

Assessing and Improving Information Literacy: The Research Practices Survey

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Session Agenda

- **Instrument development**
- **Project expansion**
- **Instrument content**
- **Selected findings**
- **Next steps**



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Research Practices Survey Instrument Development:

Collaborative process
Utilization focus

Instrument development

Collaborative process: Institutions



Instrument development

Collaborative process: Roles

- **Librarians**
- **Classroom faculty**
- **Institutional research/assessment staff**
- **Technology staff**
- **Students**

Instrument development

Utilization focus (Patton, 1997)

- **Identify potential uses by potential users**
- **Engage users in all phases of inquiry**
- **Track uses of the data**
- **Adapt the inquiry**

Instrument development

Initial administration

***2004-05:* Questionnaire construction and pilot administration at four institutions**

***2005-06:* Questionnaire refinement and full administration at eight institutions**



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Research Practices Survey Project Expansion:

More institutions
More students

Project expansion

**Fall 2006: Administration to 4300
entering first-years at 20 institutions**

Barnard College

Carleton College

College of Wooster

Cornell College

Denison University

DePauw University

Dickinson College

Grinnell College

Hendrix College

Juniata College

Knox College

Lake Forest College

Lewis and Clark College

Macalester College

Ripon College

St. Olaf College

Swarthmore College

Trinity University

University of Puget Sound

Wellesley College

Project expansion

**Spring 2007: Administration to 1300
exiting first-years at 9 institutions**

Carleton College

Cornell College

Knox College

Lewis and Clark College

St. Olaf College

Swarthmore College

Trinity University

University of Puget Sound

Wellesley College

Project expansion

**Fall 2008: Administration to 6200
entering first-years at 39 institutions**

Agnes Scott	Fairfield	Lake Forest	St. Olaf
Albion	Franklin & Marshall	Luther	Trinity U
Austin	Furman	Macalester	Union
Beloit	Grinnell	Mills	U Puget Sound
Bennington	Gustavus Adolphus	Notre Dame	Vassar
Bryant	Hampshire	Oglethorpe	Whittier
Bucknell	Illinois	Oxford (Emory)	Widener
Centre	Juniata	Sarah Lawrence	Willamette
College of Wooster	Kenyon	St. John Fisher	Wittenberg
Earlham	Lafayette	St. Lawrence	

Project expansion

**Fall 2008: Administration to 750
upper-class students at 9 institutions**

Allegheny

Bucknell

Earlham

Fairfield

Hampshire

Mills

Oxford (Emory)

St. Lawrence

Union



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Research Practices Survey Instrument Content:

Holistic model
Multiple dimensions

Instrument content

Holistic model

http://www.stolaf.edu/offices/ea/RPS_SurveyInstrument09.pdf

- Informed by ACRL standards
- Reflecting the instructional context of the liberal arts

Instrument content

Multiple dimensions

- **Experiences**
- **Attitudes**
- **Epistemological beliefs**
- **Knowledge**
- **Critical capacities**

Instrument content

Sample experience question:

Over the course of the past academic year, how often did you talk with a librarian about a research assignment you were doing?

- Five or more times
- Three or four times
- Once or twice
- Never

Instrument content

Other experience questions:

- **Library use**
- **Research instruction**
- **Research assignments**
- **Research sources**
- **Consultation**
- **Time management**

Instrument content

Sample attitude question:

How challenging is it for you to identify and retrieve sources? Please rate the following (very easy, somewhat easy, somewhat difficult, very difficult, no experience):

Using a library catalog

Using an electronic index

Using a print index

Using an internet search engine

Using inter-library loan

Physically locating sources in the library

Instrument content

Other attitude questions:

- **Perceived difficulty of different components of research** (narrowing topic, developing thesis, writing, etc.)
- **Perceived difficulty of finding and retrieving sources** (indexes, search engines, etc.)
- **Perceived difficulty of using sources** (evaluation, integration, documentation)
- **Enjoyment of research**

Instrument content

Sample epistemology question:

Please indicate the extent of your agreement with the following statement: “Careful researchers can ultimately get to the truth.”

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Instrument content

Other epistemology questions:

- **Understanding of research as a learned skill**
- **Valuing patience and persistence**
- **Understanding of knowledge as socially constructed**
- **Tolerance for ambiguity in research findings**

Instrument content

Sample knowledge question:

A peer-reviewed or refereed journal is best described as:

- A journal that publishes reviews of other articles
- A journal that publishes articles that have been approved by other scholars
- A journal that includes only articles that have been written collectively by peers
- A journal that includes references for each article it publishes
- Don't know

Instrument content

Other knowledge questions:

- **Boolean logic**
- **Search tools and strategies**
- **Source characteristics** (*primary vs. secondary, article vs. book chapter*)
- **Citation requirements**

Instrument content

Sample critical capacities question:

Which of the following is the best way to determine whether to use a particular source in a research assignment?

- Whether it is a print or an internet source
- How recently the source was published
- How easily you can get the source
- Whether the source is scholarly
- Whether the author is highly respected
- All the above are equally valid criteria

Instrument content

Other critical capacities questions:

- Ability to distinguish scholarly from non-scholarly sources
- Criteria for source selection



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Research Practices Survey Selected Findings:

Item results

Benchmarks and reliability

Selected findings

Experience dimension

...how often did you talk with a librarian?

	College X First-Years Beginning of Fall 06	College X First-Years End of Spring 07
Never	40%	57%

Selected findings

...how often did you talk with a librarian?

	College X Spring 07	All Institutions Spring 07
Never	57%	46%

Selected findings

Which of the following best describes the way you pace your work on a research assignment?

	College X Fall 06	College X Fall 08
Most at the beginning	5%	2%
Equally over time	25%	21%
Most toward the end	60%	62%
All just before due	10%	15%

Selected findings

Which of the following best describes the way you pace your work on a research assignment?

	College X Fall 06	College X Spring 07
Most at the beginning	5%	2%
Equally over time	25%	21%
Most toward the end	60%	62%
All just before due	10%	15%

Selected findings

Which of the following best describes the way you pace your work on a research assignment?

	College X Spring 07	All Institutions Spring 07
Most toward the end or all just before due	77%	73%

Selected findings

Attitude dimension

How challenging is it for you to....

Somewhat or Very Easy

	College X Fall 06	College X Spring 07
Use an Internet search engine	96%	92%
Obtain materials through inter-library loan	35%	60%

Selected findings

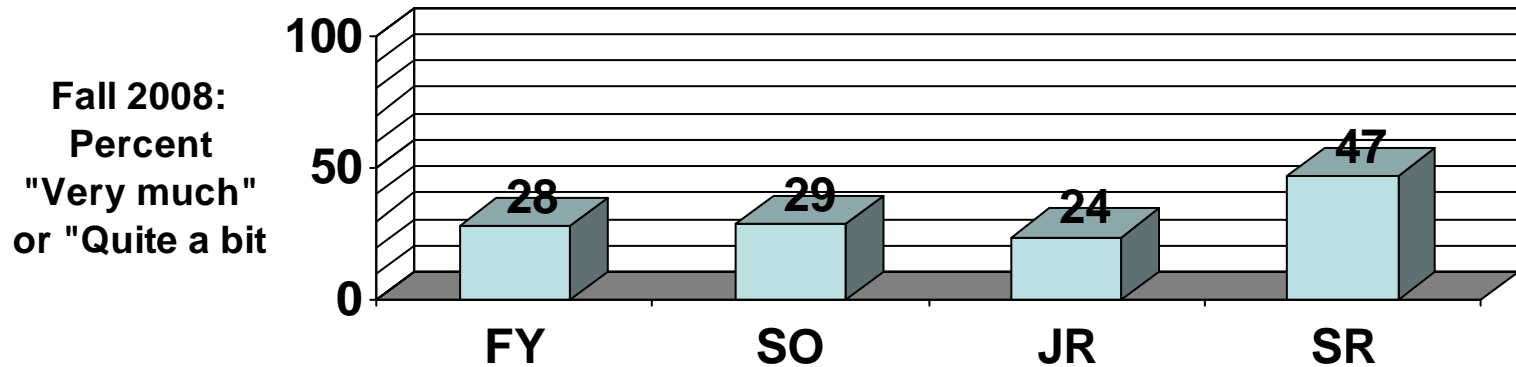
In general, how much do you enjoy research?

First-year students

	All – F 08	All – F 06	All – S 07
Very much	4%	8%	6%
Quite a bit	23%	30%	24%
Some	50%	49%	52%
Very little	23%	14%	18%

Selected findings

In general, how much do you enjoy research?



Selected findings

Epistemology dimension

“Careful researchers can ultimately get to the truth.”

Strongly Agree/Agree

College X Fall 06	All Institutions Fall 06	College X Spring 07	All Institutions Spring 07
63%	63%	50%	50%

Selected findings

Knowledge dimension

A peer-reviewed or refereed journal is a journal that....

Publishes articles approved by other scholars.

College X Fall 06	All Institutions Fall 06	College X Spring 07	All Institutions Spring 07
40%	44%	59%	67%

Selected findings

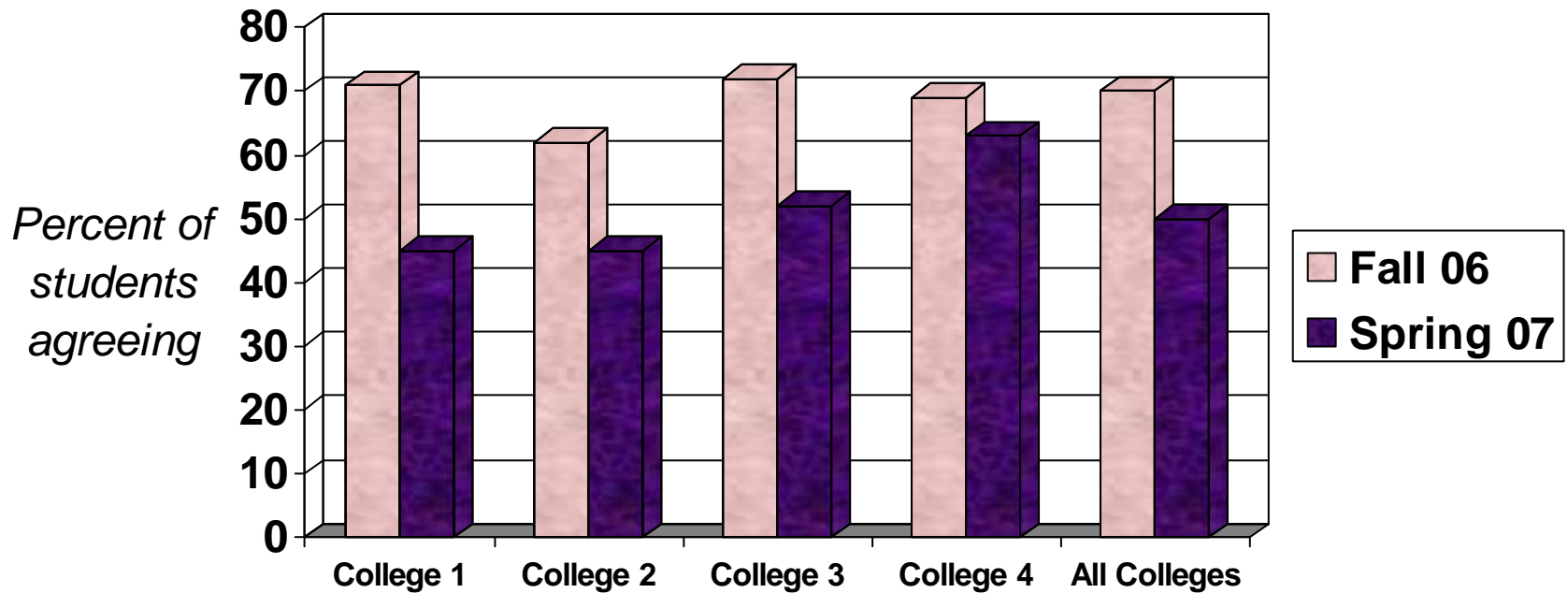
Critical capacities dimension

Best way to determine whether to use a particular source:

	College X Fall 06	College X Spring 07	All Institutions Spring 07
Source is scholarly	42%	52%	48%
All criteria are equally valid	52%	45%	43%

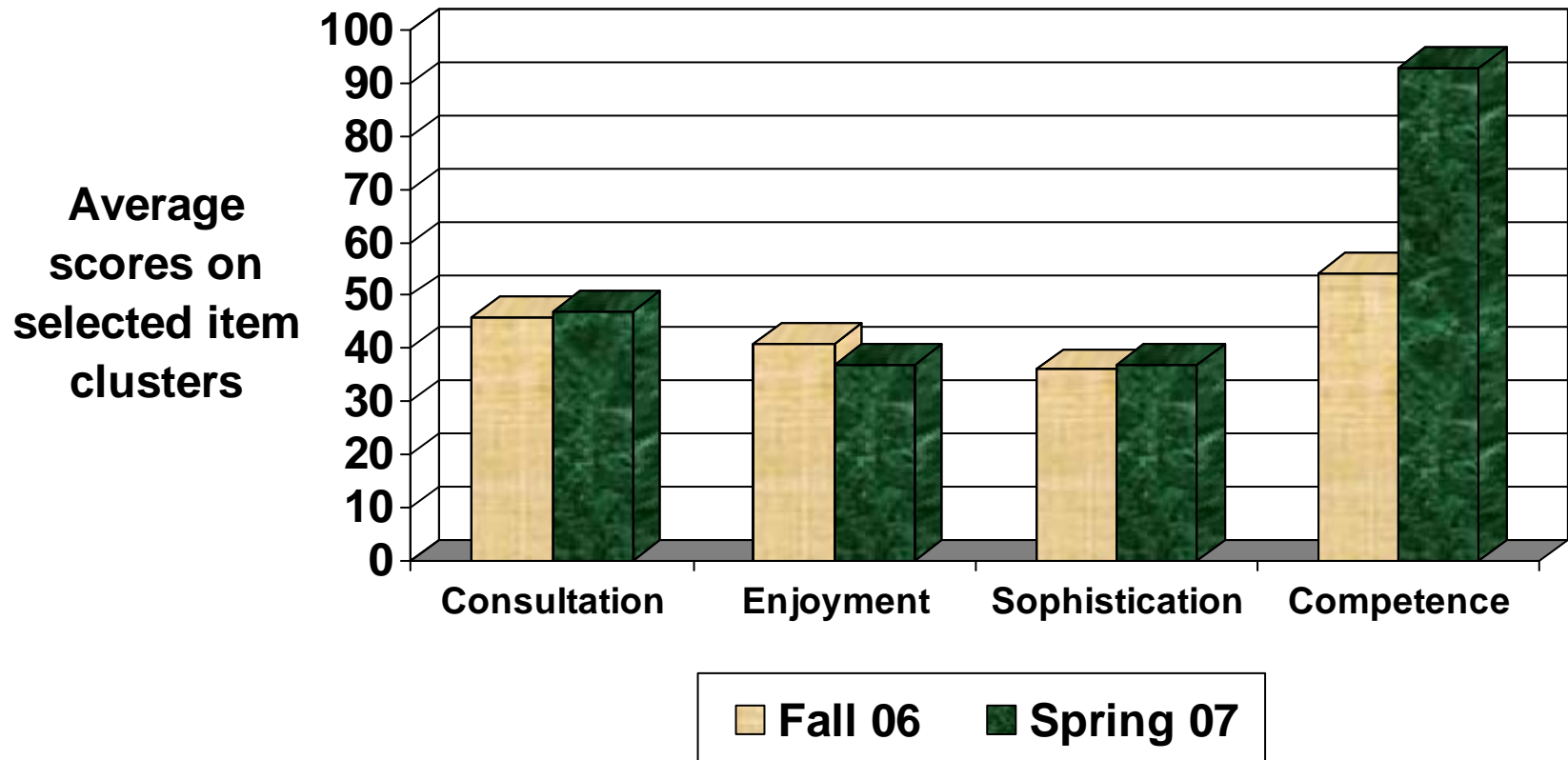
Selected findings

Time, Newsweek, or U.S. News are, or could be, scholarly:



Selected findings

Information literacy benchmarks



Selected findings

Accuracy of self-reports

The example of source evaluation

	College X Fall 2006		College X Spring 2007	
	<i>“Easy”</i>	<i>“Hard”</i>	<i>“Easy”</i>	<i>“Hard”</i>
<i>Competent</i>	22%	6%	47%	12%
<i>Not competent</i>	48%	25%	28%	12%



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Research Practices Survey

Next Steps:

Potential uses

How to participate

Next steps

Potential uses

Instructional improvement:

- Content and pacing of instruction
- Assignments
- Collaboration
- Grant applications

Next steps

Potential uses

Program review:

- **Assessing the library program**
- **Assessing departments or divisions**
- **Impressing accreditors**

Next steps

How to participate

Higher Education
Data Sharing
Consortium (HEDS)



Next steps

How to participate

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