

Assignment #1: Interviews**Interviewee #1: "Dick"**

Discussion

Dick is a normal thirteen-year-old Caucasian boy. He is the youngest of three children in a middle-class, educated, American family. He likes skateboarding, *Rage Against the Machine*, and Tae Kwon Do. He is tall for his age; his older brother describes him as "13 going on 17." According to the brother, Dick is intelligent but does not always try as hard as he could. Dick's average grade is a B or a B+.

Dick described a recent school assignment, a report on El Niño. This report was assigned because he had missed a day of school and had to make up the work. The topic was not his choice; he said that if it had been up to him, he probably would have picked something easier.

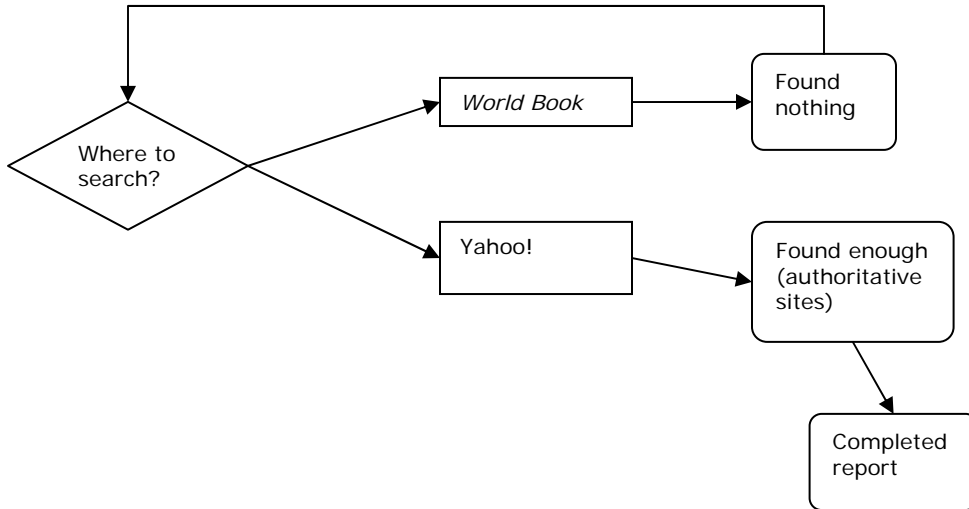
In searching for information, Dick departed from his normal routine. Generally he follows the path of least resistance and searches the Internet first. If he doesn't find anything there, he asks a knowledgeable person who, in his estimation, might be able to tell him where to look. Printed books are usually a last resort, but this time his first source was a *World Book* encyclopedia. Unfortunately, the *World Book* had no information at all on El Niño; Dick assumed that the edition was probably too old and out-of-date but did not check the date. Next he used Yahoo's keyword search engine to search the Internet, and he found all the information he needed about when El Niño occurred, how often, why, and what its effects were. He used the information that he found on authoritative websites, like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to complete his assignment. The grade on the report was a B, which is typical for Dick.

Dick's research subject, El Niño, was a good topic for a Web search because there is a lot of authoritative information about it from organizations such as the NOAA (<http://www.pmel.noaa.gov/toga-tao/el-nino/nino-home.html>) and the U.S. Geological Survey (<http://walrus.wr.usgs.gov/el-nino/>). Dick found and used those sites, and they let him finish his assignment, but they did little to kindle his enthusiasm for the subject. If Dick had tried the Internet Public Library's TeenSpace instead of Yahoo, he would have found a neat little WebQuest called "El Niño—A Child of the Tropics" (<http://library.thinkquest.org/20901/>). The WebQuest is oriented towards exploration of a topic rather than filling in the blanks on a report, so it probably wouldn't have helped Dick's assignment directly. However, its friendly and approachable tone probably would have increased his enthusiasm for the topic much more than the dry, authoritative sites. A good print resource on El Niño is *Dangerous Planet: the Science of Natural Disasters*, by Phillis Engelbert and Diane M. Sawinsky. According to the review in *SLJ*, this book is appropriate for grades 5-8 and full of information as well as citations for print and electronic resources. Because of its approachability, it is capable of both stimulating Dick's interest and giving the information he needed for his assignment.

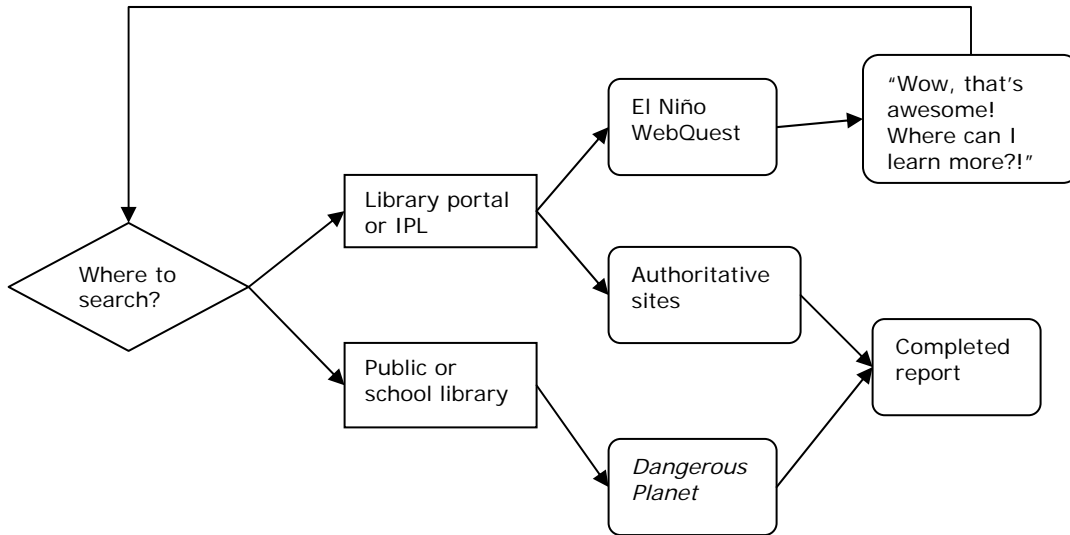
Since Dick was at home when he did the research for this project, face-to-face interaction with librarians was impossible. A good way to reach him on the Internet would be for his school or public library to develop a website which encourages students to make use of websites such as the IPL and also to come into the library to use the print resources.

Assignment #1: Interviews

Actual flowchart



Alternative flowchart



Assignment #1: Interviews**Interviewee #2: "Jane"**

Discussion

Jane is a 17-year-old half-Portuguese, half-German high school senior who attends Nova. For her history class, she is researching for a project on the history of pin-up girls. The project involves a 30-minute presentation and a 12-page paper. She says that finding visual examples is easy; the hard part is finding verbal information about pin-up girl art, how it influenced history, and how it was influenced by history. The project is due in a week or two, so Jane is in the middle of information-gathering.

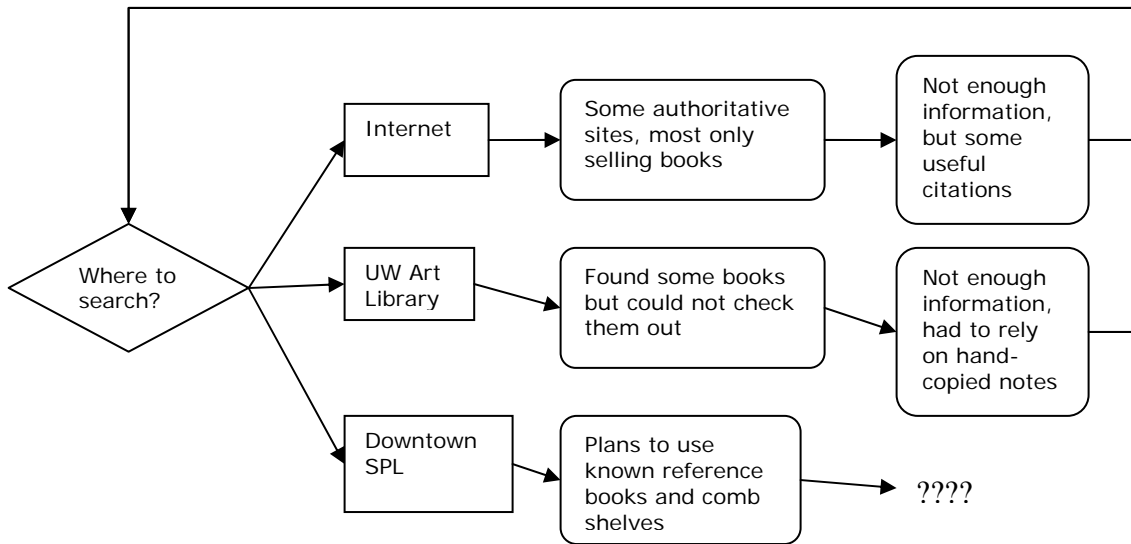
Like almost every teenager, Jane began her search on the Internet, where she had only moderate success. Many sites either featured art for sale or pointed to books for purchase. She found only a few authoritative and informational sites, like a museum of modern art which had an online exhibit. Her next attempt was the UW Art Library, where she had slightly more success. Searching the online catalog was very hard because the titles all used subtly different words; for example, she tried searching for "nose art" (as in art on plane noses) and got nothing but later found a book with the words "plane art" in the title. Even subject headings and art librarians were little help. The most success she had was from finding a likely call number in the catalog and then combing the shelves around that location. This way, she found one book that was completely about pin-up girls and 3 or 4 other books that had one chapter each on her topic. Unfortunately she was not allowed to check out the books from UW and did not want to spend the money on photocopies, so she had to rely completely on notes taken by hand. Next Jane plans to visit the downtown branch of the SPL in order to use some reference sources there. Some of these are books that she has seen cited in other places, so she has high hopes for their usefulness, but she will still not be able to check them out. While there, she will comb the stacks and perhaps find some books that she can take home.

Jane has found most of the resources that she needs, and since the art subject librarians have already done all they could, I feel myself unable to suggest additional resources that would be more useful. Jane is a highly intelligent and motivated student who has shown herself capable of research using adult-level, scholarly works. She can handle any resource containing relevant information.

Jane's major problem is access to resources. She can find the books that she needs, but she is not allowed to use them effectively. It is especially frustrating that she cannot check out books from the UW libraries. A better arrangement would be for the Seattle school system to have an arrangement with the UW libraries, so that high school students, perhaps just seniors, could have some check-out privileges for the libraries' collections. I understand that the UW libraries want to ensure that their own users' needs are fulfilled first, but Jane's school also has a responsibility to facilitate her access to the information she needs to complete school assignments.

Assignment #1: Interviews

Actual flowchart



Alternative flowchart

