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?