Scaffolding Research: Finding and Evaluating Sources

This module presents a few different pathways for your students to find useful resources for the background information on their chosen topic, and to answer their research question.

Obviously, some sources will be better than others – meaning they are authored by an expert on the topic, a primary source, or come from a reputable publication.

In this task, students create a research record based on their search online or in the library – and consider if the source is *reliable* and *useful* before taking notes. For a student who's never done research in music before, this can be a very valuable exercise to get familiar with music sources and use higher order thinking skills to decide if they should go back to it for the project – or ditch it!

This example uses the topic *Maori show bands*. *What is the significance of Maori show bands in the history of New Zealand music?*

For students struggling to formulate a research question, this exercise can also help them narrow down their topic with some preliminary information.

Research Record

Title: *The Maori Show Bands*
Date Published: *25 March 2005*
Type of Source: *Radio NZ programme hosted on Website*
http://www.radionz.co.nz/collections/the-maori-show-bands

This source is reliable because *It's a National radio programme, the presenter interviews the members of the showbands so the stories come right from the musicians themselves*

This source will be useful/not useful for my question because: *Useful because the musicians talk about their backgrounds, and there are many of examples of how Maori showbands traveled overseas and worked with top musicians there. Also a lot of musical examples. The*

stories the musicians tell aren't all useful because they sometimes go off topic.

Title: *Maori Showbands*
Date published: *Founded on April 9, 2009*
Type of Source: *Facebook page*
https://www.facebook.com/maori.showbands/?fref=ts

This source is reliable because:_*It couldn't be 100% reliable because anyone could post information, but there are a lot of photos that have been posted up by people who say they knew the musicians.*

This source will be useful/not useful for my question because: *Useful for photos and video examples, there are a lot. I could possibly post a question there and maybe someone would answer it. There are announcements about musicians who have died but I don't think that will be useful for me.*

Title: *Tracing the Tiki Tour*
Date Published: *23 October 2011*

Type of Source: *Newspaper article hosted on website*
http://www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment/news/article.cfm?c_id=1501119&objectid=10760788
This source is reliable because: *The NZ Herald is a national newspaper*
This source will be useful/not useful for my question because: *Useful because it profiles a showband (the Quin-Tikis). It's a preview of a TV series on Maori TV, that's how I found out about it (next source).*

Title: *Unsung Heroes of Maori Music – Hi-Marks, Series 3 Episode 2*
Type of Source: *TV show hosted on website*
http://www.maoritelevision.com/tv/shows/unsung-heroes-maori-music

This source is reliable because: *Maori Television is a national TV channel and they interviewed the musicians and their families*

This source will be useful/not useful for my question because: *The first part is useful because it profiles the Hi -Marks and interviews the last surviving musician; the rest is about another solo musician who was not part of a show band*

Title: *Rim D. Paul and The Quin Tikis*

Type of Source: *Web Article*

http://www.audioculture.co.nz/people/rim-d-paul-and-the-quin-tikis

This source is reliable because: *My teacher says Audioculture gets funding from NZ On Air and NZ On Screen so it is probably reliable*

This source will be useful/not useful for my question because: *Useful because it profiles the Quin Tikis singer and talks about their background, where they performed as a band and what the singer (Rim D Paul) did with music after he left the band. There are also a lot of pictures and it talks about movies some of the bands were in too.*

Title: *Showband! Mahora and the Maori Volcanics*

Date Published: *There's no date on the article but the website was published in 2007*

Type of Source: *Web Article* http://chrisbourke.co.nz/

This source is reliable because: *it looks like it's a blog and so it would be Chris Bourke's opinions so not as reliable as if it was facts or interviews*

This source will be useful/not useful for my question because: *It's a review of a book written by a musician in the Maori Volcanics. I don't think it's that useful, it would be better to just read the book*

Note Taking and Creating a Source Document
There are some great tools out there for scaffolding research. Two templates that I have come across guide students through taking notes and connecting their ideas together.

Teacher Shannon A. O'Day created a worksheet that you can download for free here:
http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/scaffolding-methods-research-paper-1155.html[1]

The pros of this template are that it is very structured. It emphasizes the research question, and encourages students to think about the "hook" that makes the research interesting to the reader.

The worksheet is set up as a gap fill exercise where students extrapolate the main idea and supporting facts from each source, using correct referencing format along the way. The sections for each source are stitched together with connecting phrases, which could be very valuable for teaching students how their ideas could potentially connect together. There is also a section for analysis, but the final section on original research may not be useful as it seems to be geared more to quantitative research (but if that suits your students' subject, then by all means!)

A con about this template is that it was created specifically for a written research paper, which your students may not be doing for their final product, but it has a lot of potential to be adapted for your students' needs.

If you can get your hands on the very well-written and useful book *Rebuilding Research Writing: Strategies for Sparking Informational Inquiry* by Nanci Werner-Burke et al (or convince your school library to order it) I highly recommend it!

These authors created a template for a "source document"[2] where students can practice using the correct bibliographical format for their source, summarizing the main ideas of the source, and have space to cut/paste any quotes from the source that they can cite or paraphrase. Each source has its own document.

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[1] O'Day, S. (2006) *Setting the stage for creative writing: Plot scaffolds for beginning and intermediate writers*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
[2] Werner-Burke, N. et al (2014). *Rebuilding Research Writing: Strategies for Sparking Informational Inquiry.* New York: Routledge.

Source Citation:

Summary:

Information:

Note Taking, Plagiarism and Citation Format

Werner-Burke et al recommend a free app called Diigo, which allows students to bookmark pages, highlight, color-code and annotate text with digital stickynotes, and store it in their personal online library. I wish I'd known about this in my post-graduate studies, as it's a very useful tool! Students can login from any computer and there is even an app for smartphones, so their notes can go with them everywhere.

The authors assert that when students plagiarize, it is often not intentional – but it is potentially serious, and it's important to drive home the importance of using original ideas. Being proactive about teaching about note-taking and citing sources can help nip this in the bud – as is being available to help them through the process. If they know they can ask you questions in class, they may not be tempted to copy directly from their sources.

When using the Source Document, remind students that if a phrase or sentence is in quotation marks, you should be able to go back into the original source and find it. Otherwise, the students need to put the information into their own words.

One exercise to help students with expressing the idea without lifting the information word-by-word is to have them read the information from the source, put it away and make a written list of what they remember or re-tell it to you or a classmate.[3] This would make a good group exercise for everyone doing the standard.

Werner-Burke et al also suggest spot checking your students' work. [4]Ask them to explain to you the meaning of a term, or how they came up with an idea. If they can't explain it to you, it's not their idea – and they have to do some backtracking to figure out where it came from and cite it accordingly.

You can also spot-check the sources themselves – and let the students know you'll be doing this.

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[3] Wheeler-Toppen, J. (2006.) Helping students write about science without plagiarizing. *Science Scope, 29* (7), 47-49.

Citation Format

Producing a bibliography shows ownership of the research process – the students have searched for their sources, evaluated them and extrapolated the useful facts to answer their research question. A bibliography is not only demonstrates the responsibilities of a good researcher in acknowledging others' work, it's something to be proud of.

In the University of Auckland School of Music, APA format is the norm, but for Ethnomusicology, it's Chicago. However, you're best off checking with the school's English department to see what they are teaching – they will definitely thank you for it!