# Using Annotated Bibliographies to Evaluate Critical Thinking Skills in First Year Seminar Students

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## Inquiry Question

After participating in the Beyond Google Library Workshop, will First Year Seminar students be able to proficiently select relevant, credible sources as well as evaluate and analyze their importance?

## Background

At Kalamazoo College, the First Year Seminar research workshop is a requirement for all incoming students. Two years ago a team of librarians and faculty redesigned our First Year information literacy program. Conversations with faculty highlighted how little experience new students have with doing research, prompting our program overhaul.

Our former First Year information literacy program emphasized concrete research skills and the use of library tools to find materials in specific formats. The new “Beyond Google” workshop has shifted to critical thinking skills.

We want students to formulate a research question and move beyond their opinions, to discover and respond to ideas in the scholarly literature on their topics.

The redesigned workshop involves collaborating with faculty to create tailored assignments that students work on before the Beyond Google workshop in the Library.

We expect students to run into difficulties and be more invested in the process because of that.

Several First Year Seminar faculty assign an annotated bibliography for their final research project.

Our team chose to work with that established assignment for our assessment piece.

To evaluate the annotated bibliographies, we used a rubric that focused on the selection, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of sources.

## Acknowledgements

This project is part of the program “Assessment in Action: Academic Libraries and Student Success” which is undertaken by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in partnership with the Association for Institutional Research and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. The program, a cornerstone of ACRL’s Value of Academic Libraries initiative, is made possible by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

## Results

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<tr>
<th>Source Selection</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Not Acceptable</th>
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Almost all students are able to select credible sources relevant to their topic. While students are able to proficiently describe the source material, they are less able to analyze its importance and what value it has for their research project.

Librarians will continue to meet with First Year Seminar faculty and highlight the annotated bibliography assignment in an effort to increase participation. We will work with them to include earlier versions of the bibliographies along with the final assignment in order to assess their progress.

Our rubric will be reviewed and revised as needed.

The First Year Seminar is one of three required seminars taken by all students at Kalamazoo College. The results of this ACRL project will strengthen the librarians’ case for instruction on evaluating and analyzing sources in the First Year Seminars, and continue to develop our assessment tool for all Sophomore Seminars.

## Conclusions and Next Steps

Success in college requires the ability to:
- Identify a problem
- Collect information. Evaluate its relevance and credibility
- Interpret and analyze the information
- Communicate research effectively


Students graduating from high school have difficulty judging the quality of sources they find online, accompanied by problems with critical thinking


“Learning the process of research is as important as assimilating knowledge”


Analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (from Bloom’s taxonomy) are frequently used as a definition of critical thinking


## Rubric

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**Selected Readings**