

Assessing Information Literacy by using the Research Practices Survey in a Consortium

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The Research Practices Survey:

Premises and Origins

Premises and Origins

Utilization focus:

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

Premises and Origins

Holistic model:

- ACRL standards
- Liberal arts instructional context

Premises and Origins

Collaboration across institutions



Premises and Origins

Collaboration across roles

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

The Research Practices Survey:

**Survey Subjects
Sharing and Using the Data**

Survey Subjects

- **Incoming First-year Students**
- **End of First Year**
- **End of Senior Year**

Survey Content

Multiple dimensions

Research Experiences

Attitudes & Beliefs

Knowledge

Critical capacities

Sharing data on your campus

- Principal audiences:
 - librarians, administrators, deans, faculty
- Example of format
 - Highlights from the Research Practices Survey (handout)

Using data on your campus

- Re-examine
 - First-year offerings
 - Library curriculum
 - Identify gaps in overall program
- Example of department use
 - Department of X Assessment Action Report (handout)

Benchmarking provides useful context

- What percent of Spring FYs were taught how to use their institution's library resources?
- College A – 74%.
- That's a pretty big number. Is that good?
- All first-years in the survey – 88%.
- Okay, so how good should you try to be?
- 2 out of 10 institutions reached 98%.

Comparison Group

- Chose 10 institutions that surveyed first-years in both F08 and S09.
- Very different students, levels of selectivity, and types of institutions.
- Assume that all had large representative samples.
- Working toward unmasked sharing within the HEDS consortium.

Comparing FY to HS

- “How many assignments in the past year required you to cite at least three sources?”
- 6 of the 10 institutions showed no significant difference between the average # students did in HS and in the first year of college.
- Of the four that did show a significant difference, two schools’ students wrote fewer papers with sources in college than in HS. Only two schools’ students wrote more.

“How many of these assignments required you to use a specific bibliographic format?”

- 4 showed significant differences, and three of those were less likely to require a specific format than those students had encountered in HS.
- Only 2 schools were different on both parameters. Both were very highly selective.
- College A had fewer papers requiring sources, and was less likely to require a specific bibliographic format.
- College B required more sourced papers, and was more likely to require a specific bibliog format.

“How much do you enjoy doing research?”

- 7 schools showed no change.
- 2 on average liked it less by the end of the FY.
- Only one had students who enjoyed research significantly more after the FY. That institution’s curriculum does have first-year students working quite often with primary sources.
- To understand the results at the other institutions, we would need to know whether those students have been exposed much to research during the first year.

Hardest Research Skill

Fall 2008	My College	All Students
Narrow the topic	2.19	2.17
Develop a list of sources	2.00	2.06
Revise search strategy	2.23	2.18
Develop an argument	2.31	2.34
Organize the materials	2.24	2.12
Write the paper	1.99	2.12
Document the sources	1.82	2.00

- Do my students rate the difficulty the same way other students do?
- Which things seem easier or harder to them?
- What do they think is the hardest thing?

What's Harder at Different Colleges?

	F08 hardest skill	F08 average score	Change to S09?
College A	Develop argument	2.4	no
College B	Develop argument	2.3	no
College C	Develop argument	2.2	no
College D	Develop argument	2.3	no
College E	Develop argument	2.2	no
College F	Develop argument	2.3	no
College G	Develop argument	2.4	no
College H	Develop argument	2.4	no
College I	Develop argument	2.3	no
College J	Develop argument	2.2	no

- This result triangulates with other assessment findings.

Ease of Determining if a Source is Appropriate

- All fall cohorts think this is easier than any of the skills on the previous slides.
- Nine of the ten schools show no change between fall and the end of the FY.
- One school does show significant change, and by spring the students think this is harder than they thought when they entered college.

Correctly define “peer-reviewed journal”

	F08 % correct	S09 % correct
College A	36%	54%
College B	58%	63%
College C	54%	79%
College D	52%	85%
College E	57%	74%
College F	50%	60%
College G	44%	69%
College H	57%	69%
College I	50%	65%
College J	49%	78%

Scholarly Sources

- The RPS includes many questions examining whether the student can identify scholarly sources, and how important they think this is.
- “You are writing a history paper on the Civil War and turn up the following 5 sources – which is least appropriate?”
- One of the choices is not a scholarly source – it’s from someone’s internet blog.

Two Questions

- “On what basis did you select your response to the preceding question about the least appropriate source?”
- “Suppose you have more relevant sources than you can use in a short research assignment – which is best way to determine whether to use a particular source?”

Ways to Choose a Source

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

On What Basis Did You Choose?

Source is Scholarly	F08	S09
College A	42%	45%
College B	58%	52%
College C	60%	77%
College D	39%	70%
College E	53%	54%
College F	33%	51%
College G	50%	56%
College H	51%	56%
College I	38%	47%
College J	48%	58%

What's the best way to choose?

Source is Scholarly	F08	S09
College A	48%	50%
College B	51%	57%
College C	51%	40%
College D	33%	44%
College E	41%	48%
College F	25%	38%
College G	44%	41%
College H	35%	42%
College I	27%	53%
College J	36%	32%

What they did and what they think they should do (Spring)

Source is Scholarly	Did do this	Should do this
College A	45%	50%
College B	52%	57%
College C	77%	40%
College D	70%	44%
College E	54%	48%
College F	51%	38%
College G	56%	41%
College H	56%	42%
College I	47%	53%
College J	58%	32%

Questions/Discussion

