For this project, I sought out my eight grade science team as my client. One of the teachers is someone I pair with for homeroom and I’m frequently overhearing units that are beginning in their classroom and challenges they both have in delivering their instruction.

Hamilton Middle School is blessed with some very talented students. Our students regularly test at the top of the charts in science, and I believe that the buck really stops with this team. They make sure that every child understands the concepts by the time they leave our school and head off to high school. Many times this is a challenge because there are students who don’t have basic understanding that one would hope for a 3rd grader, and these two ladies have the task of catching them up to what an 8th grader should know. While that isn’t the most profound issue a teacher could have, we also have students who are far above their peers. They are taking Precalculus and advanced Spanish and Science is no different. They are hungry for more and these teachers are often simply too busy to point them in an area of more challenge. When I proposed the idea of creating a Libguide for their brain unit, they were ecstatic. It is the hope that this guide will be a tool that they can use with those high achieving students to point them to more in depth understanding of the concepts covered in the brain unit. It is also hoped that the students with more potential and are just getting by will be motivated to stretch themselves further when they see their classmates using this Libguide.
My first step on this process was to sit down with them and ask what basic parts they teach towards on this unit. What they feel they are currently lacking, and where they would like to go further. The areas we first identified were: Anatomy, effects on the brain (to include legal and illegal drugs, concussions, etc), Learning and Memory, Optical Illusions, and Neurotransmissions. When searching for information, I wanted to find information that was appealing to the 8th grade eye. I often found scholarly articles, but also looked for articles written by Universities and organizations that were aimed at the general public. I wanted to offer the reader a variety of depth so as not to overwhelm them in any subject area. I was fortunate to find some great interactive sites that allow the user to hover over parts of the brain and then have that part illuminate with identification and explanation of what role it has.

In the beginning, I was really overwhelmed by the information I found and the concept of organizing it into the Libguide. Perhaps it’s the old art teacher in me, but I had this urge to print out each and every web page and cut and paste it into several posters. What was especially frustrating for me was the technical difficulties I and classmates had with getting Refworks to grab our resources. I was working on several different computers and while I could bookmark them with delicious, it kind of put me in a state of suspension, not sure if I would be able to cull my resources together in the end. As it happened, Refworks finally began to work on the very last day before this project was due. I was able to grab my resources that hadn’t gone in before, and edit out the duplicates that had occurred from repeated attempts leading up to the end.

Upon re-interviewing my clients and showing them the direction I was going in, they were thrilled. They recommended breaking the effects on the brain into 2 parts: one for life choices and their effects, the other for illness and injury. In particular, we discussed the effects of meditation, and the Ted Talk by Jill Bolte-Taylor, who is a neuropathologist who talks and
writes of her experience having a stroke. Looking into the Ted Talks was so helpful to the Libguide. I ended up going back and looking into most of my categories and searching for Ted Talks that related.

My record keeping on this project was two-fold: I used the standard notebook and pencil for documentation of my interviews with both my clients and my professor. For my research, I used the bookmarking tool, Delicious, and when it worked, I used RefWorks. I know that many of my classmates were frustrated with this tool, but when it worked it was brilliant. I later heard from a classmate (and a colleague who was required to use RefWorks for her master’s program at the UW-Madison) that RefWorks magically worked for those that just created their own account (whether 30 day trial or pay). After seeing how nice the product can work, I think I could actually swallow the $100 yearly subscription. What actually helped me with my organization most was the use of Delicious. By paying close attention to my tagging, I was able to quickly look up the subject I was looking for and locate the specific site I wanted to use on my Libguide.

My final presentation of the Libguide to my clients was very positive. They are excited about using it with their upcoming brain unit and are eager for me to make them another one on electricity. I really believe this redefined to them what other kinds of resources their librarian can provide. I am happy with my outcome. When I heard at the beginning of class that this needed to include a 10 page bibliography, I was overwhelmed. At the culmination of this project, I found my bibliography was 12 pages long and I feel like I could continue to cull more interesting pieces to add.