Assignment 3: Research Study Proposal

Assigned: March 9 • Due: May 4

Purpose
The purpose of this assignment is to provide you with an opportunity to develop and apply your understanding of the research process and gain experience in proposal writing, a valuable skill for many positions within the library and information professions.

Description
You are work in a small group with two other students in the class to develop a proposal for a research study that relates to the field of library and information science and that you believe would be worthwhile to conduct. This is a proposal to conduct a study; you are not expected to actually conduct the study as part of this assignment. Details of necessary components of the proposal are listed on page 2 of this document.

Assignment Deliverables
The first deliverable for this assignment is a topic proposal. The topic proposal is simply a brief description of the topic for which you would like to develop a formal research proposal. Ideally, you should present your topic description in the form of a problem statement; if not a problem statement, you must at least explain what the topic is and why you think a formal study of the topic would be worthwhile. This should only be a paragraph or two. Turn in your topic proposal (one per group; CC your group members so I can reply to all) by email to me by March 30th; I encourage you to turn it in sooner than that. The topic proposal will not be graded.

Your proposal itself should be in the form of a formal paper, including a list of references, and exhibit clear organization, logical development, and absence of grammatical and spelling mistakes. You should need no more than 8 to 14 pages (excluding the references), double-spaced or 1.5-spaced. List each group members’ name and email address on the proposal. If you want me to return the hardcopy version of the proposal, one group member should provide me with a large self-addressed mailing envelope. Regardless of whether you want the hardcopy returned, I will email my grading critique to each group member.

Each member of your group should also turn in a completed Group Evaluation Form and a self-critique of the proposal. The Group Evaluation Form is described in a separate handout. The self-critique is a brief (1-page or less) reflection on your proposal. This is not part of the research proposal itself, but an opportunity to step back and analyze your own proposal for strengths, weaknesses, and areas that you feel you need to understand better to improve the proposal. This critique is less formal than the proposal itself and will not factor into grading of the assignment.

Turn in your proposal, brief critique, and evaluation form, all as hardcopy, in class on May 4th.

Evaluation Criteria
This assignment is worth 35% of your final grade for the course. Evaluation will be based on the clarity of your reflective inquiry components, the research rationale and design, evidence that relevant literature has been identified and is discussed and synthesized, quality of organization and presentation of ideas, quality of writing, consistent citation referencing, and overall professionalism of proposal document.

For further guidance, review Chapter 17, “Reading and Writing Social Research” in Babbie; Chapter 4, “Writing Strategies and Ethical Considerations” in Creswell; Chapter 12, “Write-Up” in Trochim; Chapter 10, “Writing the Research Proposal” in Powell & Connaway; and the Berg paper assigned in Week 3.
Structure of the Research Proposal

Your proposal should address the sections below in the order listed, although you can alter the order if you are confident that doing so will improve your proposal. You may add other sections if you believe they are appropriate.

Title page
- Proposal title and abstract. In the abstract, state the objective of the proposed research project, the proposed data collection method, and the anticipated contribution to the field.

Table of Contents
- Use section headings identical to those in the body of the proposal, with corresponding starting page number for each section, reference list, and any appendices.

Body of Proposal
- Introduction
  - Summarizes context of the study; may introduce major sections of remainder of proposal.
- Reflective inquiry
  - Problem Statement
    - Lead in, originality, direction, and justification or value
- Literature Review
  - Research the appropriate studies on the topic (roughly 4 to 6), and weave together into a literature review
- Theoretical Framework
  - Identify any overarching theory that applies to the study (might not be applicable)
- Logical Structure
  - Remember: this item is a way of think schematically; it is not a specific section in the proposal
  - Who, What Where, How
- Objectives, Research Questions or Hypotheses
  - Define the key terms based on the literature or Web sites
  - If hypothesis, identify the significance level at which it will be tested
- Research Design
  - Address the population or sample, type of sample, sample size, how to obtain the sample
  - Describe when the study will be conducted and why then
  - What are the limitations of the study?
  - How will the research be conducted? What approach or approaches will be used?
  - Why these approaches?
  - Describe the data collection instrument
  - Describe the type of data the data collection instrument will enable you to collect. How will you need to code and organize the data before analyzing it?
  - If the method involves approaching people for data collection, provide contextual information addressing how they will be asked to participate in study
  - Resources needed
    - Identify the resources the proposed research will require:
      - Institutional resources
      - Personnel
- Anticipated results
  - In general terms, what does the study hope to find? (Important: this does not mean predicting specific results; simply indicate how the data collected will enable you to resolve or enhance understanding of your specific objectives, research questions, or hypotheses.)
- Conclusion
  - Summarize and re-emphasize the value of the proposed study

References (or Works Cited)
- Should follow a recognized style (I strongly suggest APA, MLA, or Chicago). Do not make up your own style, even if you think it is way better than the established styles.
- Should include all of the items mentioned in the literature review and any literature cited in other sections of the proposal (e.g., the Babbie; Creswell; Powell & Connaway; or Vaughan texts). Only work actually cited in your proposal should be included in the References section.

Appendices
- Optional – use if appropriate for a sample of a questionnaire or other supplementary materials you think would be helpful to include