Assignment 1: Critical Analysis of a Published Research Paper

Assigned: January 26 • Due: March 9

Purpose
The purpose of this assignment is to apply the knowledge you have gained about the components of the research process and the qualities of good research by evaluating and critiquing a published research paper. Through completing this assignment, you should become better able to evaluate published research relevant to your other courses or professional work, and become better prepared to write the research proposal that is due at the end of this course.

Description
Select an article from a peer-reviewed journal in information studies, library and information science, or other closely-related field. The article must describe findings from an empirical research study (it must involve the collection and analysis of data), whether the methods used were quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods. It should not be an article that was assigned or discussed in class, or one authored or co-authored by a current member of the UT School of Information faculty. (Not sure if a journal is peer-reviewed? Read this page: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/lsl/help/modules/peer.html)

Critique the article, considering the criteria listed on the back of this page. You might have to read a number of articles before finding one that you like and feel comfortable critiquing (in fact, this is a recommended approach, especially if the articles you read are related to the same research topic, because you can use examples and references to the other articles to bolster your critique of the selected article). To find potential articles, consider browsing the current periodicals on the 2nd floor of the PCL, the LIS and other bound serials on the 6th floor of PCL, as well as these electronic resources:

• Research by Subject > Library and Information Science
  o http://www.lib.utexas.edu/subject/lis/index.html
• Find a Journal
  o http://sfx.lib.utexas.edu:9003/sfx_local/azlist
• Databases: Library and Information Science
  o http://www.lib.utexas.edu/indexes/titles.php?subject=Library+and+Information+Science

You may choose to organize your paper according to the major headings listed in the criteria section on the back of this page, but make sure that you do not simply give short answers to each section; your entire critique should be a cohesive narrative. Take a stand on whether you think the author(s) have adequately addressed each component of the research process. I strongly suggest you consider the use of examples and references to other published research to support your arguments.

Assignment Deliverables
Your critique should be in the form of a formal academic paper, including a list of references, clear organization, logical development, and absence of grammatical and spelling mistakes. You can use APA, MLS, or Chicago as a reference style; see me if you want to use a style other than one of these. You should need no more than 8 to 10 pages (excluding the references), double-spaced or 1.5-spaced. Turn in your critique as hardcopy, single-sided, due at the start of class on March 9. This assignment is worth 35% of your final grade for the course.

Include a photocopy of the article you are critiquing with your critique when you turn it in; make sure that the journal in which the article appeared is indicated. (Clip the article and your critique together; do not staple them together.)
Criteria to Consider
When critiquing the article, consider the following points:

Title of the article
  o Does it accurately reflect the content of the research paper?

Abstract of the article
  o Does it represent the nature of the study, the methodology, results, and conclusions?

Research approach
  o Basic or applied?

Definition of terms
  o Are important terms and concepts clearly defined?
  o Are the terms used consistently throughout the article?

Reflective Inquiry
  o Statement of the Problem
    ▪ What is it?
    ▪ Is the problem statement adequate? Can you suggest a better-written statement?
    ▪ Does it address the “so-what” factor?
  o Literature Review
    ▪ Does it seem complete?
    ▪ Does it appear relevant to the research problem?
    ▪ Are quotations used appropriately?
  o Theoretical Framework
    ▪ Does the article refer to a theoretical framework?
    ▪ If so, what is the central concept of the theory? Who are the authors of the theory? Are they from within library and information science or from outside the field?
  o Logical Structure
    ▪ Is a clearly logical structure evident?
  o Questions, objectives, hypotheses
    ▪ Which are used, and what are they?

Limitations of the study
  o Does the author(s) acknowledge any limitations of the study? For example, does the author recognize weaknesses in the data gathering, which might restrict the conclusions or results?

Procedures
  o Research Design
    ▪ Does the research design seem appropriate for the research problem?
    ▪ Is the data collection method adequately explained? Are there problems with it?

Quality indicators
  o Is evidence of reliability and validity given?
  o Is there evidence of bias?
  o Are there ethical issues involved in the research?

Results
  o Are the objectives met or the hypotheses supported or rejected?
  o Are the data presented clearly and convincingly?
  o Are the data analyzed and interpreted?

Discussion or Conclusions
  o Summarize the conclusions of the research
  o Does the data support the conclusions?
  o Is anything important missing from the discussion of the findings?

Presentation of findings
  o Is the writing style clear? Confusing?
  o If a survey, questionnaire, or similar materials were used, do the author(s) provide a copy or sample in the article?
  o Is there graphical presentation of data? Is it effective? Does it support the arguments?

Summary
  o What is your judgment of the overall merit of the study in terms of its importance and impact in the field?
  o Do the authors suggest areas for future research related to the current study?
  o What did you learn from reading this article?