

**Skills and assumptions: how  
school librarians can help  
highlight pupils' skills and  
challenge assumptions**

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### Challenge 11 - How the USA is governed Logbook



Identify this building:

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Identify this building:

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Identify this room:

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Who works in these buildings?

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Which government body passes laws for the whole of the USA?

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Teacher's Question –  
“What weapons were used in  
the Spanish Civil War?”

Pupil's Answer  
( copied from Yahoo Answers)  
“Muskets & swords”

“Go to the Library and find books about...”

“Just Google it”

“We will not be adding the guidance on enquiry skills [as] there’s a lot out there and we’d expect teachers to provide the support required”

All these have something in common:

# Assumptions!

# What are the assumptions?

- Availability of information
  - Is the topic too local or narrow for there to be any books/sites relevant to it?
  - Has anyone checked with the library/ the Internet?
  - Was the library asked to order relevant material in advance?
  - Is it at an appropriate reading level?

# What are the assumptions?

- Accessibility of information
  - Will the answer leap out at a pupil?
  - If pupils have just “Googled” the question, will they know the RIGHT answer if they find it?
  - For pupils used to lively games/music sites, will educational ones be engaging?  
(My experience is that they will surf endlessly in the expectation that they’ll find something better)

The Aspen Institute goes further:

# “Digital & media literacy”

Renee Hobbs,

Aspen Institute, 2010

- “People who play Farmville may (or may not) have the skills to search for information about jobs, education and health care”
- “Although young people are using digital media, we should not assume they are digitally literate “

# What are the assumptions?

- The biggest assumption of all:

That pupils have the  
necessary skills!

# What's "assumed"- 1

- - That pupils have developed searching skills (Whose job was/is it to teach them?)
- - That pupils can use a dictionary (but is that taught in English, in French, in Business?)
- - That pupils know what keywords are and how to use them ("Isn't it just easier to copy & paste a question into Google?")
- - That pupils know how to use a search engine (who taught them?)

<b>Search Operator</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>+ (plus sign)</b>	<i>the word after the plus must be included in the search</i>	<b>ice +cream</b>
<b>- (minus sign)</b>	<i>the word after the minus sign must be excluded from the search</i>	<b>ice -rink</b>
<b>" " (quotes)</b>	<i>search for the exact phrase inside the quotes</i>	<b>"make my day"</b>
<b>AND</b>	<i>include the word or expression after the AND in the search</i>	<b>peaches AND cream</b>
<b>OR</b>	<i>include both the item before the OR and the item after it</i>	<b>Labour OR Conservative</b>
<b>NOT</b>	<i>exclude documents containing the term following the operator.</i>	<b>war NOT Bosnia</b>
<b>NEAR</b>	<i>find documents in which two words appear within 25 words of each other.</i>	<b>Charles NEAR Diana</b>
<b>NEAR/n</b>	<i>find documents in which two words appear within n words of each other.</i>	<b>Goofy NEAR/4 Disneyland</b>
<b>ADJ</b>	<i>find documents in which two words appear next to each other.</i>	<b>Disneyland ADJ parade</b>
<b>ADJ/n</b>	<i>find documents in which two words appear exactly within n words of each other.</i>	<b>Mickey ADJ/6 Disneyland</b>
<b>BEFORE</b>	<i>find documents in which the first term appears before the second</i>	<b>War BEFORE Peace</b>
<b>0, {}, [], &lt;</b> <b>(parentheses)</b>	<i>used to group expressions when building complex queries.</i>	<b>(beer OR lager) AND (McEwans OR Tennants)</b>

# What's "assumed"-2

- That pupils will be able to transfer skills
  - (but are those teaching them using the same methods/vocabulary – “Keywords”, “Topic words” “Search terms” may be used interchangeably – and confusingly!)
- That pupils know how to make (or take\*)  
**notes** (but is anyone checking before they're set a related task?)
- That pupils will take the time to check that they've found the right answer – and not just **copy anything/everything** (but are they actually engaged enough with the process to carry out this extra step- and will it even occur to them? Indeed – how will they know when they have found the right answer?)

\*A clear distinction between making & taking notes is evident in the Scottish CfE, with “taking” seen as more active and thus desirable

# What's Assumed – 3

- Pupils' focus may be too focussed on the searching for anything rather than considering the task's actual purpose or the usefulness/relevance of what they're doing.
- Pupils' measure of success may be how quickly they found ANY answer or how much they found – NOT whether it actually answers the question
- Often marks are not even considered for how well the pupil went about the search process, or how “original” the answer may be -just how many pages long it is.

# What's "assumed"-4

- That there is no connection between plagiarism/copying and note making/taking abilities.

- this connection is often neglected or people are simply unaware of it – a good source of information is

<http://www.uow.edu.au/student/services/ld/students/UOW021315.html>

(University of Wollongong – Learning Development)

Their top tip for avoiding plagiarism is “**Efficient and effective note-taking and note-making strategies**”

# What's "assumed"-4

- That the information found is accurate (but how will the pupil know?)
- That the information is relevant (but has the question been clear enough – if pupils are asked to find information on obesity, many of the sites may be American – BUT the teacher may have intended the focus to be British – in other words, have pupils been made clear about the purpose of the task?

# What can the Librarian/LRC Manager do?

- Use every opportunity to draw pupils' good and bad practice to pupils' and teachers' attention (the "good bad example")
- Point out time (and marks) lost by pupils
- Encourage teachers to observe pupils' searching strategies ( and if you think I'm making an assumption about teachers' skills, come along to my Workshop tomorrow!)
- Encourage wider skills development in consultation with others

# The Govan High Skills answer (coincidentally called “Future Skills”)

- + Held a meeting to identify skills used throughout the school – came up with 71
- + Mapped the skills to LRC, Scottish Curriculum, local/national employment skills list, Careers – many other areas.
- + Developed the concept of a “Common Vocabulary” of skills
- + Identified and developed many ways of getting pupils involved in thinking about the skills

# What are the Future Skills “Families”?

- The Communicator (14 skills)
- The Connector (15 skills)
- The Contributor (6 skills)
- The Decider (10 skills)
- The Doer (13 skills)
- The Originator (6 skills)
- The Sorter (7 skills)

## A recent e-mail

- “We've found your annotations of the skills sets listed against the Curriculum for Excellence extremely helpful while preparing our new book, and we would like to make a proper printed acknowledgement to this effect on the work. ”
- Gordon & Frances Jarvie, authors

What use is it other parts of the UK if the Future Skills are only mapped to the Scottish Curriculum?

Thanks to Geoff Dubber for allowing me to add a column to his document “Information Literacy Skills in the KS3/4 curriculum”, I have now mapped the Future Skills to it as well (at least for Year 10)

Geoff Dubber's original, compiled  
verbatim from the National Curriculum

<u>ILS Target Skill</u>	<u>Subject/Ref</u>	<u>Detail</u>
<i>Selecting and Appraising</i>	<i>Sc. 1.2f</i>	<i>Recognise that scientific controversies can arise from different interpretations of the same evidence</i>

## The original PLUS Future Skills

<u>ILS Target Skill</u>	<u>Subject/Ref</u>	<u>Detail</u>	<u>Future Skills</u>
<i>Selecting and Appraising</i>	<i>Sc. 1.2f</i>	<i>Recognise that scientific controversies can arise from different interpretations of the same evidence</i>	Analytical skills, Big picture connections, Current affairs awareness, Objective rational thinking, Judgement, Reaching conclusions, Assimilation, Weighing up different points of view

# In other words...

In order for pupils to be able to carry out this particular task, these are the skills they need to have/use:-

*Analytical skills, Big picture connections, Current affairs awareness, Objective rational thinking, Judgement, Reaching conclusions, Assimilation, Weighing up different points of view*

- Using the full Skills Map, one can see how often and in what areas, the same skills are needed-

# An extract from the Full Future Skills Match

Information Literacy Skills in the KS3/4 curriculum -  
A yearly checklist of ILS progression and development

+ Year 10

ILS Target Skill	Subject/Ref.	Detail	Future Skills
Planning	Eng. 7.1	Draw efficiently on and adapt a range of possible ways to generate, plan and shape ideas for impact, according to task, purpose and audience	Adapting communication, Setting information out, Sharing ideas, Summarising skills, Vocabulary, Analytical skills, Big picture connections, Gathering facts, Image modelling, Objective rational thinking, Synthesising skills, Efficiency, Focus on task, Judgement, Strategic planning, Designing
	ICT 1.3	Produce a data structure to enhance efficiency; create a range of validation checks to ensure a viable data set when developing a data system, and explain the features which make it efficient	Adapting communication, Setting information out, Sharing ideas, Analytical skills, Networking connections, Objective rational thinking, Efficiency, Focus on task, Organising, Reaching conclusions, Self-evaluation & correction, ICT Practical, Designing, Assimilation
	ICT 4.1	Apply prior learning in their work and understand how it has improved their work	Analytical skills, Big picture connections, Future orientation, Objective rational thinking, Perceptive interpretation, Reaching conclusions, Self-evaluation & correction, Assimilation, Neurological connections
	Hist. L7	They investigate historical problems and issues, asking and refining their own questions and beginning to reflect critically on the	Adapting communication, Setting information out, Summarising skills, Analytical skills, Gathering facts, Image modelling, Objective rational thinking, Perceptive

# What this means-1

- For example, including the example already shown, “Judgement” appears in 21 times different tasks – so, there are 20 other tasks to which *Sc. 1.2f* can be connected by the librarian/LRC Manager to show how the LRC/Library links up skills and different parts of the curriculum.

# What this means-2

- Everyone can now look at any item on the list and see exactly what skills pupils will need to complete the associated work properly.
- Anyone can decide on a skills focus that brings together their own skills programme and the skills pupils need
- Everyone can use the evidence to show clearly how skills gained through the library/LRC are vital in other parts of the curriculum – and in precisely which parts.
- Anyone can look for skills gaps that the evidence shows up – and demonstrate how the librarian can close the gap.

# What's the point of skills matching?-

## 1

- Adds another dimension to any lesson– the task is unchanged, but the skills involved can now be highlighted
- Encourages people to look at the process not just the task.
- Allows skills to be tracked and connected using a universal system that brings together the skills and the curriculum in a cohesive and connected manner
- Means the librarian/LRC Manager can clearly show teachers the benefits of LRC/Library sessions
- Facilitates skills transferability – once skills have been clearly labelled in a way shared by everybody, then (and in my view only then) is it possible to develop them & allow connections to be made.

# What's the point of skills matching?-

## 2

- Facilitates connections between departments – with LRC/Library as the hub
- If pupils are awarded points/prizes or are praised for developing skills, then this can enthuse/motivate them (see next page)
- If you host (and promote) Skills Awards Events then it can raise interest in other parts of the school and raise your profile.
- It's very effective for highlighting assumptions regarding pupils' (supposed) skills

# Future Skills

Achieving our full potential



Name \_\_\_\_\_

has developed as a \_\_\_\_\_ with the

skill of \_\_\_\_\_

by \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_



Well Done



# How you could start-1

- Make sure you understand the principles
- Study Geoff Dubber's work & the added skills column
- Start looking for skills that are apparent – or indeed missing – in your own library/place of work.
- Compile a list and start involving colleagues (both internal & external, teacher & librarian)

# How you could start-2

- Reflect on which of your colleagues are most likely to see the value of skills connections and talk to them
- Involve pupils ( e g library helpers, any you identify who could benefit from it-) Govan High has found them a motivating factor for pupils at all levels of ability
- Start small to build up understanding
- Expect to make mistakes – we did!
- Persevere – it's worth it

# Conclusions-1

- Using “skills connections” is only one of many approaches – but it works very effectively
- I do want to encourage others to think about the benefits of using a “Skills System” – whether this is the whole thing or a part of it, but the most important aspect are the underlying concepts of sharing a vocabulary, involving pupils, making connections and making transferable skills easier and more useful for all concerned.

## Conclusions-2

- Encouraging pupil involvement can be most rewarding, as their self-esteem and confidence grow
- Once people learn how to see connections, their ability to see further connections can increase; without this taking place the ability to transfer skills to any new situation is at best linking A and B and never seeing the Big Picture

# A salutary definition

- **“TRANSFERABLE SKILLS**

Skills learnt and developed in one situation that could be used in a different situation.

The term normally implies that the individual is aware of the transferability of the skills they have developed.”

(from “Skills for Scotland: A lifelong skills strategy”)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/197204/0052752.pdf>

# Why is it salutary?

“The term normally implies that the individual is aware of the transferability of the skills they have developed”

- It is yet another assumption – just how the individual is supposed to be aware of their skills is left unanswered!

# Parting advice

- Keep an eye open for assumptions and bring them to others' attention
- Recognise that we can all make assumptions, but that reflection and colleagues' input can help identify underlying issues and thus aid in overcoming them.
- If you have ideas or ways of doing things – don't be afraid to share them!

Thank you for listening

Any questions?

Please contact me if you want to ask me  
more, or if I can help at all

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