Ten Tips for a Better Research/Library Assignment

1. **Consult with a Librarian**. Library faculty know which resources are available to the York College community and are happy to work with faculty as they craft research assignments. We can help you avoid some common assignment pitfalls.

2. **Assume minimal library knowledge**. Keep in mind that being computer-literate does not equal being information-literate. Most students do not understand the intricacies of information retrieval and access, and few know what is available to them or how to effectively search for high-quality information.

3. **Always check to see if we own needed resources** / **Keep your assignment current.** Our electronic resources are constantly changing so it is essential that you keep up-to-date with new and old databases. Familiarize yourself with the library and its electronic *and* print resources.

4. **Explain the assignment clearly and in writing**. Provide as much detail as possible. It is helpful to include what types of sources are required (popular or scholarly, primary or secondary, etc.), the due date, what citation style the students should use, etc.

5. **Use correct and unambiguous terminology**. Assignments that prohibit the use of Internet resources confuse students because many scholarly resources are available electronically through the library's website. For example, when you say that students cannot use the Internet, does that exclude our full-text periodical or e-book databases? Students tend to take instruction literally.

6. **Explain the purpose of the assignment.** Tell your students *why* they are doing the assignment and what *purpose* it serves. Make sure your assignment is directly applicable to course content so students find it relevant and worthy of their time.

7. **Try your own assignment**. Put yourself in your students' shoes and do a test run of your assignment. Is the assignment researchable *at their level*? Is the time frame reasonable for the amount of work? Are the sources available? If you provide citations, are they accurate so students can locate the materials?

8. **Consider scheduling an information literacy class.** Information literacy classes provide assignment-specific library instruction to your students. Schedule a class whenever your students must write a research paper, complete an assignment, or give an oral presentation.

9. **Give the Library a copy of the assignment**, preferably via email**.** Many students approach the reference desk with the same assignment and we can provide better service to your students if we know about an assignment ahead of time.

10. **Encourage students to ask for help—from you and from librarians**. Library faculty are professional researchers, so please encourage your students to ask for help while at the library. Many students tell us they have been searching unsuccessfully for hours before they approach the reference desk. We can save them valuable time by directing them to appropriate resources and suggesting specific research strategies.