Library Research: What’s in It for Me?

As part of my role at the Library, I teach students, both new and returning, library research skills. Many eyes roll, many groans can be heard, as I step into a class to conduct my workshops. Students don’t come to College to learn about the library and how to research, that’s what Google’s for. Library research and the skills learned aren’t just for the classroom. They have real-world applications like critically evaluating information to share with a prospective client, or developing an article for publication. Knowing how to properly research can benefit students far into their professional lives. It’s just trying to convince them of that, first!

Some of the questions I get asked include:

* Why do I need to learn this? I already know how to research.
* Isn’t Google good enough?
* Why do I have to do so much prep work?

Some WIIFM answers include:

* Research skills are much more than typing a sentence into Google and getting results. You need to learn how to critically evaluate those results to use the information most effectively depending on your information needs.
* Google has a lot of information, but many times you many need specialized information like data, statistics, or academic research. That is not always available or easy to find on Google. Even though the techniques I show are applied to library databases, they can actually be applied to better search Google as well as other specialized information resources.
* Preparing to search is an important step. It helps to clarify what you are actually researching which will help you focus on finding the information you actually need. It saves a lot of time spent going of on tangents while researching. It provides a direct path.
* Critical thinking (analysing, evaluating, etc.) and information management (Gathering and managing information, selecting and using appropriate tools and technology, etc.) are essential employability skills. These skills have been deemed as critical for college graduates to have and are skills that employers look for in potential candidates.
* Research skills will help in your personal life. For example, if you are researching cars to purchase, you need reliable, factual information, in order to make a well-informed decision on your purchase.