

# Online Planning and Instruction for Business Ethics Databases

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Instruction for business database usage is essential for graduate student success. For many assignments, students taking upper-level coursework need company data, news articles, and scholarly journals to draw comprehensive conclusions about corporate practice. While some students may have used library resources during their undergraduate years, a surprising number have never had formal instruction on research methods. Librarians can help fill this essential gap by working with professors for in-person or digital teaching sessions.

## Initiating Contact

Business professors, like other academics, tend to be extremely busy individuals. Initially, I brainstormed how to make first contact, including in-person visits and email outreach. I wanted to be respectful of instructors' other time commitments, so I ultimately went with a concise digital message. I explained, in bullet-point form, what I could do to make online or hybrid instruction easier, while also encouraging faculty to reach out with any other resource needs. There had been a recent push at the university for increased online teaching, so I capitalized on the opportunity. Within two days, I had gotten inquiries from a few professors within my liaison areas, including one in the Management department. With this individual, I helped plan a business ethics course session, which would be focused on exploring digital information sources, in preparation for a cumulative, standards-based assignment.

## Meeting Preparation

To hash out the details, the professor and I met in person to go over the specifics of what would be taught. I had prepared for the consultation by narrowing down which library databases would be most pertinent. This involved some pre-emptive searching with general key words, although I knew that the meeting would allow me to ask about content-specific terminology. At the predetermined time, I stopped by the marketing professor's office and we talked about learning objectives, the assignment rubric, and presentation time and format expectations. Afterward, I was sent the "Optimal Ethics Benchmarking Project" description, alongside a sample paper from a previous year, to better prepare. Using these tools, I determined that key words like "sustainability", "environmental management", "diversity", and "corporate social responsibility" would be worth using for the database searching examples.

## Instructional Platforms

Digital instruction was planned for Zoom, since the professor was most comfortable with that video conferencing platform. She sent me the meeting link, so that I could log-in at the designated time; however, an update was made before the actual session to add password

protection. I had used WebEx and Skype for Business to communicate in the past, so learning how to screenshare for Zoom was not difficult. Most electronic platforms have “Frequently Asked Question” portals and video tutorials, if users need some help getting familiar with the format.

### Teaching Online

The actual teaching session ran smoothly. All I had to do was log in, request the host role to present, and choose a monitor to share with the group. I modeled how to search at least six distinct business ethics databases. These included *ABI/ Inform*, the *Sustainability Resource Center*, *Business Source Complete*, various newspaper databases, *Nexis Uni*, and *Mergent Online*. I also advised students on how to do more effective web searches by using advanced features, such as domain limiting, and by considering whether sources were authoritative. Lastly, I emphasized the importance of including balanced information, not just company-sponsored pages, to avoid biased reporting. All these factors had been identified as important during the planning stages, so it was essential to follow-through.

At the end of the session, I emailed the professor a three-page overview of all the searching tips and tricks that I shared during the presentation. This included suggested key words, Boolean combination examples, and particularly useful tabs within the databases. Additionally, I had given permission for the online session to be recorded, in case students needed to go back and see what I discussed. My final advice was for students to reach out, if they wanted individualized research help through email, our chat service, or by appointment. While it is good to offer Q&A time directly after synchronous online teaching, the option for future contact is just as critical.

### Conclusions

Overall, library instruction in an online format can be a rewarding experience, as it allows direct expansion of services to a new group of students. Most universities have a mix of programs that are entirely online, blended, or in-person, so librarians need to be comfortable with all types of modalities. By building a repertoire of positive interaction examples, librarians showcase the value of library instruction and encourage further collaborative partnerships.

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