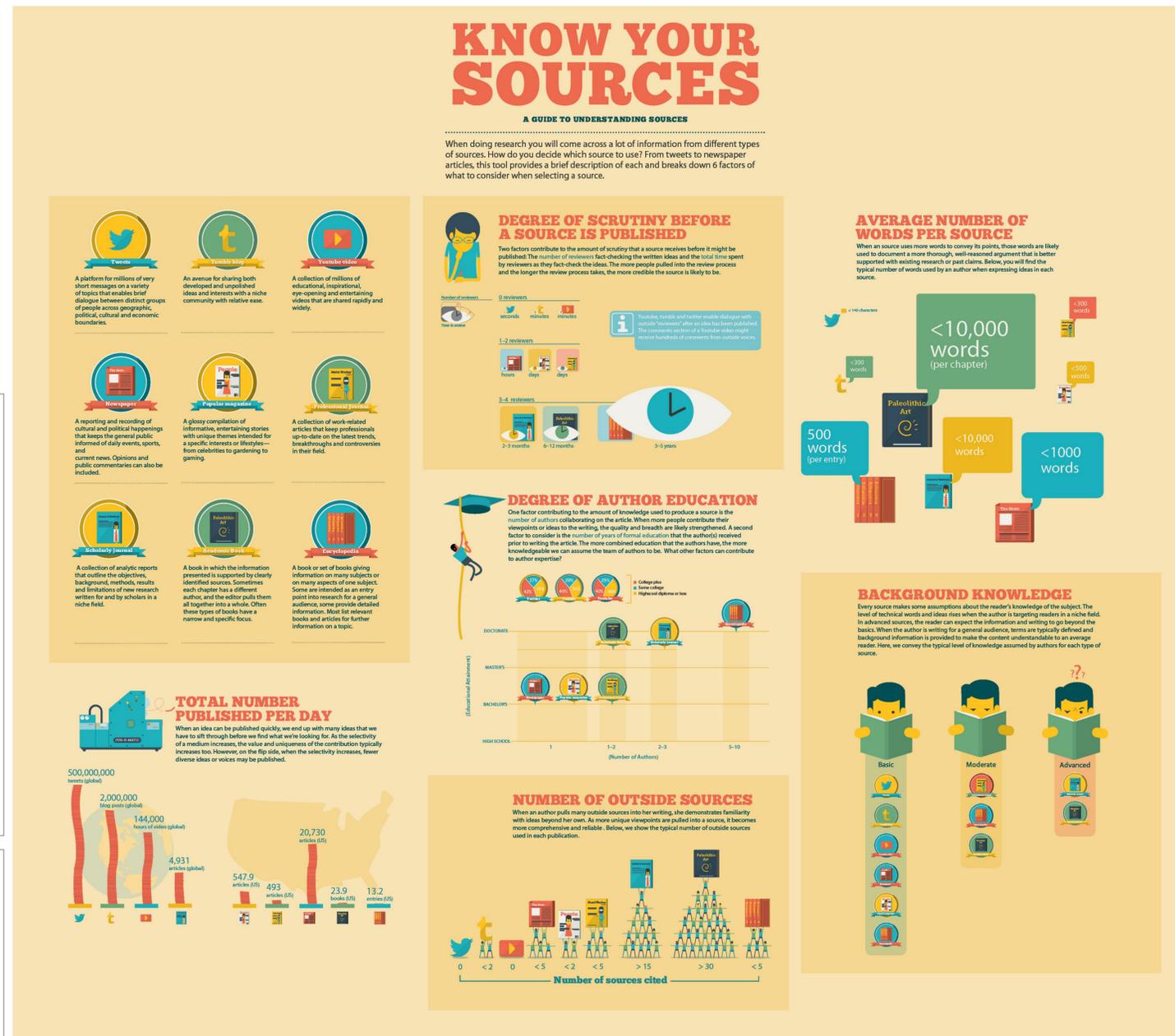
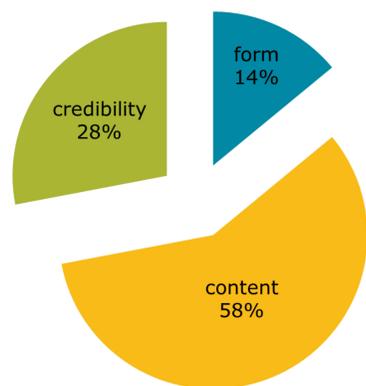
Results



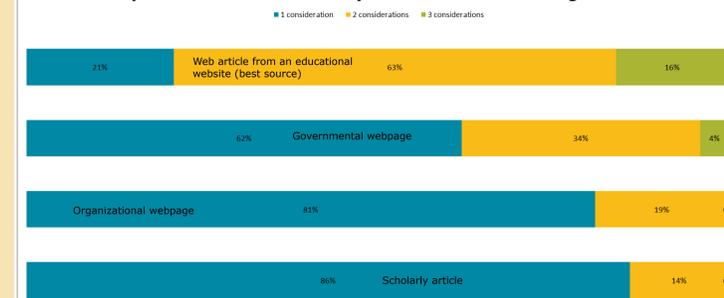
types of considerations made by WR121 students when selecting the "best" source



types of considerations made by WR122 students when selecting the "best" source



unique considerations made by students when selecting a source



Discussion

Most useful finding
Students who made 2 or more unique considerations were significantly more likely to select the best source.

Threshold Concepts
Student responses reflected a basic understanding of format as a process, without much depth or nuance. Some responses articulated markers that indicated the underlying creation process. That said, library and writing faculty recognized a gap in student understanding as a result of this study, and collaborated to address it through the creation of an infographic that makes visible the weight of significant markers that differentiate a variety of information sources.

Link to full assessment results & analysis:
<http://bit.ly/sourceselectionassessment>

Program assessment of a threshold concept: practice and application

Library Assessment Conference, Aug. 4-6, 2014
Seattle, WA