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Simultaneous learning about research and filmmaking: Informed learning and research guides

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Abstract

Christine Bruce has written extensively about informed learning. Informed learning is “using information, creatively and reflectively, in order to learn” (2008, Preface). Bruce writes about informed learning as it relates to information literacy. Librarians, working collaboratively with professors, often develop research guides to teach information literacy skills, and to organize and present program, course, assignment or topic specific resources. Research is essential to documentary filmmaking. This chapter is a case study that describes how the History of Non-Fiction Film research guide that we created aligns with the three principles and seven faces of informed learning.

Keywords: informed learning, information literacy, research, documentary film, non-fiction film

Introduction

College courses should be about more than just the subject matter on the syllabus; they should be about how to learn. Informed learning is about using information to learn, and about “engaging students with those information practices relevant to their discipline” (Bruce, 2008, Preface). A film professor and the arts librarian at Sheridan College, in Ontario, collaborated to create a research guide for 125 first-year students enrolled in a required History of Non-Fiction Film course in the Bachelor of Film and Television (BFTV), a program that trains students to become screen industry professionals. While the students were not explicitly introduced to the theory of informed learning, the guide was organized taking into consideration the research essay, the discipline, the required research skills and the student experience. This chapter relates the theory of informed learning to the creation and use of the History of Non-Fiction Film Research Guide.

Background

Information Literacy

A primary role of public service librarians is information literacy instruction. Librarians endeavor to teach students about proper research, not only to support students in their academic pursuits, but also to assist them in building research and information skills for lifelong learning and professional and personal success. In recent years, blended learning, flipped classrooms and e-learning have increased and hence the use of research guides has become commonplace. A key question that animates this paper is how does the information that is included and the way that it is presented in research guides affect student learning about the subject they are studying and about the research process?

Information management is one of six essential employability skill sets identified by the Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development required of Ontario college graduates. The defining skill areas are “gathering and managing information, selecting and using appropriate tools and technology for a task or a project, computer literacy and Internet skills.” Associated learning outcomes require learners to “locate, select, organize and document information using appropriate technology and information systems and analyze, evaluate, and apply relevant information from a variety of sources” (Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, 2009).

In addition to information management being an essential employability skill as articulated by the Government of Ontario, information literacy is defined by the Association of College and Research Libraries (2016, p. 3) as “the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.” The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) organized information literacy “threshold concepts” into the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education consisting of six frames or concepts with accompanying knowledge practices (actions) and dispositions (ways of thinking).

eLearning

Alison Head, Executive Director and Lead Researcher of Project Information Literacy, agrees with Christine Bruce, that in the 21st century, educational technology cannot be overlooked in the study of information and learning. “Embedding modules into the research process – better help systems, short Web-based tutorials, and explanatory YouTube videos – help students, in general, learn about research in context as the process unfolds” (2013, p. 32).

SpringShare's Libguide platform allows librarians to easily combine curated and library created content and multimedia, about the research process and related to the subject content of the course, and share it as a research guide in the learning management system (LMS). According to the SpringShare website (2018), there are currently 120,000 librarians from 5700 libraries in 80 countries using the SpringShare platform.

Sheridan College subscribed to the SpringShare LibGuide platform in May 2010 and currently maintains over 300 research guides. Sheridan has 23,000 full time students, 3,700 part time students, 13,000 continuing and professional studies students, and 6,400 international students, from over 100 countries, studying across four campus locations in the Greater Toronto Area of Ontario, Canada. The library holdings total over 500,000 and 85% are digital (<https://www.sheridancollege.ca/about/at-a-glance.aspx>). SpringShare LibGuides are used by library staff not only to advertise the library collections and services, but to expand information literacy instruction. Early on, Sheridan College Library research guides listed resources by format at the program level. In recent years, librarians are using research guides to present relevant information and resources at a topic or course level, and are incorporating short educational videos related to scholarly research.

Research & Documentary Filmmaking

Documentary filmmaking requires research and information use, and there are scholars and/or filmmakers who argue that learning how to make documentary films is akin to learning how to do scholarly research. To clarify, documentary is a type of non-fiction narrative that documents reality. While there are other types of non-fiction narratives—such as investigative journalistic reporting or factual programming—for the purposes of this chapter, the terms non-fiction film and documentary will be used interchangeably. Filmmaker/professor Paul Goodman

suggests that documentary filmmaking and the research process can inform one another. Both filmmaking and research begin with a question, and involve design, measurement and data analysis. Goodman argues that filmmakers can benefit by applying coding systems used by researchers to the process of filmmaking. Researchers could benefit by videotaping their subjects, employing techniques of storytelling, and exploring multimedia presentation formats (2004). Films allow for creative expression that can stir the viewers' emotion in order to engage and persuade viewers. All documentarians aim to prove or demonstrate something, and they provide "evidence" to give credibility to their argument. Deploying Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, film theorist Bill Nichols explains that the documentary filmmaker (the orator) must follow "the three C's of rhetorical discourse: to be credible, convincing and compelling" (2010, p. 80). Indeed, stirring emotion is often the primary goal of a documentary filmmaker, and documentary is often referred to as the cinema of persuasion.

Sociology professor David Tabachnick of Muskingum University argues that his students think through the same methodological issues that they deal with in other kinds of qualitative research: "how to ask a research question, how to establish rapport with people and proceed ethically, how to interview, how to record and include details of life as it is lived, and how to present cases of people, subcultures and issues researched as offering challenge to or insight into more general theories" (2011, p. 144). Students in Tabachinck's course conduct sociology research and share their findings through storytelling in film.

Non-fiction filmmakers' information needs include, but are not limited to:

- Selecting a topic or story
- Researching the topic (using primary and secondary sources) and subject(s) of a film

- Researching filmographies and film collections (what other documentaries have been made on the topic/issue?)
- Verifying facts
- Developing a point of view
- Researching media law and ethics
- Locating potential funding sources and distribution channels for documentary films
- Finding social actors and locations to shoot the film
- Respecting copyright and seeking permissions
- Soliciting feedback about the film

Informed Learning

Information literacy and informed learning are closely related concepts. Portions of the information literacy framework concepts and dispositions align with the characteristics of informed learning described by Hilary Hughes and Christine Bruce. Informed learning, in basic terms, “is about using information to learn” (Bruce et al., 2012, p. 524). The pedagogical construct of informed learning is built on three principles with 12 characteristics. In describing informed learning, Bruce argues that teaching and learning should “bring about new ways of experiencing and using information and engage students with those information practices relevant to their discipline or profession” (2008, Preface). Several of the characteristics of informed learning mirror the knowledge practices and dispositions of the ACRL Information Literacy Frames for Higher Education. Informed learning and information literacy both describe the learner’s relationship with information, and the learning process in similar ways.

Information is at the core of both informed learning and information literacy. The focus of informed learning is on how individuals use information to learn. Informed learning is not

limited to academia and scholarship; Bruce et al. (2012), also connected informed learning to workers and citizens. The ACRL Information Literacy Framework for Higher Education focuses on information use and information creation in the context of scholarship and higher education. Bruce describes the relationship between informed learning and information literacy by saying that “information literacy makes informed learning possible,” and “informed learning that communicates clearly the potential contribution of information literacy” (2008, p. 3). In 2010, Bruce and Hughes (p. 13) identified the study of informed learning in a research community as an area for further work.

Analysis

The impetus for the History of Non-Fiction Film Research Guide was a film professor approaching the arts librarian to discuss first year second semester film major students’ research needs. Learning objectives for the Sheridan course include skills of: “explaining, describing, recognizing, analyzing, and contrasting,” in addition to research related skills. Two research learning objectives are to “interpret primary and secondary data,” and “distinguish between quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry employed in the creation of non-fiction films” (Sheridan College, 2015). For the major assignment, students are required to write a 750 word research essay using a minimum of four scholarly sources. To meet these research related learning objectives, the authors of this chapter spent a couple of weeks gathering resources and designing the History of Non-Fiction Film Research Guide. The goals then, for the research guide, were for students to be able to: (a) find scholarly articles/books about a documentary filmmaker, (b) find films by a documentary filmmaker, (c) develop a research question, and (d) cite their sources using proper APA formatting.

It was difficult to schedule in-person visits for a course that has multiple sections and different instructors, so an online research guide was a way to share content without the librarian being present, and it is a teaching tool that persists for future students and professors to use. The research guide was introduced and demonstrated to 125 first year college students in class, in the LMS, and as an embedded link on SLATE, the course's web-based learning tool, and in the assignment sheet itself. Additionally, the professor made numerous references to the guide as student questions arose. The repeated reminders to students about the research guide is believed to be one of the key reasons it has been significantly utilized. We created the research guide in February 2017, and since then it has received 2313 views. There were 613 views within 46 days of it being shared.

The intentional design and practical college classroom application of the research guide will be considered against Bruce's three principles and seven faces of informed learning. Additionally, two examples of documentary film research guides from other universities that exhibit the principles and faces of informed learning are included.

The Three Principles of Informed Learning

Hughes and Bruce (2012, p. 255), describe three principles of informed learning.

First Principle: "Informed learning takes into account learners' existing experiences of informed learning, especially through the use of reflection to enhance awareness."

The film students enrolled in the History of Non-Fiction Film were not given an explanation or instruction about informed learning. The assignment asked students to select filmmakers who "made a significant contribution to the documentary form through their unique voice, innovative style and/or their ground-breaking choice of subject matter (personal communication [Course assignment], 2017)." To complete the essay assignment about a

filmmaker, students needed to reflect on the documentary film throughout history and culture, and on what the filmmaker they studied did to change or impact documentary film. This reflection required them to think about where their filmmaker might fit in with regard to documentary movements, aesthetics, eras, and even a documentary film canon.

Second Principle: “Informed learning promotes simultaneous learning about disciplinary content and the learning process; here the idea of simultaneous learning contrasts with the common instructional practice of separating information skills from learning about the subject.”

Conducting research is essential to writing about film and also creating effective and impactful documentary films. Students, and particularly first-year students, are often mystified or overwhelmed by writing a research paper or developing a documentary film treatment. One of the key skills in writing a strong thesis or treatment for a documentary film is twofold: acquiring good research skills and developing a research process. Research is a process, and it is integral to documentary filmmaking. The research guide helped students breakdown the steps of the research process. The first piece was for students to write a research statement: “The filmmaker (insert name) has made a significant contribution to the documentary form through their ambush-style of interviewing and their use of irony.” Once students take the time to develop an effective research statement, they are anchored. This is the key connection between academic writing and documentary filmmaking; it’s the “so what?” Why should anyone care about a particular documentary filmmaker? Why should anyone care about your documentary film? This is a key stage, and one that is commonly overlooked by students who just want to rush in and start writing or shooting. But, you should never shoot, and ask questions later. The development and pre-production phases are essential in documentary filmmaking, and the skills required to carry out these phases successfully are embedded in the film program’s curriculum.

Third Principle: “Informed learning brings about changes in learners’ experience of information use and of the subject being learned; this is in accordance with the idea of learning being about becoming aware of new ways of experiencing.”

Information is presented on the research guide as videos, expert blogs, podcasts, articles, etc. Students can screen, listen to, and read unique content about documentary film and filmmakers from popular and scholarly sources. In this sense, the research guide served as a roadmap to researching and experiencing the history of documentary cinema and filmmaking practices. The guide is set-up to provide step-by-step guidance for writing a research essay on a documentary filmmaker, but it is also a portal to new experiences about and further exposure to documentary as an art form. Many students who are enrolled in the History of Non-Fiction Film are reluctant and even resistant to learning about documentary because they have had little exposure to it, other than what was screened in science or history classes in high school. When students see the vast and extensive film collections available through Criterion-on-Demand and Kanopy streaming services, not to mention film festivals (Hot Docs), podcasts and magazines devoted to the art form, students discover and experience a whole new world. This can be helpful to students who aim to work and build careers in the creative screen industries, but are not aware of all the professional possibilities.

The Seven Faces of Informed Learning

It is helpful to refer to the Seven Faces of informed learning (Bruce, 2008) in order to describe the BFTV student experience.

First Face: “Informed learning is experienced as using technology to communicate and keep abreast of developments in the field (p. 41).”

The History of Non-Fiction Film Research Guide facilitates digital learning; it is accessible online, via the library's website, or from the LMS. The research guide is a compilation of online resources from the library including content from communities of academics (e.g. JSTOR), and filmmakers (e.g. CBC Digital Archives). By linking to blogs and podcasts (e.g. Pure Nonfiction, POV and NFB Blog), we connect students to current practicing documentary filmmakers, as well as documentary curators, writers, and distributors.

Second Face: "Informed learning is experienced as sourced information to meet a learning need (p. 43)."

To complete the major research essay, profile of a documentary filmmaker, students were required to use four academic sources, in addition to sourcing and screening documentary films. The purpose of requiring students to use academic sources was to introduce first year students to the vast body of literature on documentary cinema, and to direct them away from opinion-based writing (e.g. film reviews, blogs). Students are often intimidated by the idea of "scholarly sources" because of the use of jargon and reading level. However, identifying and using scholarly sources is an important research skill and helps build strong critical reading and thinking skills. In addition to linking journals, the research guide lists contact information for the arts liaison librarian and Tutoring Services. Students were encouraged to work with the librarian and several did.

Third Face: "Informed learning is experienced as engaging in information process to learn (p. 45)."

In their own way, students looked to uncover the contributions of a documentary filmmaker. They may have done this by reading critiques and commentary, or by watching

documentary films and drawing their own conclusions. The assignment specified the key research question to answer, but not the process to find the answers.

Fourth Face: “Informed learning is experienced as making connections between information and learning needs (p. 46).”

All of the content on the research guide was purposefully chosen with the essay assignment in mind. A Research Process tab provides students with tutorials and videos about how to approach and conduct academic research and writing since these are skills that students require to complete the essay assignment. The Research a Filmmaker tab links to databases, journals and magazines where students can begin to learn about their documentary filmmaker of choice and understand that filmmaker’s contributions to documentary film. After reading about their filmmaker, students will find collections of films to watch on the Streaming Video tab. A Credo Reference mind map on the Research a Filmmaker tab provides a visual for students representing relationships between information and ideas and organization of information. The documentary film mind map has branches for film, cinema vérité, direct cinema, docufiction and specific filmmakers.

To keep students’ research on track and focused, students submitted a proposal and annotated bibliography to their professor in advance of the final essay. The purpose of the proposal is to three-fold: (1) to highlight the importance of the research statement and critical reading in academic writing, (2) to allow time for idea gestation, and (3) to provide formative assessment to students so that they have the opportunity to refine their focus and find more relevant sources. In the professor’s feedback students who demonstrated some difficulty with finding appropriate sources, writing a research question, writing an annotated bibliography, or using utilizing proper citation (APA), they were directed back to the specific tabs in the research

guide. The Annotated Bibliography tab has helpful tutorials such as “Writing an Annotated Bibliography.” Therefore, the professor deployed the research guide as an on-line teaching tool for students who required extra help in the course or with their assignments, particularly when face-to-face meetings were not an option.

Fifth Face: “Informed learning is experienced as building a knowledge base in a new area (p. 48).”

In the process of reading about documentary film, students will come across film critics and scholars expressing different points of view and examining films through various types of lenses (e.g. feminist film theory). Scholars and critics will not always agree on what defines non-fiction film/documentary film and which films effectively and ethically tell captivating stories about real people. Documentary is rife with controversy because it often involves the participation of vulnerable people and/or exposes aspects of society/culture/history that destabilize the status quo. It is up to the student to piece together what they read, see and hear into an organized essay about an influential documentary filmmaker. In this sense, through critical reading, viewing and thinking skills, students develop a stronger understanding of how documentarians deploy filmmaking techniques and editorial decisions to construct truth(s).

Sixth Face: “Informed learning is experienced as extending knowledge (p. 50).”

In the Bachelor of Film and Television program students not only learn to analyse and write about documentary film, they are also required to make their own short documentaries in the third year of study. Building on what the students learn from researching and writing about an influential filmmaker in the History of Non-Fiction Film, they will integrate that knowledge and learning into their own documentaries. Most film students will attempt to emulate a filmmaker or filmmaking style in their own work; learning from “the masters” is a tried and true

form of learning. Students will either integrate, adapt, or reject the techniques and innovations they learned about from already established filmmakers and critics.

Seventh Face: “Informed learning is experienced as making wise use of information to benefit others (p. 51).”

We included a quote on the research guide, reminding students of the purpose and impact of documentary film. For film students, documentary film is an art form rooted in creative expression, what John Grierson called a “creative treatment of reality.” Grierson is deemed by many film scholars as the “founding-father” of documentary. The famous quote by Grierson illustrates to the learners the social responsibility that they hold as documentary filmmakers. “The materials of citizenship today are different and the perspectives wider and more difficult, but we have, as ever, the duty of exploring them and of waking the heart and will with regard to them. That duty is what documentary is all about. It is, moreover, documentary's primary service to the state.” (Grierson as cited in Snee and Benson, 2015)

Documentary film students have a responsibility to find and tell the truth through film in a safe and ethical manner. The stories that filmmakers share and the messages that they convey have the power to impact peoples’ opinions, behaviors and lives. A number of film students gravitate to controversial, sensitive, and even transgressive topics such as sex work, racism, and homophobia in religious communities. Even though students may obtain signed releases from their subjects, they may not always understand how to use their film as a tool that will benefit their subjects or how the film could potentially harm them. The required textbook for The History of Non-Fiction Film is Bill Nichols’ seminal text *Introduction to Documentary* which examines the ethics of representation in filmmaking. Early on in the course students are given short analytical exercises which ask them to consider the implications of filming real people.

Due to classroom time constraints, the professor cannot screen all the examples of films that have sensitive issues, and hence refer students to the Research Guide where they can find on-line streaming sites to screen the films mentioned in class or in the textbook. Additionally, the guide provides links to documentary podcasts (*Pure Non-Fiction*) or documentary organizations (*DOC*) where documentary ethics are often discussed and debated. The research guide also helps further expose students to documentaries that have made an impact in society, such as raising awareness around animal cruelty or climate change; modelling a mode of filmmaking that is rooted in social justice rather than just entertainment. There is an opportunity, through informed learning, to make film students more aware of their values and their influence as filmmakers and citizens.

A Snapshot of University Film and Documentary Research Guides

While developing the research guide for the History of Non-Fiction Film, we decided to do some research to see what other institutions had created and implemented. Searching Google for (film or documentary) and (“research guide” or libguide) yielded over 20 results from universities around the world. The content of the guides spanned documentary film as a source format (i.e. Dartmouth and Princeton) to the study, review and/or criticism of documentary film (i.e. Cornell, Northwestern, Ryerson, UCLA, University of Akron and Yale), to topics related to production (i.e. Georgetown, George Washington, Ithaca and NYU). Two documentary film research guides stood out as incorporating elements of informed learning.

The Advanced Writing for Documentary Film Research Guide by American University Library is a visually appealing guide with film resources organized by format, for example archives, books and articles. At the top of the home page, the author of the guide, Derrick Jefferson, includes a box called Research in Film and Video Production. In it he quotes Trisha

Das who wrote that “the amount of research a scriptwriter puts in is directly related to the ‘value’ of the film” (2007, p. 10). Including this quote demonstrates the value of research to film creation and firmly puts the research process into the context of filmmaking. Students who read this article will learn about the role of curiosity in research, the importance of a research strategy, and types of research including print research, field research and interview research (Das, 2007, pp. 10-12). Das urges documentary script writers to “dig deep” and explore the “top of the issue” (the facts), the “heart of the issue” (insightful details), the “root of the issue” (history), the “branches of the issue” (related issues), and the “challenges to the issue” (2007, pp. 14-15).

The Documentary Film Production Research Guide by Nikoo Yahyazadeh at Georgetown University Library is an example of a research guide that includes both discipline specific information about documentary film production and about the research process. Information is organized by discipline-specific filmmaking workflows such as Pre-Production, Production and Post Production. Drop down menus serve to further organize the information. Research skills are included under Pre-Production along with Preparing for Your Shoot, Researching Your Topic and Finding Videos and Images. Discipline specific information about Shooting Video, Recording Audio and Lighting Interviews is included under Production and Editing Video and Editing Audio is found under Post-Production.

The American and Georgetown University Library’s research guides simultaneously teach about research and filmmaking, meeting the second principle of informed learning.

Next Steps

Building on the experience of creating and using a research guide to teach research skills for documentary filmmakers, the authors applied the same principles of informed learning to the design and use of research guides for two additional courses, the History of International Cinema

and Film Theory and Criticism. The History of International Cinema is a semester one course with two learning objectives related to research: (a) “identify the characteristics of a clear research question with respect to the history of international cinema,” and (b) “define the concepts used in a research question” (Sheridan College, 2014). The research guide for the course has information that defines film studies and international cinema. Like the History of Non-Fiction Film Research Guide, it includes quotes from the discipline, and a Credo Research mind map for context, along with open content for students to connect with the industry.

In Film Theory and Criticism, a semester eight course, “students work with primary texts - both films and theoretical writings - and have the opportunity to explore responses to film theories in classroom screenings, debates, discussions, presentations, as well as their written work” (Sheridan College, 2018). The Film Theory and Criticism Research Guide presents information about writing and filmmaking. In addition to videos and PDFs about critical thinking and writing literature reviews, there are titles like *Film Theory and Criticism* and *Writing about Movies*. Film criticism, in and of itself, is a way of practicing social responsibility, which is one of the characteristics of informed learning. Writing film critiques requires students to reflect on issues such as “history, race, gender, sexuality, class or the environment” (Duke University, n.d., p. 1). Informed learning, as a pedagogy, “supports social engagement and the development of cultural understandings” (Bruce, 2008, p. 7). Having students watch films, read reviews, write critiques and discuss their experiences and reflections, is practicing informed learning. Through the research guide the BFTV students have access to a rich and curated range of materials aimed to not only help them become stronger academic writers, but also to help them become more engaged with film culture as an exciting and critically-

driven realm, one that can profoundly inform their practice as filmmakers; for the most part BFTV students aim to work as screen industry professionals.

Lupton (as cited in Bruce, 2008), described the first year student experiences of researching essays as: “(a) seeking evidence, (b) developing and argument, and (c) concerned with social responsibility.” She aligned each experience to a characteristic of informed learning. Seeking evidence and developing an argument is “developing a knowledge base,” while concerned with social responsibility is “contributing to social change” (pp. 73-74). Sheridan BFTV students could be seen as contributing to social change through film critique.

Recommendations

What to do:

The process of creating research guides as a tool for informed learning is best done as a partnership between librarians who specialize in research, and college teaching faculty who are industry experts and/or scholars. In this collaboration, the professor can plan the course content including lessons, activities, and assignments, and the subject librarian can suggest, create and curate resources for a research guide that supports the goals of simultaneously teaching about research discipline specific knowledge. Working together, the professor and librarian can organize and present information on the guide within the context of the discipline or industry, and use technology to make students aware of industry trends.

What not to do

Do not only include information from scholarly sources on research guides. Informed learning is discipline specific, and this type of information may also be found in trade publications, on websites, and blogs, etc.

Do not present research guides to the students without involving them in a discussion about informed learning. In order to encourage reflective learning, students should discuss their experience using information to research and write about an influential documentary filmmaker. In a future iteration of the course, the authors, ideally, will build this into the classroom experience.

Possible discussion topics could include:

- How and where did you find information about the filmmaker? (third face)
- Which resource provided you with the best information for your purposes? (fifth face)
- Having read about the filmmaker and watched their documentary films, do you agree with how authors described their work and contributions to the field? Was it fair and accurate? (fifth face)
- Will what you now know about the documentary filmmaker influence your creative filmmaking process in the future? (sixth face)

Applications

Other professors, instructors, librarians and library assistants are encouraged to collaboratively design research guides for different subjects, based on the principles of informed learning, as we did in the case of the History of Non-Fiction Film Research Guide. Course assignments and classroom activities can also be designed for different topics following the principles of informed learning. Students could select and research a topic and submit a rough draft listing their sources and search strategies. They could reflect on feedback and edit their work, potentially returning to the research guide to search for and incorporate new sources of information. While the students were required to submit the essay topic and bibliography in

advance of the final essay, informed learning was not explicitly discussed with the students.

Professors and librarians could adapt the sample discussion questions listed above. Discussing information literacy and informed learning with students has the potential of supporting lifelong learning, and increasing students' awareness of the social impact of their work.

Conclusion

The purpose of the chapter was to explore informed learning in a research community, specifically around research guides. Research guides can be used as a tool for informed learning. The History of Non-Fiction Film Research Guide is an example of a professor and librarian collaborating to select and organize information to simultaneously teach first year film and television students about research and documentary filmmaking. Conducting research is a crucial step in documentary filmmaking. Students needed to access information from the research guide to complete their research assignment. Keeping with the practice of informed learning, the History of Non-Fiction Research Guide presents information in a meaningful context. Context is provided by the organization and naming of tabs, and the inclusion of quotations and a mind map. To inform students of developments in the field, another aspect of informed learning, the research guide links to blogs and podcasts about current documentary film industry news, filmmakers, film festivals, etc. As a way to explore the use of research guides in informed learning, a future study could incorporate classroom discussion and activity that explicitly names and defines informed learning. Students could discuss their experiences and reflect on their learning through in-class writing activities and discussion.

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