Best Practices for Incorporating Research in Writing Assignments

- **Consult with the librarian for your discipline about your assignment**

  He/she has seen many research assignments over the years and may have great suggestions for you or can recommend resources you can base an assignment on (ex. full-text primary source e-collections, print material in our Special Collections, etc.). Librarians who understand your research assignments can do a better job selecting materials for the library collection.

- **Make your research assignment clear to the students in your syllabus**

  Librarians often encounter students who aren't sure about the assignment. Some students need more direction than others. If you prefer a specific citation style, tell them. Refer them to **Refworks, Zotero, or our Citation guide** for help creating/managing bibliographies. Explain what you mean by "scholarly" sources. Recommend specific databases to search, especially core ones for a discipline.

- **Provide appropriate research paper models for students**

  Students may be used to writing for another discipline or not know how to go from writing papers based on their own analysis to writing papers that incorporate research or arguments by others. Refer them to research paper examples in writing handbooks; show them past "A" research papers by previous students (get permission); Recommend a journal article that is a good model (ex. Sample paper in Econometrics). For thesis students, refer them to our digital thesis archive or to College Archives for earlier "honors" papers.

- **Arrange for a library instruction session and/or course research guide**

  Don't assume all your students know how to do research, even if they are seniors. According to an OCLC study, **89% of college students begin with a search engine. Only 2% start with the library web site.** Our survey of incoming Middlebury students indicated that 84.5% use a search engine for research (57% use online databases and indexes, 40.5% use a library catalog). Instruction can be tailored to the assignment and to the skill set of the students and librarians can create research guides for them to refer to. *TIP: Don't schedule instruction too far in advance – time it for when they will actually be doing research or they'll forget what they learn.*

- **Help your students avoid poor papers based on last minute research by assigning a bibliography in advance.**

  Great writing skills won't make an "A" paper if the student has missed the best research on a topic or based a paper on inappropriate but easy to copy internet resources. <u>If students do research at the last minute their writing will also be at the last minute</u>. *TIP: Force them to do research in advance by requiring them to submit a bibliography well before the paper is due. This will allow them time to use Interlibrary Loan. Those not on track can be referred to a librarian for help.*

- **Encourage students to consult librarians! Recommend research consultations! Think of librarians as partners.**

  As it has become seemingly easier to do research online, students consult librarians less often. **Our survey of incoming Middlebury students showed that 56% rarely or never seek assistance from librarians. Add your librarian's contact info to your syllabus.** <u>You are KEY to getting students to understand what we can do for them.</u>