The Amazing Library Race

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What is The Amazing Library Race?

• In-class Instructional Game
  – Loosely based on The Amazing Race
• Ideal for lower division courses without specific assignment
• Interactive
• Engaging
• Competitive
• Hands-on
• Fun!
History and Evolution

• Spring 2005
  — Developed by Jennifer Duvernay at Arizona State University for a Freshman Learning Community
• Fall 2010
  — Adapted for BRAE 128 – Careers in Bioresource and Agricultural Engineering course at Cal Poly
• Fall 2011
  — Used College-wide for Introductory and Orientations courses (for In-Library Instruction)
    • 10 different courses

How to Play

• Students work in teams
• Theme or topic for each leg of the race
• Use the library website or a course-specific Research Guide to correctly answer a set of questions about the library and its resources in each leg.
• First team to complete all the legs of the race wins
Active Learning

• Minimal Instruction – Students Jump Right In!
• Learn by Doing
  – Cal Poly’s Teaching and Learning Philosophy
• So...

Let’s Play!
Teams

• Get into teams of 4-5 people.
• Create a name for your team.
• Select a Team Captain

The Race

• There are 3 legs of the race.
  — Each leg has 3 questions.
• Use the Woodbury University Library Website (http://library.woodbury.edu/) to find the answers to the questions.
• Each team member must correctly answer all the questions before you can move on to the next leg.
  — Team Captain will bring all team members’ answer sheets to the instructor for review
• The first team to complete all 3 legs WINS!
And the winner is...

The Method to the Madness
Teams

• Size
  – Teams should be equal in size
    • 2-4 students/team
  – Teams can be assigned or self-forming
  – Difficult to manage more than 8 teams
    • Adjust team size according to class size

• Team Name
  – Students must select a name for their team
  – Team name and student name on all documents

• Team Captain
  – Students must select a captain for their team
  – Team Captain reports for the team
    • Minimizes traffic at the instructor workstation

Goals & Learning Outcomes

• The Race can be tailored to the course to meet specific goals and learning outcomes

• At Cal Poly
  – Goals
    • Dip their toes into the “Library Ocean”
    • Plant the seeds for future learning in subsequent courses
    • Tackle the common pitfalls early on (e.g., citations)
  – What do I want the students to learn?
    • Intro/Orientation Courses (Bloom’s Level 1 – Understand)
      – Popular and common resources and services
      – Library catalogs
      – Discipline specific article databases
      – Citation types and components
Legs of the Race

- Recommend 4-6 legs
  - Number depends on the amount of time you have in class
    - Number of questions in each leg can also vary
  - Each leg should address a topic or concept based on your learning outcomes
  - Each leg is color-coded with colored paper for clarity
- Envelopes for each leg
  - Contain sheets of paper with questions
- At Cal Poly
  - About the Library
  - Articles, citations, and plagiarism
  - Books
  - Articles
  - Citations

Questions

- Number can vary from 2 to 10
  - Again, this depends on the amount of time you have (e.g., 50-minute one-shot, 3-hour lab)
- Questions can be general or discipline-specific – you decide!
- Questions should require students to use a resource to find information
  - Point students to library website or research guide
- Questions should be “SMART”
  - Specific – Aligned with goals and learning outcomes
  - Measurable – Easily assessed and verified
  - Attainable – Easily answered
  - Realistic – Actual tasks/situations they may encounter
  - Timely – Important and relevant
Examples & Research Guide

- **About the Library**
  - Where is the Research Help Desk located?
  - What are course reserves?
- **Articles, citations, and plagiarism**
  - List the 3 types of articles and the audience for each type.
  - What is Cal Poly’s definition of plagiarism?
- **Books**
  - On which floor is [specific book] located?
- **Articles**
  - List two databases you could use to find articles on topics related to your major.
  - Create a search statement to find articles on [specific topic]. Use this to search [specific database] and list the title of a relevant article you find.
- **Citations**
  - Is the following citation for a book or an article?
  - Identify the [journal title, article title, volume, issue] in the following citation.

Answers

- All members of the team must answer the questions correctly and consistently
  - No slackers – everyone participates
  - Relatively low incidence of copying – teams self police
- **Answer sheet options**
  - Questions with blank spaces for answers
    - Suitable for shorter races with fewer questions
  - Separate answer sheet
    - Answers only
    - Allows question sheets to be reused
      - Good for multiple sections
  - On their own paper, too
- **Prepare an answer sheet ahead of time**
  - Be prepared to grade quickly and fairly
Prizes

- Small prizes for each member of the winning team
  - Increases motivation, engagement and competition
  - Disclose prizes...or not
  - Single prize or multi-level prizes (1st, 2nd, 3rd)
- Examples
  - Promotional materials
  - Candy
  - Trophies or medals! 😊

Preparation

- Goals & Learning Outcomes
  - Use these to shape the content of the Race
- Website/Research Guide
  - Make sure questions can be answered using one of these
- Legs/Questions
  - Prepare questions
  - Place question sheets in envelopes for each leg
- Worksheets
  - Prepare separate worksheet for answers if desired
- Answers
  - Make sure you have the correct answers to the questions on an answer key for quick and efficient grading
- Prizes
  - Determine accordingly
Advantages

- Students become engaged in the activity
- Hands-on experience with the library and its resources
- Lays a foundation for future information literacy instruction in subsequent courses
- Can be tailored to the discipline and to specific goals and learning outcomes
- It’s fun!

Disadvantages

- Extensive initial preparation
  - Questions
  - Envelopes
  - Research Guide
- Frenzy of activity during the class
  - Questions from students
  - Grading answers
- Level 1 learning
Questions and/or comments?

Would this work for you?

• With your team, discuss and share...
  – Do you see yourself using this activity at your institution?
    • Why or why not?
    • Which courses?
    • What might be your goals and/or learning outcomes?