

Project two: Research report draft

Bradley Dilger ~ Fall 2014 ~ <http://dtext.org/>

After receiving feedback on your project proposal and research methods from me, conduct the research you've planned — the background research, interviews, and observations which will help you understand the community you're investigating. Turn to our course texts and conversations for help, taking careful notes and keeping good records of not only the library research you conduct, the data you collect, but the methods you use to interact with discourse community members. We will devote considerable class time to this work.

After conducting your research, write a record of your findings. This report should:

- introduce the discourse community you're investigating;
- summarize your community service experience;
- document your methods;
- describe the community you're investigating—not only the individuals you have interviewed and observed, but other relevant members you've come into contact with (like Fagin does in *Toms River*);
- carefully consider the texts community members rely on to do their work;
- describe literacy trends in the community you studied, using the languages of genre and the frameworks of discourse community and activity theory.

In sum, *explain what you learned about writing and community, and how you learned it*. Plan to include relevant attachments such as the documents you have collected.

This report is preliminary, and your language and tone can reflect that—you can even indicate, in writing, the areas where future work (e.g. additional interviews or observations) may change your conclusions. (Your final report will add implications and a concluding reflection.)

I suggest you structure your draft report with the following sections:

- *Introduction*: Briefly describe your project as a whole.
- *Project status*: Outline the work you have completed, the work you have left, and any questions you have about the project and help you need. (Not a part of the final report—though you could include a section which looks to the future if you think there is one for your project.)
- *Methods*: Describe the ways are conducting your research, both library-oriented and direct methods. If your methods have changed radically from your research methods document, explain why.
- *Preliminary results and discussion*: Describe your community service, then describe what you are learning about the discourse community under study. You are welcome to speculate, outline ranges of possible findings, etc. Analyze your findings in terms of the frameworks we are learning for studying writing. (For the final report, I recommend dividing results and discussion into two sections, the latter far more structured around your opinions and conclusions.)

For alternative models, samples, and more direction, refer to Deans, who offers several other possibilities:

1. empirical research report (pp. 171–184) — this is closest to the approach above;
2. community-based research essay (pp. 277–329) — note several examples end in recommendations or conclusions which are turned toward action; you don't have to do this for your draft (if at all);
3. agency profile report (pp. 330–337) — focused on the needs of a non-for-profit or similar organization, the example also ends in recommendations, as above.

Format and delivery

Assignment length: 6–8 pages double spaced (1,800–2,100 words) plus appendixes.

Structure and style: As noted above, you have several options here — pick the approach which best fits your data and personal preference. Ask if you need help. Use subheads and other features to organize your report and make information easier to read. As with other things you've written this semester, tables, lists, and similar methods for organizing text are appropriate.

Delivery: Submit hard copy on the due date. Email an attachment (.doc or .docx format) to me as well, with the filename “lastname-report-draft.doc.” If you create appendixes as separate files, use file names “lastname-draft-appendix1.doc,” etc.

Format: No cover page. Use Times New Roman, 12 point. Use 1” margins and include a running head with your last name and the page number. Staple or paper-clip your hard copy.

Submission: Due 11/14.

Points: 75.

Strategies for success

- ✓ If you need some more time, just ask (in writing, please). *However*, think carefully about this—we have more class days behind us than in front of us.
- ✓ I will create the assignment for the final report soon after the due date for the drafts — that way I'll be able to shape it to address issues everyone is experiencing. In addition to the cues above, I'll share a draft on my web site soon.
- ✓ Deans contains a lot of content which can help — strategies for planning, collecting data, analyzing texts, writing. Don't forget to use that book to help!
- ✓ For alternative models, refer to the *NFGW* chapters on reports (9 and 14), on the course web site. In many ways, Dan Fagin's *Toms River* is a model (though it is considerably longer than your report will be, of course).
- ✓ If you want to share something ahead of the due date, great — your best strategy is coming to office hours or making an appointment for a conference.
- ✓ You are welcome to add comments and questions throughout your draft using footnotes or other means — that will help me help you.