

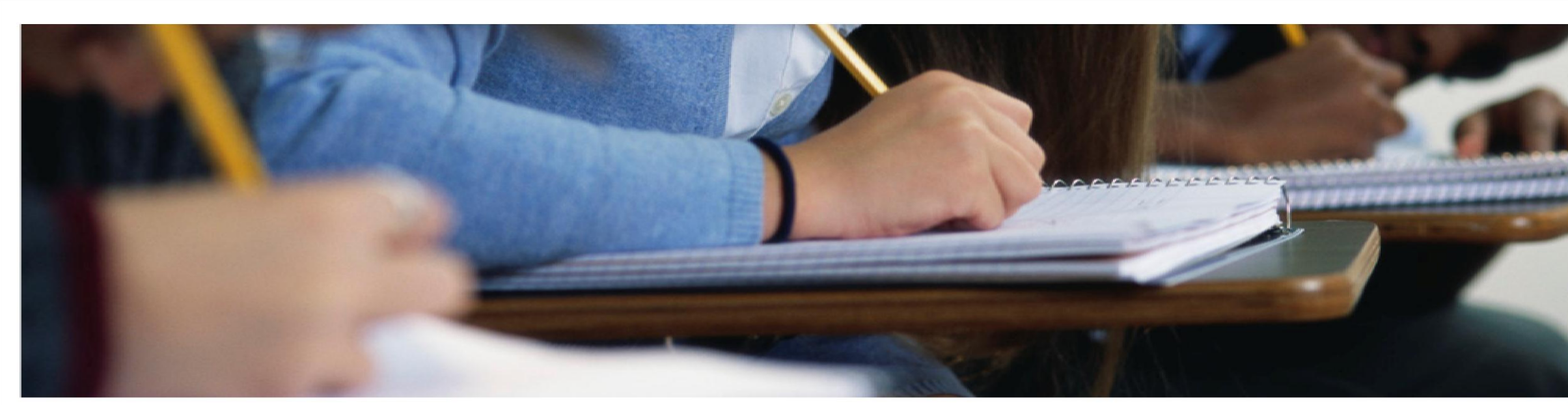
# Authentic Assessment/Assessment-for-Learning: Early Findings from a Large Scale Information Literacy Assessment Program

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## Introduction

A library session is required for almost all students enrolled in a first-year English course at MacEwan University. These library sessions have been designed to provide a baseline set of information literacy skills and attitudes that can be built upon in upper division library instruction sessions.

With an average of 150 library sessions per year, the English Library Instruction Program (ELIP) has become a sizable yet essential service offered by MacEwan University Library. Following a pilot in January 2012, the Library created an assessment plan to provide evidence of program success. The assessment plan is based on the structure recommended by Oakleaf (2009) and was enacted during the 2012-2013 academic year.



## Theoretical Approach

**Assessment for learning:** The project team adopted an "assessment-for-learning" theoretical approach. This means that any assessment tool developed must also be a learning opportunity for students (Oakleaf, 2009, p.81).

**Authentic learning:** An assessment activity that acts as a learning tool also allows for authentic learning: learning that "embeds real-world problems into the classroom and encourages students to think critically and creatively to solve problems" (Burke, 2009, p. 66). The assessment tool developed by the team fulfills a real-life need of the student: finding information for their assignment. The authenticity of the task motivates students to engage more fully in their own learning.

## Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes establish the groundwork for active, observable assessment (Zald & Gilchrist, 2008, p. 168). Two learning outcomes focused our assessment efforts:

1. Construct an effective search strategy in order to locate relevant resources (maps to ACRL 2.2).
2. Identify resources in order to determine which are most relevant for the assignment (maps to ACRL 3.2).

## Methods

**Tool:** The student worksheet was designed to collect assessment data and help students gather needed information for assignments: Q.1 was demographic; Qs. 2-3 set the student up for the search strategy; Qs. 4-7 mapped back to one of the two learning outcomes and were evaluated on the rubric.

**Closing the learning cycle:** In keeping with assessment for learning theory we committed to providing feedback to students. After collecting worksheets, library instructors gave feedback and suggestions on the student's search strategy, then returned the worksheets to the instructors for dissemination to students.

**Data collection:** Where student permission was given for data inclusion, worksheets were copied and anonymized to comply with REB.

## Results Scoring

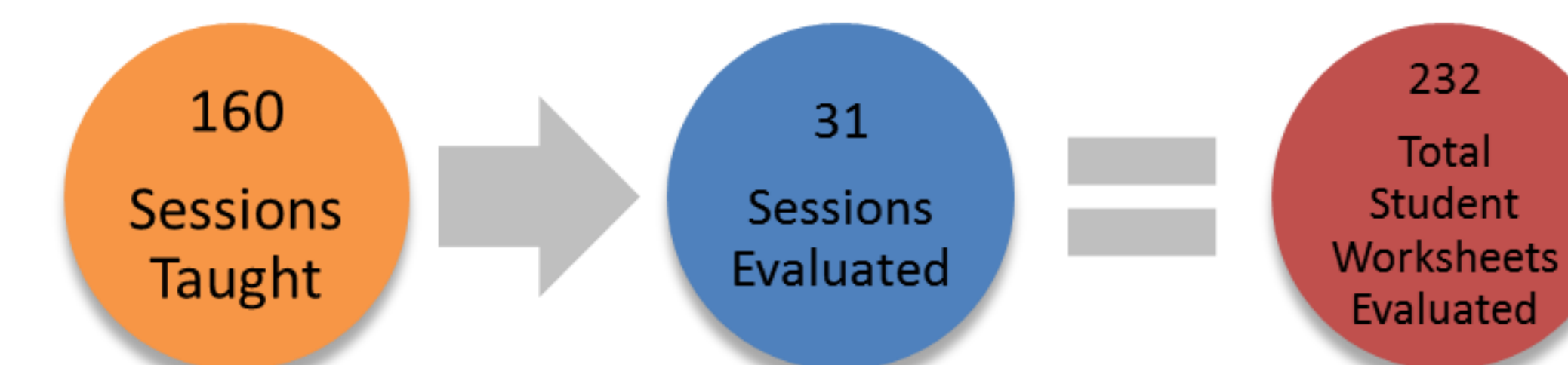
A rubric was developed with a set of criteria for determining student success. Our goal was a median score of 1-1.5 for each outcome.

Following a rubric norming session, we developed a set of exemplars for each measure. Independent scorers applied the rubric to a sample of worksheets and reached a consensus estimate of over 70%, prior to grading the remaining worksheets independently (Stemler, 2004).

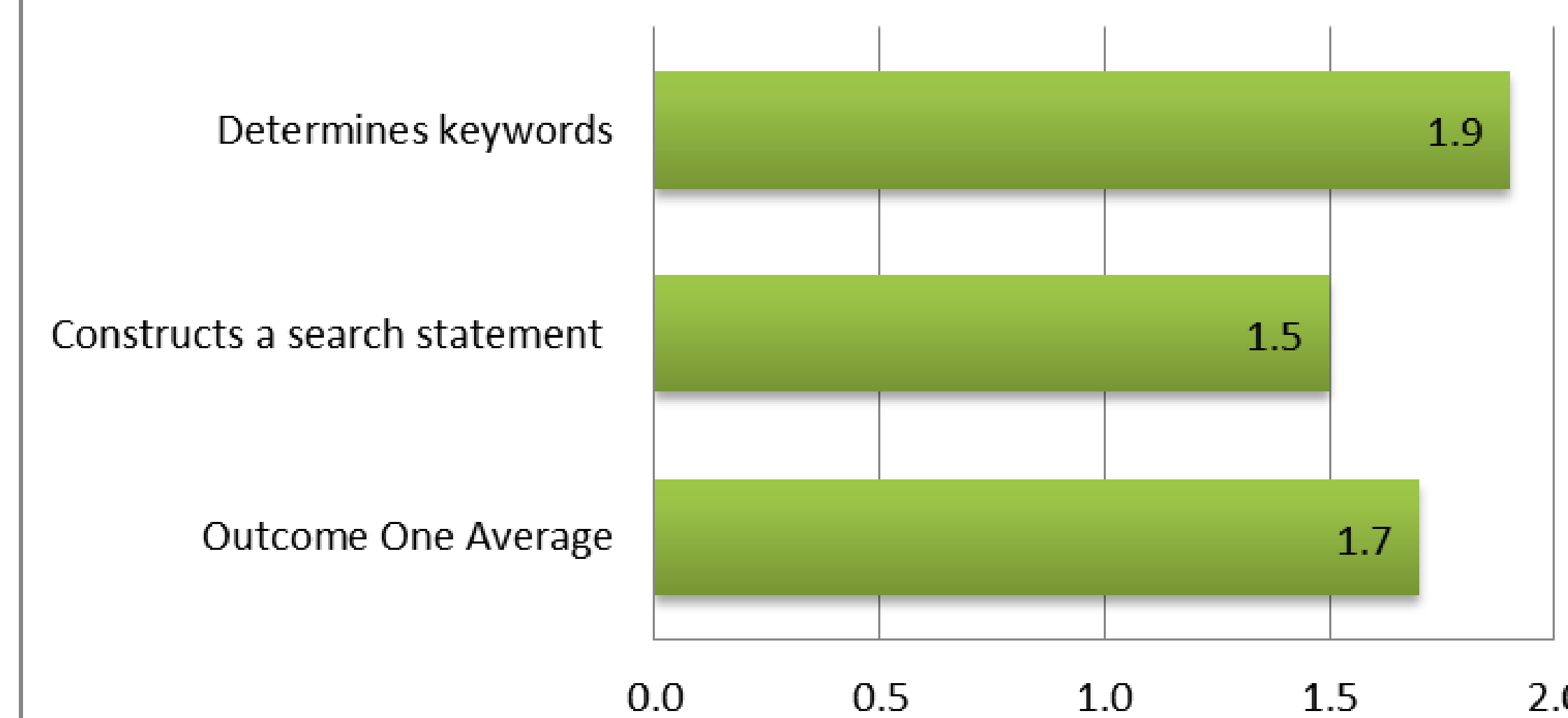
## Scoring Rubric

Rubric Score	Definition	Result Scenario
0	Not Present	Unacceptable
1	Emerging Skills	Acceptable
2	Developing Skills	Exceptional

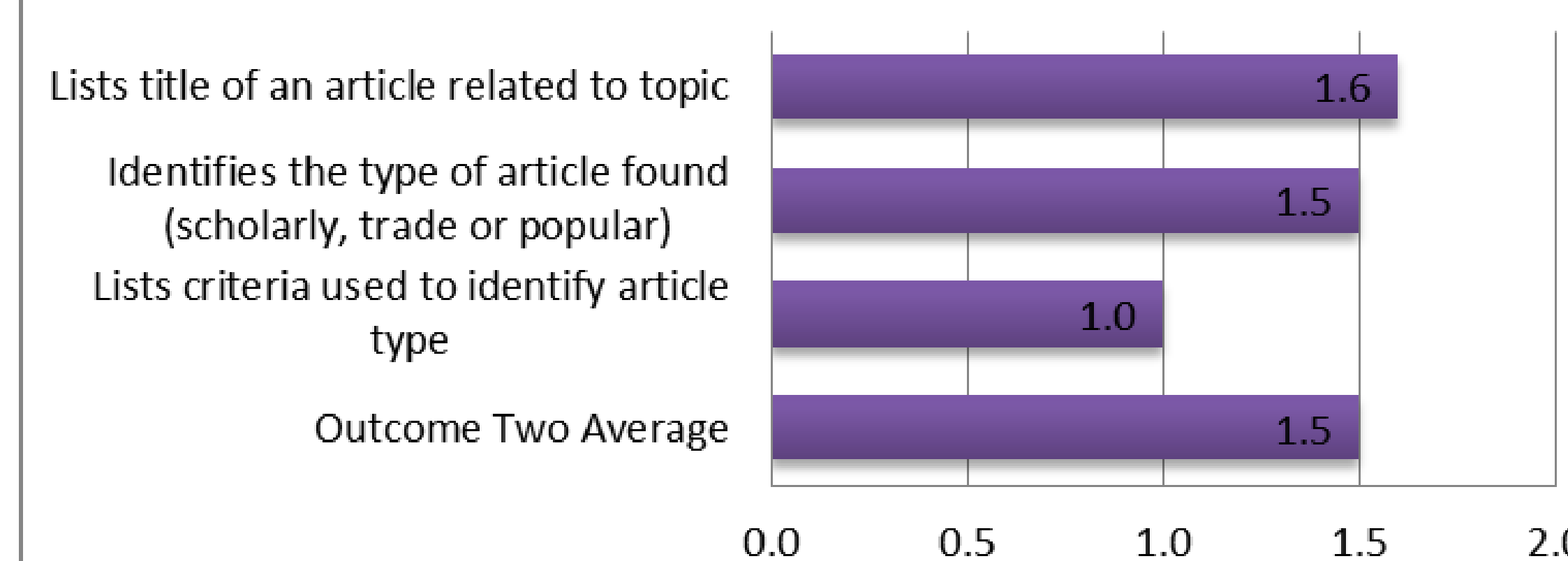
## Initial Results



### Outcome One: Construct an effective search strategy in order to locate relevant resources



### Outcome Two: Identify Resources in order to determine which are most relevant for the assignment



## Discussion

**Observation:** We observed high scores for retrieving a relevant article, despite low scores for quality of search statement. We were surprised that the quality of the article was not directly correlated to the quality of the search. We speculate that the improved effectiveness of the discovery layer search tool results in the retrieval of relevant articles despite poor search strategies.

**Observation:** We observed low scores for identifying type of article and listing criteria used to identify article type. We were particularly disappointed with this low score, because the critical thinking skills necessary for article evaluation were not being broadly demonstrated. We also speculate that the low score for the last questions might be due to insufficient time for students to complete worksheets.

## Closing the Loop

As we seek to "close the loop" of our assessment project (RAILS, 2013), we are using the results to improve our information literacy instruction program. Curricular changes made include providing less emphasis on constructing an advanced search strategy and more emphasis on evaluation of resources. Specifically:

- Eliminate teaching of truncation, wildcards and nesting (due to effectiveness of search tool).
- Incorporate a hands-on article-evaluation learning activity for students in the classroom.

## References

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