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Instruction @ the URI Libraries

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More Signs First Year Students Need Instruction in Information Research

A recent study sponsored by the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) examined the actual information literacy proficiency of students as compared to students' self-view of their ability. The researchers, Melissa Gross and Don Latham from Florida State University, found that students are still overestimating their own information research abilities.

"The results of [this] quantitative analysis support findings from the literature that conclude that students come to college without, or with low level, proficiency in IL skills (Educational Testing Service, 2006; Gross & Latham, 2007; Peter Hart Research Associates, 2005). The majority of students tested earned scores in the below-proficient range, and those who tested as proficient tended to score at the bottom of the proficient range... Although the results of the analyses report are not generalizable, they do add to the body of empirical evidence, which suggests many student do not have the skills they need to be effective in finding and evaluating information. It also reveals that many students are not receiving sufficient formal IL [information literacy] instruction in K-12." (Gross & Latham, 2012, p. 582)

What this shows is that a general introduction to the library in a student's first year is not enough to prepare students to do research in a specific discipline. With reductions in high school and public library budgets across the country, we can no longer assume that students have even received adequate support for their high school research, and, in some cases, their first contact with serious research will be at the college level.

It's a common belief that digital natives can find and evaluate information on their own, but as researchers at the University of New Mexico and the University of Nevada at Las Vegas note: "University students may appear to be more comfortable in technology-intensive environments than are their professors, but it does not necessarily follow that they have the knowledge and critical thinking skills to effectively locate, filter, and evaluate information found online." (Kingsley & Kingsley, 2009, p. 2)

Sources

Gross, M., & Latham, D. (2012). What's skill got to do with it? Information literacy skills and self-views of ability among first-year college students. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, 63*(3), 574-583. doi: 10.1002/asi.21681
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Scaffolding library & information research sessions to match your curriculum

As discipline specific curricula develop incremental, scaffolded learning opportunities for students, the same is necessary in the area of information literacy. In order for students to apply college-level information seeking strategies and develop higher order evaluation skills, they must have incremental, scaffolded opportunities to find, evaluate and analyze information sources.

Many first year students attend a library instruction session that introduces them to the basics of using a general database to find credible articles on a topic. This frequently helps them meet information needs in introductory courses, but the session is not able to anticipate their future, discipline-specific needs. To support student research growth, librarians can work with you to tailor sessions to meet the specifics of assignments and projects as students grow and develop through their majors.

Although students may assume that because they have participated in a library instruction session before, they know everything they need to about searching for information. Building new skills on the foundation laid during students' early visits to the library will help ensure student success.

By the Numbers

In Spring 2012...

3,000 *total* students attended information literacy instruction sessions at the main library in Kingston. *This includes:*

1,200 WRT 104/105/106 students who learned how to find credible articles to support their writing projects, and...

90 subject-specific sessions taught for the following departments: African American Studies, Human Development and Family Studies, History, Library and Information Studies, Nursing, Theatre, Psychology, Textiles, Women's Studies, and Writing

Related Updates

New LibGuides

We have two new general LibGuides to offer this summer. The first is "Google Tips & Tricks," available at uri.libguides.com/google. This guide presents an overview of advanced search strategies in Google, including the ability to limit a search to only .edu or .gov domains, limit by document type, and more. Additional tabs highlight using Google Scholar, and using Google Scholar with RefWorks citation management software. A guide highlighting new e-resources is also now available. If you are interested in seeing what non-database e-resources the URI Libraries have added recently, go to uri.libguides.com/neweresources.

Citation Tools

Have you tried Mendeley or Zotero? These are two free tools for citation management, and they're becoming increasingly popular. If you're interested in learning more about using these tools for your classes or research, please contact Amanda Izenstark - amanda@uri.edu.

Instruction @ the URI Libraries provides updates and tips related to the URI Libraries' instruction programs and offerings, and is distributed in January, May, and August.

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