BEAM THEM TOGETHER

Employing the Background, Exhibit, Argument, and Method Model to Connect Research and Writing

Rachel Scott, ILS Librarian, University of Memphis Libraries
BIZUP’S BEAM DEFINED

- “A rhetorical vocabulary for teaching research-based writing.”

**Background** – “materials whose claims a writer accepts as fact, whether these “facts” are taken as general information or deployed as evidence”

**Exhibit** – “materials a writer offers for explication, analysis, or interpretation”

**Argument** – “materials whose claims a writer affirms, disputes, refines, or extends in some way”

**Method** – “materials from which a writer derives a governing concept or a manner of working”

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<th>BEAM AIN’T CRAAP</th>
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<td>Evaluating Sources with CRAAP</td>
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<th>C</th>
<th>Currency - the timeliness of information</th>
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<td>When was the information published or posted? Has the information been revised or updated? Is the information current or out of date? Are the links functional?</td>
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<th>R</th>
<th>Relevance - the importance of the information for your needs</th>
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<td>Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question? Who is the intended audience? Is the information at an appropriate level? Have you looked at a variety of sources?</td>
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<th>A</th>
<th>Authority - the source of the information</th>
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<td>Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor? Are the author's credentials or organisational affiliations given, and what are they? What are the author's qualifications?</td>
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<th>P</th>
<th>Accuracy - the reliability, truthfulness, &amp; correctness of the content</th>
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<td>Where does the information come from? Is it supported by evidence? Has it been reviewed? Can you verify any of the information in another source? Does the language seem unbiased?</td>
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<th>P</th>
<th>Purpose - the reason the information exists</th>
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<td>What is the purpose of the information? Do the author's sponsors make their intentions clear? Is this information fact/opinion/propaganda? Is it objective, impartial &amp; unbiased?</td>
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BEAM IN LIBRARIES: SOME EXAMPLES

• Kate Rubick, Librarian at Lewis & Clark College partnered with a rhetoric and media studies professor to have students categorize sources in a published article.

• Librarian Robert Miller and writing instructor Sandie Friedman share tips including making a handout (explaining BEAM and how to integrate sources) and explicitly discussing how students might use the sources you help them identify / access.

• Librarians Kristin M. Woodward and Kate L. Ganski created a sixty-minute lesson plan with assessment rubric for use in any discipline.

• Librarians at the River Campus Libraries of the University of Rochester explicitly tied BEAM into note taking and writing processes.
“Finding the source is really only the beginning of the process from the student’s point of view. We are arguing that students may need to reorient themselves in relation to sources, thinking of them as voices in a scholarly conversation. Further, we are suggesting that to help students reorient, librarians, too, may need to conceive of their roles differently by beginning to shape the student’s argument by actively guiding them towards a more skillful use of sources.”

“But ultimately, this rhetorical approach represents an incomplete understanding of information's value—that is, it does not call on students to consider whether a source contributes to their learning. It is not hard to imagine a clever student starting a research project by outlining his or her argument and its conclusion, finding sources to substantiate the main points, then weaving the sources and structure together to present a well-formed argument. This student has demonstrated a grasp of the ways that information can be persuasive, but it remains an open question whether he or she understands and appreciates the ways that information enriches understanding and spurs further inquiry.”

MUSIC SOURCES: BACKGROUND

What: Background sources provide general, factual information.
Why: Used to provide context.
Example: Encyclopedia and thematic catalog entries and dictionary definitions.
But composer biographies, scores, and other sources could also provide background information, depending on the specific project.

Mahler(-Werfel) [née Schindler], Alma Maria

Peter Franklin

https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.43383

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What: Primary source materials

Why: Used as material for analyses and interpretation

Examples: Notated music in any format, other artistic works, field recordings, ephemera, historical documents, or anything else that might be considered a primary source.

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus, Der Schauspieldirektor: autograph manuscript, 1786 Jan. 18. Morgan Library and Museum: http://www.themorgan.org/music/manuscript/115408/7
What: Sources that rhetorically assert something

Why: Engage with existing claims, ideas, theories

Examples: Articles, editorials / opinion pieces, and critical edition introductions.

A source in any format in which an argument is put forth.

Screenshot of Arnold Schoenberg, “Neue Musik,” Arnold Schoenberg Center,
MUSIC SOURCES: METHOD

What: Research methodology or theoretical framework employed

Why: Used as a model for the structure or theoretical approach

Examples: Schenkerian analysis, Feminism, Phenomenology, data scraping

Musicologist-taught course for all incoming master’s students. The goal of the course is for students to gain facility with music research processes and resources in a variety of formats.

- Students worked with resources in the library throughout the semester.

- The instructor requested two librarian-led sessions, one to focus on the Music Library print collections and another to focus on relevant databases.

- This would be the first time that some returning students ever encountered subscription library databases. Other students are accustomed to accessing and searching library databases. How could I possibly engage all students?

- My objective was to shift the focus from search logistics to understanding the variety of source available and evaluation options.
From the worksheet...

**Source Evaluation: How will you use it?**

- **Background**: Factual information. Without background the analysis will lack context.
- **Exhibit / Evidence**: Primary sources—including notated music—to interpret or analyze. Without evidence, your paper will lack substance.
- **Argument**: Secondary textual sources to affirm, refute, improve, or build on. Without referring to others’ arguments, your paper can’t meaningfully engage with existing research.
- **Method**: Theoretical frameworks or research methods to incorporate into your own study. Without discipline-appropriate methods and theories, your paper won’t be well-received.
- Considering how you might use the source will help you evaluate its quality, purpose, and relevance for your project.
BEAM Questions on Worksheet

What is the purpose of *Grove*? Explain why you would use it primarily a background, exhibit, argument, or method source.

[Select a potentially useful article and provide a citation.] Skim the article. Would you use it for background, evidence, argument, method, or a combination? Please explain:
In conclusion:

- BEAM is a worthwhile instructional methodology that librarians have adopted for their own instruction.
- BEAM explicitly ties research resources to writing and creates space for librarians to extend their instructional interactions with learners.
- BEAM can be used with many forms of music research and writing.
- BEAM has been enthusiastically adopted by faculty in various disciplines.
- BEAM, like any library instruction approach, works best when planned collaboratively.
REFERENCES


• Rubick, Kate. Flashlight: Using Bizup’s BEAM to Illuminate the Rhetoric of Research. https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/liw_portland/Presentations/Publications/3/

• University of Rochester, River Campus Libraries, “BEAM Method for note-taking and using scholarly sources.” http://libguides.lib.rochester.edu/beam