2016 Assessment of Library Bibliographic Instruction Session

This report evaluates a pilot assessment method for in-class student learning. Information literacy process skills are difficult to assess, as they do not necessarily show up in a final product. In a one-shot session, some of them are evident in student research behavior after the librarian's direct instruction. This proposed assessment used an online form in which students record key components of their search process and results during the session. Students then have a record of their work, as well as the librarian (also the instructor if needed). If successful, the method could be applied to freshman composition sessions to gain data on the information literacy process skills of a large information literacy instruction constituency.

A section of Freshman Composition was chosen whose instructor was amenable to this pilot. The instructor's assignment asked students to research a paper about a major or career and required four articles, though he suggested reading far more in order to choose. As stated in his assignment, students would learn how to effectively use databases to get articles that must be "reliable, accessible, and relevant." He did not require scholarly articles. The librarian's outcomes for this session were typical of most of these freshman composition sessions. They included using an appropriate database, brainstorming keywords from the research topic, considering the authority of scholarly over popular (and library over Web), evaluating results lists for relevant information resources, and how to get full text. Students were then given the form in which to list their topic, list keywords, and record up to four relevant citations from the catalog, databases, or open Web. There were 15 students in the session.

Using a rubric (below), the librarian assessed the degree to which students met the librarian's outcomes based on what students recorded on the form. Expectations were that students would find at least two appropriately authoritative articles from databases and/or the Web after brainstorming alternative keywords, and give a correct citation based on citation guides or from the autocite feature in some databases.

Results showed that students all were successful at capturing a citation or a URL for the information source they chose. Most did not list keywords derived from their topics, but rather simply used their topic as keywords. One reason for this may be that the particular assignment of searching a major or a career does not lend itself to brainstorming alternative keywords, at least at this initial exploratory stage. Their results were therefore often too general, but on the other hand many students may want to start general to begin exploring this topic. Although most students should explore alternative keywords to more successfully search databases, that step may come later, so assessing the first 25 minutes of students' search behavior may be too narrow a window to capture this aspect of students' process.

The authority outcome was difficult to measure. Popular and Web sources were acceptable for this assignment. The encyclopedia content that some were reading may or may not be acceptable depending on the instructor, though certainly acceptable and encouraged at this

first pass through the literature. Later passes through the literature may cause deeper thinking about authority, but it was not so much an issue in these initial exploring and in this assignment. On the other hand, it was unclear whether students would move beyond introductory sources or Web sites. Again, assessing in-session behavior does not necessarily assess students' critical thinking and eventual choices. These students may have spent their time wisely even though they did not get to resources deemed "reliable" for the final draft. To assess whether students' choices meet an expectation for authority, the librarian should work with the instructor more to determine what this expectation is for this assignment, and assess it later in the students' process. The new ACRL Framework acknowledges that authority is contextual, thus indicating a more sophisticated method of assessing it. This one-size-fits-all form may not accurately measure this outcome for every assignment, even if tailored to freshman composition courses only.

Not all students found at least two articles given the 25 minutes of searching after the librarian's direct instruction. One student found five, and two students found just one. While two relevant articles in 25 minutes may seem achievable, the two students who spent time reading one article may have spent their time well, even though not meeting the *librarian's* expectation, and so not *assess* well. In this introductory session, students were conducting initial forays, and reading one Credo online encyclopedia article may be a good use of their time. In other words, students' initial use of the time may not give evidence of the students' attainment of outcomes. A more thorough assessment would continue to follow students' search process beyond this beginning. If research is iterative and reflective, this instrument does not give a full picture of process skills.

One issue with attempting to assess a 50-minute session is the disruption of the assessment itself. This form was designed to simply capture the work students would already be doing plus give students the added benefit of compiling their choices on a page that they can email to themselves. However, most of the databases will email the article to students expeditiously from within the database, so using this form does end up to be somewhat of an extra burden to students. Moreover, the instrument itself shapes students behavior, so it biases results.

In sum, this instrument is problematic as a valid assessment of the session learning outcomes. The process aspects of information literacy may be in evidence in some students, but if they are not, that doesn't mean the student is wasting time or has not learned. Also, the librarian's learning outcomes may strain to align with various freshman composition instructor's assignments, weakening validity.

Other means of assessing students' achievement of the outcomes should be explored. Minute papers, especially asking what students found useful from the presentation, reveal what students find useful in their own words. Alternatively, the librarian could directly assess the student's understanding when coming around to help each individual after the presentation. Although each student may be at a different level or demonstrating only one of the outcomes, the librarian would have direct and reliable observation of student behavior, if not also

learning. Another design we have tried asks faculty downstream of the one-shot session whether the class as a whole did well on specific outcomes in the final product. However, relying on the faculty member's overall estimation was not very precise. Surveying students' perception of the value of library instruction may be quite useful, either contacting students after the assignment or much later when they are seniors. This would require capturing student IDs, but then their responses could be tied in to campus wide success measures and compared to a control group. Finally, we could assess students' final products through communicating with amenable faculty. Likely targets may be Bus 3100 annotated bibliography or the other WPST courses, which require in-depth research. The problem of assessing process skills of information literacy would then remain.

	Meets the outcome	Partially meets the outcome	Does not meet the outcome
After an orientation to library databases and a demonstration, the student can use an appropriate database to identify at least 2 relevant articles.	//////////	/////	
After a demonstration and activity for reducing their topic to keywords, the student can generate appropriate keywords for their topic.	//	////////	/////
After an explanation of authority and the difference between popular and scholarly journal literature, the student can select a resource with the appropriate level of authority needed for his topic.	///////////	/	///
The student can use the citation tool in a database or other means to capture the publication information for a citation.	/////////////		

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