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
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

57% Yes
43% No
0% Sometimes
I require this citation style most often

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

![Bar chart showing the percentage of choices for citation styles: APA 57%, MLA 14%, Chicago 14%, Students can choose 14%, Other discipline-specific style 0%.]
I require the following sources:
1/3 of Students are Uncertain about Faculty Expectations
Freshman Myths

5 recurring misconceptions about college level research process
Myth #1

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:

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.

- GPA 3.0 or Lower: 12% research help
- GPA 3.5 or Higher: 70% research help
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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