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Upper-level graduate students, have used with multiple disciplines

**Topic:** Entering the Scholarly Conversation: Research Methods

**Objective:**

- Visualize your topic to refine your search

**Materials:**

- Whiteboard within Zoom

**Activity:** Visualizing your topic using Venn diagram activity via Zoom

- This specific activity is taught within a 2–3-hour session in a research methods course. The session prepares students to write literature reviews through a series of activities and discussions, including a specific activity around reading a published literature review; demonstration to review databases; and lecture around organizing the search process & results.
- 20-40 minutes (Length dependent on how much time instructor allotted for the full session)
- On the whiteboard in Zoom, demonstrate breaking a topic into multiple facets, using a Venn diagram. Explain that the diagram helps students to 1. Visualize the topic; 2. See that their topic is the intersection of the circles, but that most articles will only encompass a few of the facets rather than trying to find the “one perfect article”; 3. Translate their thoughts into subject headings
- Ask students to volunteer to provide their own topics/interests. Explain that the volunteers will only be asked to provide their topic, but the rest of the class will be required to create the Venn diagram and think of additional questions to ask the volunteer. The volunteer will not need to answer the questions, but will be able to use the questions to consider how to refine their topic.
- Draw a simple Venn diagram on the white board. As the first volunteer provides their topic (this works whether they add it to the chat or talk out loud), write the terms in a box in the whiteboard separate from the Venn diagram. Once the student finishes, ask the rest of the class for what components would go into different circles. Help explain why some concepts might do better broken into multiple facets, or perhaps combining like terms into a single facet.
- Ask the class to pose questions to the volunteer that might help refine the topic. Push students to consider other questions. Encourage the instructor to

participate, too. Allow time for the volunteer to take a screenshot of the Venn diagram.

- Repeat with as many other students as time allows.

### **Assessment of student learning:**

Survey (via Microsoft Forms) at the end of class includes:

- Likert scale on “to what extent this session...”
  - “Helped me visualize/refine my topic in the Venn diagram activity”
  - “Increased my confidence in my ability to research”
  - Open text question: “In this session, we read through a published lit review together, created Venn diagrams of your topic, reviewed database search techniques, evaluated resources, and discussed tips to stay organized. What did you find helpful? What was not useful? Any other comments or questions?”

### **ACRL Information Literacy Framework:**

- Research as Inquiry:
  - KP: Formulate questions for research based on information gaps or on reexamination of existing, possibly conflicting, information
  - KP: Deal with complex research by breaking complex questions into simple ones, limiting the scope of investigations; monitor gathered information and assess for gaps or weaknesses