

Understanding Scholarly Articles

Information Literacy GEO this assignment addresses: Uses and manipulates information responsibly, ethically, and legally. The information literate student summarizes the main ideas to be extracted from the information gathered. Students need to identify the main idea(s) in the print or online sources of information, such as article, reports, reviews, etc. They have to be made aware of the facts that:

- The titles of the scholarly articles may not convey all of the ideas and concepts of the articles.
- Abstracts of the scholarly article are to be used for determining if the article in hand can provide a full or partial answer to the topic or problem under investigation.

Objectives of assignment: Students will learn to:

- Read the text and select main ideas
- Restate textual concepts in their own words and selects data accurately
- Identify verbatim material that can be then appropriately quoted

Preparation:

This module is intended to demonstrate how to examine and evaluate scholarly articles and determine their contents and relatedness to a specific topic. The instructional process is based on three steps:

- Identifying the *major concepts* in the abstracts the articles.
- Locating the paragraphs and sections in the body the article where each *major concept* has been presented and elaborated upon.
- Examining the title of the article to determine how well the *major concept(s)* are presented in the title.
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Instructional Initiation (about 30 minutes): The instructor should have pre-selected and photocopied one scholarly article to use in the demonstration and another one to distribute to the students. These articles need to have relatively lengthy/wordy titles.

1. Highlight the *major concepts* in the abstract of the first scholarly article.
2. Assign a number to each *major concept* in the abstract.
3. Locate and number the sections in the body of the article that relate to the *major concepts* in the abstract according to their numbers in the abstract.
4. Count the keywords and phrases in the title of the article that correspond with the *major concepts* in the article.
5. Display/distribute (or by any other appropriate means) the article to the class and discuss the procedure while attracting the students attention to the highlighting and numbering method that you have used.

Assignment:

1. Divide the students into teams of three.
2. Distribute a copy of the second article to each team.
3. Ask each team to select one spokesperson.
4. Ask each team to follow the process of reading, highlighting, and numbering of the abstract and the body of the article as described in steps 1 through 4 under Instructional Initiation above.
5. On the blackboard (or by means of any other group demonstration tool) draw four columns with these headings:
 - i. Concepts
 - ii. Abstract
 - iii. Article
 - iv. Title
6. Ask the spokespersons (one at a time) read the *major concepts* that their team has identified in the Abstract, Article, and Title.
7. Enter the *major concepts* in the Concepts column, and put an X mark in the column that corresponds to the source of the *major concept*: Abstract, Article, and Title columns.
8. Continue the process until the findings of all of the teams have been presented and recorded in the appropriate columns.
9. Total the number of X marks for each column.
10. Compare the number of totals of the columns to demonstrate the differences in the information *weight* between the Title, Abstract, and Article elements.

Important summation/review points:

1. By comparing the information *weight* of the Title, Abstract, and Article elements, students will become aware that:
 - A Title may only be a partial representation of the Article contents.
 - Abstracts represent the major concepts in the scholarly articles.
 - Body of the scholarly articles is the main sources of information that is briefly represented in their Abstracts.
2. Students become familiar with the format of the information communication modes in the scholarly literature.