First-Year Student Research Skills: Challenges, Myths, and Solutions

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These materials were designed to be used with Wright State University first-year students or faculty of first-year students to improve research skills.

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First-Year Student Research Skills

Challenges, Myths, and Solutions
Big Challenge for First-Year Students

Research ?!#@?%
Agenda:

✓ Project Information Literacy overview

✓ Research challenges of first-year students

✓ PIL results and WSU student results

✓ How we can help
Learning the Ropes
How Freshmen Conduct Course Research Once They Enter College
Alison J. Head, Ph.D.
December 5, 2013
I’m overwhelmed!

But, I’m excited!
Do I have enough information?

What kind of sources do I need?

What's APA?
I find students’ lack of research experience frustrating

A. Yes
B. No
C. Sometimes
I require this citation style most often

A. MLA
B. APA
C. Chicago
D. Students can choose
E. Other discipline-specific style

14%  57%  14%
MLA   APA  Chicago
0%  14%  14%
Students can choose  Other discipline-specific style
I require the following sources:
1/3 of Students are Uncertain about Faculty Expectations
Freshman Myths

5 recurring misconceptions about college level research process
I’m independent. It’s unacceptable to ask for help.
Myth #2

Everything’s online;
I don’t need to go to the library.
Librarians are only for students who get stuck.
The database the librarian recommended is the only source I should use.
Dusty old books,
nothing relevant to my research!
Major Findings

And solutions!
Wow, this library is huge!
9 times more books

10 times more computers

20 times more librarians

21 times more databases
Struggles of First-Year Students

- Defining/selecting a topic
- Constructing searches
- Locating relevant sources
- Making sense of it all
PIL Study – Students’ Responses:

- 37% could not define and select a topic
- 74% struggled to construct searches
- 57% could not locate relevant sources
- 43% struggled to make sense of sources they found
ENG1100 Learning Objectives

• Constructing & implementing effective search strategies

• Identifying keywords, synonyms and related terms

• Exploring a general information source to increase familiarity with a topic
What did you learn?

What will be the hardest part?
WSU ENG1100 Assessment Results:

What did you learn today?

- 81% construct and implement effective search strategies
- 67% identify keywords, synonyms, and related terms
WSU ENG1100 Assessment Results:

14% define and select a topic

5% constructing searches

2% locate relevant sources

23% struggle to make sense of sources they found
WSU ENG1100 Assessment Results:

- **46%** ENG1100 classes with library visit
- **14%** define and select a topic
- **5%** constructing searches
- **2%** locate relevant sources
- **23%** struggle to make sense of sources they found
Faculty Members are Role Models

700 appointments last year

How did you hear about research consultations with a librarian?

- Faculty
- Librarian in Class
- Friend
- Library Website
Research Appointment with Librarian Feedback

The assistance I received fulfilled my needs.

I learned research skills and techniques I can use later.

I am likely to use the library in the future.
Research Appointment with Librarian Feedback

99% The assistance I received fulfilled my needs

98% I learned research skills and techniques I can use later

99% I am likely to use the library in future
Students who use the library are more successful!
Students with higher GPAs had received more research assistance from librarians.
Resetting Expectations

“The cognitive skills needed for scholarly inquiry are very different than finding ready-made answers using a Google search.”
How to get rid of those crappy research papers
How to get rid of those crappy research papers
Research Toolkit

- 8 workshops
- Interactive
- Assessment
- Certificates and records of attendance
- More information on our website
Help Improve First-Year Student Research

- Invite a librarian for instruction
- Recommend library workshops
- Continue dialogue with us
Thank You!

Project Team

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