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How Are We Doing? Using Faculty Feedback to Assess the Impact of Library Instruction on Student Work

Cara E. Berg
William Paterson University of New Jersey

Nancy J. Weiner
William Paterson University of New Jersey

Abstract

Data collected from surveys of faculty who brought their students for library instruction provide the basis for this article. Faculty can be reached through surveys developed using low cost or even no-cost tools, and results have been used to help establish a connection between library instruction and quality of student work. Details on the surveys and summary data results will be highlighted as will results from a survey of faculty who do not schedule instruction, thus providing easily replicable assessment tools that can be adapted for the needs of other academic libraries.

Keywords: assessment, faculty attitudes, faculty surveys, library instruction, student work

Corresponding author: Nancy J. Weiner weinern@wpunj.edu

Introduction/Literature Review

The David and Lorraine Cheng Library is located on the campus of William Paterson University, one of the nine state colleges and universities in New Jersey. The User Education Program at Cheng Library can trace its roots back to 1977 when the full-time position of Instruction Librarian was first introduced. While the early years of the User Education Program focused on expanding the program and providing bibliographic instruction, it was not until the early 2000s that more emphasis was being placed on assessment of library instruction sessions. This shift in focus may be attributed to the introduction of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Information Competency Standards for Higher Education in 2000, which provided instruction librarians with the impetus to look beyond the library instruction session to take a closer look at student learning.

As technology and online resources became the focal points of library instruction, implementation of information literacy programs and assessment of student learning outcomes gained prominence. Thompson (2002) discussed this trend of larger accrediting bodies having a focus on information literacy within their own standards, which supported the notion of faculty-librarian collaboration, not just in collection building but in curriculum development and teaching information literacy skills. In response to this trend many academic libraries, including the David and Lorraine Cheng Library, developed Information Literacy Plans and sought ways to assess student learning. By 2005 the Coordinator of User Education and members of the User Education team focused initial assessment efforts on the first-year student population, introducing an in-class library assignment for First-Year Seminar (FYS) classes that was graded using a scoring rubric, thus establishing a cycle of assessment for this population. This was soon followed by having students complete one-minute papers at the end of course-related instruction sessions (excluding FYS courses) to help determine if students had enough hands-on computer time to locate relevant sources and apply the search skills they were being taught. In addition, students were also asked to identify anything that remained unclear to them at the end of the session, which was considered a popular method of assessment at that time (Cunningham, 2006).

While the results of these types of assessment were useful and continue to be so, it was at this time that members of the User Education team decided to seek faculty feedback on library instruction sessions. Seeking inspiration, members of the User Education team examined early studies that focused on exploring faculty perceptions of information literacy instruction and research containing examples of faculty surveys (Hardesty, 1995; Cannon, 1994). It was also

Corresponding author: Nancy J. Weiner weinern@wpunj.edu

during this time that research examining faculty perceptions of the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards emerged (Gullikson, 2006) along with an increase in research focused on faculty collaborations with librarians (Hrycaj & Russo, 2007). Amidst this growing body of research on the topic, our user education team decided to conduct a survey of faculty whose students had received library instruction in the previous semester, and we continue to survey faculty more than ten years later.

In preparation for our initial survey, we examined existing research that focused on librarians conducting surveys relating to faculty views of instruction and asking for feedback on the program. Cannon (1994) surveyed social sciences and humanities faculty about their thoughts on library instruction. Faculty were asked to indicate what type of library instruction was used (i.e., resource demonstration, library tour), their general thoughts on library instruction, and finally the reasons for not requesting library instruction. The last question was asked in the second faculty survey. Leckie & Fullerton (1999) adapted the Cannon study, utilizing a different group of faculty as well as interviews to help them better understand the faculty's perceptions. Hrycaj & Russo (2007) compared the Cannon study and the Leckie and Fullterton studies to their own and concluded the information gleaned from the three aforementioned studies were inconclusive. They pointed out what they saw as ambiguity in the questions asked and thought that the results did not justify claims that there were positive signs for faculty-librarian partnerships. However, they did state that just because they did not see positive signs from the three surveys did not mean that these essential partnerships should not be pursued.

Some surveys focused on the ACRL Standards. Gullikson (2006) asked faculty which outcomes of the Standards were the most important. Dubicki (2013) conducted a similar survey at several New Jersey colleges and universities in which faculty rated the importance of standards. Dubicki's survey asked if faculty addressed the information skills that they found (or did not find) important in their classes and also asked faculty to rate whether the students should be information literate at graduation. Dubicki reports that 99% of faculty thought that students should be information literate at graduation, but only 53% thought that the students were information literate at graduation.

The gap between faculty's thoughts on information literacy and how they saw the students' information literacy skills is also explored by DaCosta (2010) who surveyed faculty on library instruction at two institutions in two separate countries. DaCosta found a significant gap between faculty members who say they want students to be information literate at graduation and those who think students actually are information literate. The themes in these

surveys are similar: faculty indicate that information literacy is important, but many do not see the students as being information literate at graduation. Saunders (2012) also surveyed faculty on their thoughts about information literacy and noted that faculty found it to be an essential skill, but there were inconsistencies on who the faculty thought should teach it. Surveys also asked faculty if they saw a direct impact on students' work after the students received instruction. Bury (2011) reported 85% of faculty stated that library instruction had an impact on students' work. Singh (2005) reported that 55.2% of respondents stated that the students' work had improved after receiving library instruction.

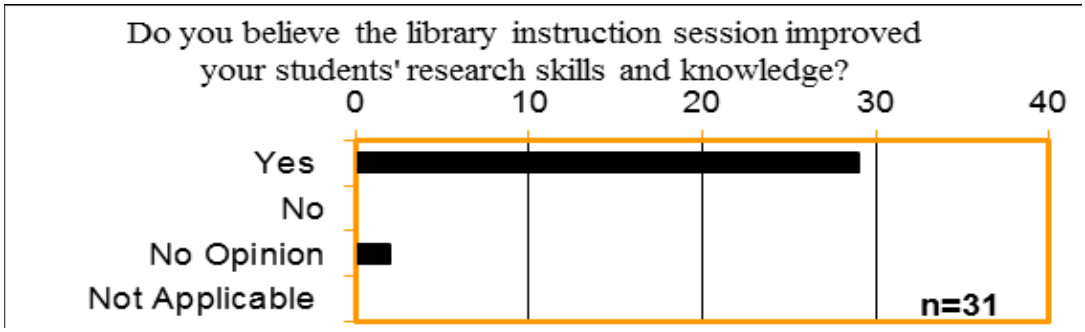
Most of the survey populations included all faculty regardless of whether their students had received instruction or not. One exception is Cunningham (2006) who discussed the use of multiple assessment tools, including one sent to faculty members whose students received library instruction that semester. As with the Cheng Library survey, Cunningham's was sent out electronically at the end of the semester in the hope that it would not be a disruption to the faculty. Cunningham did not send out a survey to the faculty who did not request instruction.

Survey Design and Findings

The User Education team developed a brief, four-question survey containing two closed- and two open-ended questions. Seeking to gauge faculty attitudes toward library instruction and the impact on students' work, the team launched the survey near the conclusion of the fall 2006 semester. Biennially, for the next ten years, a variation of this survey was sent out to faculty who had requested library instruction. During the most recent year of the survey, the User Education team developed a second survey sent only to the faculty who did not request instruction. Together these surveys gave the librarians a clear picture of the instruction program, including what was successful, what could be improved, and why some instructors did not request instruction.

The team sent the survey via email using the free version of the online survey tool Zoomerang to 86 faculty members who brought their non-FYS classes for library instruction during the fall 2006 semester. The Library received 31 responses, resulting in a 36% response rate, and most of the respondents indicated satisfaction with the library instruction sessions and the sources students used for their research projects (Figure 1).

Figure 1



Members of the User Education team were pleased with the feedback and the response rate, and initial plans called for surveying faculty each year at the end of the fall semester, with the results representing another facet of assessment activities for the User Education program. In 2007, however, we decided to conduct the survey biennially rather than annually to avoid survey fatigue. In addition, the brevity of the original survey necessitated revision, and the subsequent versions included eight questions: two demographic, four Likert-style, and two open-ended questions (Appendix 1).

The number of survey invitations sent to the same faculty population who had requested library instruction in subsequent years (2008-2016) varied from a low of 72 to a high of 97, but response rates improved, especially when compared to the original survey, from a low of 42% to a high of 58% (Table 1).

Table 1: Response Rates

Year	# Email Invitations Sent	# of Responses	Response Rate
2008	88	41	47%
2010	97	42	43%
2012	72	42	58%
2014	84	47	55%
2016	83	35	42%

The purchase of a library subscription to Survey Monkey (formerly Zoomerang) improved sharing of results while also offering better analysis of the responses to the open-ended

questions. Faculty responses to survey questions regarding the purpose of the library instruction session and the value of the experience for students were overwhelmingly positive in each of the surveys (Table 2), and faculty comments suggested the same. Responses to questions regarding the impact on student research skills and improvement in student use of sources were somewhat weaker throughout all the surveys (Table 3). The comments reflected this as well.

Table 2: Responses to Question 3 and Question 4

Year	# of responses	Q3-The library instruction session served the purpose I intended for the class.	Q4-The library instruction session was a valuable experience for my students.
2008	41	97% Strongly Agree	90% Strongly Agree
2010	42	73% Strongly Agree	68% Strongly Agree
2012	42	85% Strongly Agree	78% Strongly Agree
2014	47	75% Strongly Agree	79% Strongly Agree
2016	35	91% Strongly Agree	88% Strongly Agree

Table 3: Responses to Question 5 and Question 6

Year	# of responses	Q5-The library instruction session improved my students' research skills and knowledge of library resources.	Q6-After the library instruction session, my students' assignments and papers indicated use of more appropriate source material.
2008	41	70% Strongly Agree	43% Strongly Agree
2010	42	56% Strongly Agree	34% Strongly Agree
2012	42	69% Strongly Agree	61% Strongly Agree
2014	47	68% Strongly Agree	47% Strongly Agree
2016	35	65% Strongly Agree	62% Strongly Agree

The results from the initial survey of faculty were shared only with librarians during a regularly scheduled monthly library faculty meeting, but User Education team members

were encouraged to continue surveying faculty and incorporating the results into the User Education Assessment Plan and the User Education Annual Report. Once the faculty survey cycle normalized, comparison results were often shared not only with librarians but also with teaching faculty who attended twice-yearly Library Liaison programs. In addition, as part of Cheng Library assessment presentations, highlights from the surveys were also presented during orientation programs for new faculty and with other campus groups such as the Directors Council and Deans Council.

Sharing the results with faculty attending Library Liaison programs consistently had an immediate impact; it helped raise awareness of the User Education Program and increased interest in scheduling library instruction sessions. Emphasizing the positive responses to the Likert-style questions was certainly beneficial, but also highlighting some of the comments usually elicited more immediate reactions. While the vast majority of the comments were positive, we did not shy away from sharing some of the negative remarks during these presentations, which resulted in a more balanced presentation of the feedback.

Incorporating the survey results into these various presentations also provided the opportunity to highlight the ACRL Information Literacy Standards and helped demonstrate the collaboration between library faculty and teaching faculty. The survey results also provided tangible rather than anecdotal evidence to illustrate the value that faculty place on library instruction, but this did not always translate into an increase in the number of library instruction sessions taught. Librarians also benefitted from reviewing the results, especially the suggestions made on how to improve the instruction program, which led to a few changes through the years. Although faculty completing the survey remained anonymous, identifying only their college and course level, many complimented or thanked individual librarians in the open-ended comments section, which also proved to be a positive outcome of the survey.

Assessment of our information literacy efforts is an important aspect of the User Education Program, and the results from the surveys of faculty continue to provide useful information. The results also help to illustrate the value faculty place on the library instruction sessions and the importance of collaboration to improve student research skills. Use of a faculty survey, sent at established intervals, also complements existing assessment activities and has allowed for more meaningful conversations with faculty regarding library instruction.

Discussion

The results from our faculty surveys are similar to what can be found in the literature that examines faculty attitudes and perceptions regarding library instruction in that faculty view library instruction in a positive light and also note the impact that the library instruction had on students' work (Bury, 2011). As suggested in the literature, faculty do believe information literacy skills are important, but there remains a gap between those who think it is important but may not take advantage of the expertise of an instruction librarian to teach these skills (Junisbai, Low & Tagge, 2016).

The second survey came about after examining the ten years of data from the biennial faculty survey. Members of the User Education team noted that the answers were consistently positive and did not show much variability over time. Nevertheless, we continue to collect this data since it is useful in determining faculty attitudes towards library instruction and overall satisfaction with the instruction program. After reviewing the results, however, we decided to develop a survey that would target faculty who did not schedule library instruction, a segment of the university population that we had overlooked.

This second faculty survey was designed with two main goals. The first goal was to identify reasons why faculty and adjuncts, especially those who assign their classes a research assignment, do not request information literacy instruction for their students. Survey results would also help us determine if there were any misconceptions regarding library instruction that could be corrected through future outreach. The second goal was to have the survey serve as a marketing tool for the library instruction program. Anecdotal evidence suggested that there are some faculty and adjuncts who are not aware of the library instruction program. While such a survey is somewhat more time consuming to develop, members of the User Education team hoped its results would help correct any misconceptions about library instruction and determine why faculty do not schedule library instruction. Ultimately some of the results could be used for outreach purposes.

The User Education team identified as the population for the survey all faculty and adjuncts who taught during the 2015-2016 academic year who did not request library instruction. We did not include faculty who taught a First-Year Seminar (now Pioneer Success Seminar, PSS) class since they do not participate in the existing faculty survey. To expedite creation of the survey, Google Forms was used instead of the Library's subscription-based Survey Monkey. A paragraph explaining the purpose of the survey, as well as a brief description of information literacy instruction, was included at the beginning of the survey.

> *One of the many services the library provides is information literacy instruction when a librarian works with your class to demonstrate resources that will help them to excel in research assignments. Usually this instruction takes place in a computer lab or an equipped classroom to give students hands-on time with the resources. Your feedback will help us better serve you and your students.*

The survey (Appendix B) consisted of seven questions, containing a mix of dichotomous, open-ended, Likert Scale, and multiple-choice questions. The survey was anonymous although respondents had the opportunity to provide their email address if they wished to learn more about the library instruction program. In order to identify some of the reasons why faculty do not request library instruction, even when students have a research assignment, multiple-choice questions were developed that included common reasons why faculty choose not to schedule library instruction. While respondents had the option of providing their own reasons, we hoped that the majority of responses would fall into one of the pre-defined categories we provided.

Working with the Head of Library Information Systems, we were able to compile an email list of full-time and adjunct faculty who taught during the 2015-2016 academic year. We reviewed the library instruction calendar and removed the names of faculty who had scheduled a library instruction session for their class. In total, the survey was emailed to 999 faculty and adjunct members. Unlike the faculty survey sent out near the end of the semester, the email invitations for this survey were sent in late September with a follow-up email sent in mid-November. By the end of the semester, 165 faculty and adjuncts completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 16.5%. While we were somewhat disappointed by the response rate, we were encouraged by the results and were able to identify some areas where we could correct common misconceptions regarding the library instruction program.

We were surprised to learn that 32% of respondents were not aware of the library instruction program. While we assumed that this lack of awareness may be attributed to new faculty or adjuncts, this is a conjecture on our part since we did not ask respondents to identify themselves as a new member of the campus community. However, the responses provided insight into the need to promote the library instruction program as a possible service and to offer an overview of information literacy and library instruction. Similar attitudes were found in the responses to question number four, which asked "If you have assigned a research project but did not schedule a library instruction session, what was the reason for this decision?" Although

30% of respondents selected "students have already received library instruction in other classes" as the primary reason, more than 26% of respondents selected "didn't know this was an option" as the reason for not scheduling a library instruction session. "Not enough time to schedule a session" was cited by 23% of the respondents, which was about what we expected.

Faculty's most cited reason, students already had library instruction in a previous class, gave us an opportunity to create a curriculum map to help overcome this misperception. Some of the comments reflected this reason as well, and faculty noted the sessions provided for the first-year students. While acknowledging that some redundancies exist in the library instruction program, we want to ensure all students acquire information literacy skills, especially once they enter into their upper-level classes in their major. This direct feedback from faculty will allow us to explore our options for developing curriculum maps for targeted departments in the upcoming year.

Conclusions

Survey of Faculty who Scheduled Library Instruction

Reviewing the results from the faculty surveys continues to be the most rewarding aspect of conducting the biennial survey as is implementing any suggestions made by faculty to help improve our program. Also appreciated are the positive comments regarding individual librarians. It is also satisfying to know that our faculty are very receptive to completing the survey, yielding response rates of 40% or more over the past ten years. While the initial development of the survey was one of the most challenging aspects, we learned from our original survey results that we needed to expand the number of questions and balance the survey with a mix of Likert-style and open-ended questions. Some faculty also provided suggestions on how to improve upon our questions after the initial survey in 2006. We implemented the changes, and the questions have since remained unchanged.

In hindsight, it certainly would have made sense to consider development of a survey targeting faculty who do not schedule library instruction sooner than we actually did, but we will continue to survey faculty who do schedule instruction sessions. Faculty attitudes towards library instruction sessions and the perception of its value are consistently high and overwhelmingly positive, but we have recently shifted our focus to improving the responses in terms of faculty perceptions of improved student research skills and improved sources used

for research projects. Formal and informal sharing of the results of the faculty surveys is a key element to the success we have experienced. Faculty who respond to our surveys often express interest in the results so we try to close the loop in terms of communicating to faculty the results as often as we can.

Survey of Faculty who did Not Schedule Library Instruction

While we would have preferred a higher response rate, we still consider the recently developed survey to be a success. The responses we received provided substantial feedback about why, especially when assigning a research assignment, faculty do not request and students do not receive library instruction. The responses also allowed us to correct immediately misconceptions about the library instruction program and to raise awareness of its existence.

Results from this survey were first presented at the monthly library faculty meeting. This resulted in the Dean of the Library sending the faculty, including adjuncts, an email message promoting the library instruction program and its customized library instruction sessions designed to meet the needs of a particular class. The Dean also agreed to send this message at the start of each semester. While individual librarians are tasked with sending similar emails to their faculty in their liaison areas, we do not have confirmation that this is ever actually done. In addition, having the support of the Dean of the Library highlights the importance of the library instruction program to faculty and staff in other departments on campus. The direct outreach from the Dean resulted in several requests for instruction. Another immediate result was a discussion on developing better outreach methods to adjunct faculty to make them aware of the library instruction program.

The survey also served its purpose as a partial marketing tool for the library instruction program since many faculty members replied immediately to the email to request instruction. We also felt that increasing awareness of the library instruction program was achieved as several comments indicated they would now begin to take advantage of the program. Although we think the survey helped raise awareness of the program, as of this writing, it is too soon to tell if the survey helped directly to increase instruction numbers for the 2016-2017 academic year.

The survey also had some issues. While they were not significant in numbers, we discovered that some of the respondents had indeed brought their class in the past year for library instruction. This was made clear in the comments when either an individual librarian or a specific resource was mentioned. We also realized it would have been helpful to determine

how many respondents were full-time faculty and how many were adjuncts.

Overall, we took away valuable information from the survey:

- We might think everyone knows about library instruction, but that is not true.
- Faculty and adjuncts would benefit from knowledge not only about the existence of the instruction program but also the ways we can accommodate them.
- A curriculum map would be useful in eliminating some redundancies of instruction and assuring all students receive library instruction.

As we have done with the first faculty survey, we plan to conduct this second survey again in two years and compare the data. We also plan to compare the instruction numbers for this academic year to see if there was an increase in instruction that may be attributed to the wider distribution of the survey. While the questions will remain the same, in future surveys we would ask respondents to identify themselves as full-time or adjunct faculty. This will be helpful for outreach purposes as well as for identifying any differences between the two groups.

Both surveys are applicable to any size institution and require minimal training whether using Google Forms or the commercially available Survey Monkey. Used independently of each other, each survey provides a snapshot of our instruction program and the faculty attitudes and perceptions about it. In the first survey we were able to see an immediate response to our work with their students. In the second survey we learned why some faculty chose not to schedule library instruction. Using both surveys, we were able to develop a clearer picture of the state of library instruction at our university from the faculty's perspective. We were also able to use these results to help improve outreach to faculty, marketing the strengths of our program in an efficient way, and to begin work on constructing a curriculum map to serve the needs of our students.

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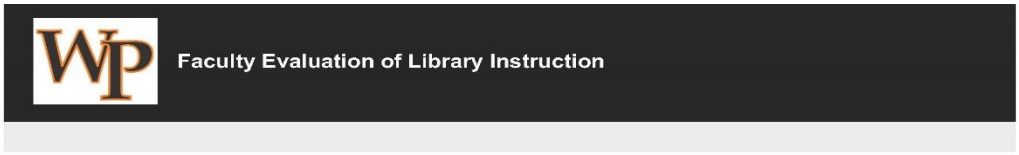
Appendix A



Faculty Evaluation of Library Instruction

1. Please identify the College for which the instruction was taught

- ◯ College of the Arts and Communication
- ◯ Cotsakos College of Business
- ◯ College of Education
- ◯ College of Humanities and Social Sciences
- ◯ College of Science and Health

2. Please indicate the level(s) of the course

- ◯ 1000
- ◯ 2000
- ◯ 3000
- ◯ 4000
- ◯ Graduate

Other (please specify)

3. The library instruction session served the purpose I intended for the class

◯ Strongly agree ◯ Agree ◯ Disagree ◯ Strongly disagree ◯ n/a

4. The library instruction session was a valuable experience for my students

◯ Strongly agree ◯ Agree ◯ Disagree ◯ Strongly disagree ◯ n/a

5. The library instruction session improved my students' research skills and knowledge of library resources.

◯ Strongly agree ◯ Agree ◯ Disagree ◯ Strongly disagree ◯ n/a

6. After the library instruction session, my students' assignments and papers indicated use of more appropriate source material.

◯ Strongly agree ◯ Agree ◯ Disagree ◯ Strongly disagree ◯ n/a

7. Please provide any suggestions on how you think we could improve our library instruction program.

8. Additional comments

Appendix B

Information Literacy Instruction Survey

One of the many services the library provides is information literacy instruction where a librarian works with your class to demonstrate resources that will help them to excel in research assignments. Usually this instruction takes place in a computer lab or an equipped classroom to give students hands-on time with the resources. Please provide us with feedback about our instruction program, to help us better serve you and your students.

Are you aware of this service as mentioned in the above paragraph?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

In your courses, do you assign a research assignment (i.e. outside sources) that results in a paper or presentation?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If you have assigned a research project, how do you feel about the quality of student work?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Poor	○	○	○	○	○	Excellent

If you have assigned a research project, but did not schedule a library instruction session, what was the reason for this decision? Select all that apply:

- ☐ Students have already received library instruction in other classes.
- ☐ Students should already know how to conduct research.
- ☐ Not enough time to schedule a session.
- ☐ Didn't know that it was an option.
- ☐ Library does not have the resources my students need.
- ☐ I had in the past, but did not like the presentation.
- ☐ Other: _____

Please provide any additional comments or questions about library instruction.

Your answer

College Name (optional)

Your answer

If you would like to speak with us about library instruction options, please leave your name and email address and we'll be in touch!

Your answer

SUBMIT