The Scavenger Hunt: Sample Questions

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The Scavenger Hunt: Sample Questions

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INDEX:

.01 Scavenger Hunt Questions and Commentary
.02 Different Types of Sources
.03 Dictionaries
.04 Databases
.05 Archives
.06 Links to Class Assignments
.07 Conclusions

.01 Scavenger Hunt Questions and Commentary

In last month’s issue of BCIS, I discussed how to set up a scavenger hunt to encourage students to develop and practice their search skills in the library and on the Internet, and I included some of the many benefits that students in my own classes have gained from such an exercise. (see the September article) Below I provide sample scavenger hunt questions to help teachers get started constructing their own scavenger hunts.

These sample questions are all related to history, which is what I teach, but the hunt can be adapted for any subject matter. In addition to sample questions for a scavenger hunt, I have provided commentary about why these questions might be included in the hunt. Each student answer should identify the source in correct bibliographic format.

.02 Different Types of Sources

1. Find a recorded oral interview (audio or written transcript). Why was the interview taken? What was it about? How was the interview conducted? What kinds of information did the interviewer gain?

Interviews are now available at a variety of Internet sources and may be available in school...
archives. This question introduces students to a type of historical evidence other than the standard written document.

2. Find a map of __________, possibly from a specific historical period.

This question introduces students to cartographic resources. It might be helpful to ask students to find one map through the Internet and one from a hardcopy source and then ask if they see any differences in information or use between them.

3. What were two headlines in the *New York Times* on the influenza epidemic in 1918-1919?

This question (or any such question based on newspapers available in one’s own library) generally will get students to use microfilm/forms. The microfilm readers and films/forms should be included on the library tour.

4. In what year did women gain the vote in national elections in France, Italy, Finland, England, United States, Norway, Switzerland, Germany, and Australia?

5. Name five foods that the Americas contributed to Europe.

6. Name five foods that Africa contributed to the Americas.

Students may find many different sources to answer these questions, demonstrating the wealth of possibilities for finding research materials. Such “fun fact” questions can introduce information that may be surprising to students and may challenge them about things they take for granted. Interesting conversations in class often follow when students find new and provocative information.

7. According to the U.S. Census, how many “free colored” people were in the United States in 1820 and again in 1850? Did the percentage of “free colored” people (among the total U.S. population) go up or down from 1820 to 1850?

This question asks students to work with census data and do some mathematical figuring. Because the government did not ask the same questions on each census, one can ask students what the different questions asked might signify about historical change and about government interest in such information.

.03 **Dictionaries** *(return to index)*

8. Where does the word “barbarian” come from? How did its meaning develop?

This question directs students to some of the more extensive dictionaries, such as the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, now available in hardcopy and on the web. It points students to
dictionaries as a useful resource for more than just spelling and definitions.

9. What was a “Phrygian Cap”? Why did it have this name? (The answer involves two different cultures in two different time periods.) Why did the second culture use this same name?

This is a fairly simple question to answer with a good dictionary, but it introduces the idea of cultural borrowing and can generate a discussion of why a culture might want to do that.

.04 Databases (return to index)

10. How many different books in English or Spanish have been catalogued (according to the database World Cat) on Mayan Civilization from 2000 to the present?

This question gets students to use one of the more complete databases [World Cat (formerly OCLC)] on books and other materials available in the more than 43,000 OCLC member libraries in 86 countries and territories. The question is structured to help students learn to use the “limit” searches to find the resources that they need.

11. What two authors have written articles debating the merits of one of the author’s retelling of the story of Martin Guerre?

This introduces students to article databases (either on-line or hardcopy).

12. How many dissertations were written on Middle Eastern history before 1980? How many since?

This question gets students into another database, Dissertation Abstracts, and asks them to analyze some of the data available. It can also lead to a discussion of why and when certain topics become the subject of intensive academic study.

.05 Archives (return to index)

13. According to Mary and Betty Campbell’s Government Camp Song, written during the Dust Bowl, which government camp’s residents did not wear shoes?

This question takes students to a useful archive available on the Internet, namely, the Library of Congress American Memory Collection.

14. According to the patent of the inventor of the cotton gin, what first inspired Eli Whitney to invent the gin?

If one goes to the U.S. National Archives and Record Administration (NARA) website, one can view Eli’s handwritten document to find the answer. This question introduces students to the
availability of actual archival documents on the web, one of the great benefits of the Internet. If desired, this kind of document can begin a conversation about the interest and use of such documents and also the challenges that they present.

15. Go to Special Collections/School Archives and ask to see a couple of volumes of *L'Encyclopedie*, 3rd edition. Discuss one or two of the written entries (if you can read French) or some of the visual plates. What is the focus of this encyclopedia? How is it different from today’s encyclopedia?

This type of question needs to be based on materials available locally. Many students do not know about special collection/archival sources or are unaware that they as students have access to them. Yet, once introduced to them, students tend to like looking at such documents. If many students are involved in this kind of search, it is helpful to discuss the assignment with the librarian/archivist ahead of time and have some of the volumes pulled for student use. A brief tour of the archives before the hunt often goes over well with students, especially if they are given time to look at some of the documents. The tour (and the scavenger hunt question) can reduce intimidation levels and introduce students to the special rules that apply when examining documents in these collections.

.06 Links to Class Assignments (return to index)


If this question is assigned for the same week that the book is being read, it provides another avenue for students to understand the text under discussion. Discussion of the answers also allows the class to talk about the differences in book reviews among academic, library (basic information to aid libraries in book buying), popular (such as in The New York Times) and random reader (such as at Amazon.com) book reviews.

17. Find an article related to your research project. What kinds of sources did the author use? What is the author’s argument?

This question pushes students to find an article for their research. Depending on class level and goals, this exercise can open up questions about various types of journals (academic, newsweeklies, popular, etc.) and introduce students to how authors use sources and the types of arguments/theses that they make.

18. Find a book not available in your school library that is related to your research project and order it through interlibrary loan (ILL).

Students often do not know how to use ILL and so steer clear of it. This question overcomes that hurdle, thus expanding the resources that students use in their projects. Such questions in the scavenger hunt can provide an incentive for students not to procrastinate on at least some of
their research, and it can also contribute to students talking about their individual research projects in class.

19. Find another source for your research project by using the footnotes/bibliography of a source that you already have. What did you gain from the new source? Provide bibliographic information for both sources.

This question shows students how to expand their skills in finding sources for research projects. One student at University of Central Arkansas was ecstatic when this method yielded one of his best sources at a time when he had been struggling to find additional materials.

20. Name the title, year, and school of several faculty members’ dissertation theses.

This exercise provides a small window into a non-teaching aspect of their instructors’ lives. It opens the possibility of discussion about what faculty generally must do to become university professors and what they do for their careers when not teaching. This assignment works well in an introduction to research/methods course or a first-year introductory course.

.07 Conclusions

The scavenger hunt is an almost infinitely flexible tool for teaching students better research skills. It is a fun activity that encourages students to try multiple paths to an answer. The hunt also encourages students to learn from each other by using discussion and asking students to tell their peers how they got their answers. Tying questions directly to class materials or individual research papers brings new and expanded means of learning into the class. Moreover, these exercises give students practical skills they will use again and again. When students find that their new skills help them find information quickly for assignments in other classes and even for projects outside of school, they become excited about what they have learned.

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14 THOUGHTS ON "THE SCAVENGER HUNT: SAMPLE QUESTIONS"

Erik Suto

on January 30, 2014 at 6:16 PM said:

This is very attention-grabbing, You are an excessively professional blogger. I’ve joined your rss feed and look ahead to in search of extra of your fantastic post. Also, I’ve shared your web site in my social networks!
best tankless water heater

on February 3, 2014 at 5:49 AM said:

I’ve been exploring for a little bit for any high-quality articles or blog posts on this kind of space. Exploring in Yahoo I at last stumbled upon this site. Studying this info So i’m satisfied to show that I have a very just right uncanny feeling I discovered just what I needed. I so much definitely will make sure to don’t put out of your mind this website and give it a glance regularly.

rifle scope reviews

on February 3, 2014 at 8:47 PM said:

A fascinating discussion is definitely worth comment. I do think that you ought to publish more on this issue, it might not be a taboo matter but usually folks don’t discuss these issues. To the next! Cheers!!

jig saw reviews

on February 3, 2014 at 9:26 PM said:

I’m not that much of a online reader to be honest but your sites really nice, keep it up! I’ll go ahead and bookmark your site to come back down the road. Cheers

folding bike reviews

on February 3, 2014 at 10:04 PM said:

Spot on with this write-up, I absolutely think this website needs far more attention. I’ll probably be back again to see more, thanks for the info!
garment steamer reviews

on February 3, 2014 at 11:16 PM said:

Because the admin of this site is working, no hesitation very shortly it will be well-known, due to its quality contents.

best garbage disposal

on February 3, 2014 at 11:41 PM said:

Thanks a bunch for sharing this with all of us you actually recognize what you are talking about! Bookmarked. Kindly also consult with my site =). We could have a hyperlink change agreement between us.

band saw reviews

on February 4, 2014 at 12:53 AM said:

When some one searches for his necessary thing, so he/she wishes to be available that in detail, so that thing is maintained over here.

africa

on February 4, 2014 at 10:17 AM said:

Hmm it appears like your website ate my first comment (it was incredibly long) so I guess I will just sum it up what I had written and say, I’m thoroughly enjoying your blog. I as well am an aspiring blog writer but I’m still new to everything. Do you’ve any recommendations for novice blog writers? I’d undoubtedly enjoy it.|Woah! I’m incredibly loving the template/theme of this blog. It’s simple, yet effective. Many times it is tough to have that “perfect balance” in between user friendliness and visual appearance. I have to say you have done a superb employment with this. Also, the blog loads quite fast for me on Safari. Outstanding Blog!! Do you mind if I quote two your posts as extended as I provide credit history and sources back for the site? My blog internet site is in the exact same area of interest as yours and my targeted traffic would really benefit from plenty of the details you present here. Please permit me know if this alright with you. Thank
you!|Hi would you mind letting me know which webhost you are using? I’ve loaded your blog in 3 various world-wide-web browsers and I must say this blog loads a lot faster then most. Can you recommend a great web hosting provider at a sincere price? Thanks, I appreciate it!|Fantastic web site you’ve here but I was wanting to know in case you knew of any discussion boards that cover the same topics talked about here? I’d quite love to become a part of community exactly where I can get advice from other experienced people that share the exact same interest. In case you have any suggestions, please allow me know. Many thanks!|Hey! This really is my very first comment the following so I just wanted to give a quick shout out and say I actually appreciate reading your blog posts. Can you recommend any other blogs/websites/forums that go over the exact same topics? Appreciate it!|Do you have a spam trouble on this website; I also am a blogger, and I was curious about your situation; we now have produced some nice practices and we are looking to exchange ways with other folks, please shoot me an email if interested.

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nigeria entertainment news

on February 4, 2014 at 10:28 AM said:

I will right away clutch your rss as I can’t in finding your email subscription link or newsletter service.

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nigeria entertainment news

on February 4, 2014 at 10:37 AM said:

your attendees and take pictures.

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best shoes for crossfit

on February 4, 2014 at 6:06 PM said:

Hi I am so excited I found your web site, I really found you by error, while I was searching on Aol for something else, Anyhow I am here now and would just like to say many thanks for a marvelous post and a all round interesting blog (I also love the theme/design), I don’t have time to go through it all
at the moment but I have bookmarked it and also included your RSS feeds, so when I have time I will be back to read much more. Please do keep up the excellent job.

**table saw reviews**

on *February 4, 2014 at 8:12 PM* said:

This info is priceless. How can I find out more?

**best robotic pool cleaner**

on *February 5, 2014 at 1:01 AM* said:

If some one needs to be updated with most up-to-date technologies therefore he must be visit this site and be up to date every day.