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Collaborative Assessment of Student Learning: A Tale of Two Departments

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Collaborative Assessment of Student Learning: A Tale of Two Departments

Introduction & Research Design

Healey Library and the English department teamed up to assess the impact of library research instruction on undergraduate students enrolled in ENGL 102 at UMass Boston in Spring 2016.

Research Question How does research instruction impact students' ability to transfer research skills from one project to the next?

Methodology Quasi-experimental, as we could not randomly assign students to control or experimental groups; mixed methods, as we used both qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures

Sampling Voluntary convenience sample; participating ENGL 102 sections were volunteered by their instructors

Hypothesis Research instruction will increase students' ability to transfer research skills from one context to another

Instruments Booklet, rubric (to evaluate the booklet), pre-test, post-test

Participation & Data Collection

- 10 faculty and 24 ENGL 102 sections participated in our study
- All 5 instruction librarians at UMass Boston participated, teaching at least one research instruction session
- Overall, 320 students attended research instruction sessions, and from those 320 students we collected:
 - * 281 pre-tests from students enrolled across all 24 participating ENGL 102 sections
 - * 222 booklets from students enrolled in 20 of 24 participating sections
 - * 250 post-tests from students enrolled in 22 of 24 participating sections by the end of the Spring 2016 semester

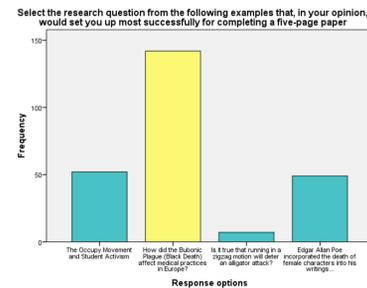
Oops! We Won't Do It Again AKA Lessons Learned

- **There's Something About the Booklets** They were considered valuable by both faculty and students. This was both a blessing and a curse: students did NOT want to part with their booklets, even for one day!
- **Convenience Trumps All** If you show students how to email articles to themselves, they will not necessarily write down the articles' bibliographic information.
- **Keep it Simple** Don't try to assess too many learning outcomes at once! We only had 3, which still resulted in a lesson plan that packed too many things into too little time and a booklet that the majority of students had difficulty completing in class.
- **Future Improvements** In the next round, we will break the lesson plan into smaller chunks, with instructional responsibilities shared between librarians and faculty.

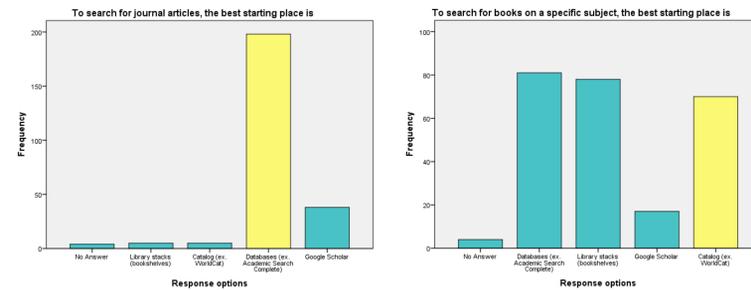
Quantitative Data – Numb3r N3rds FTW

Five post-test questions were designed to gather quantitative data and gauge student understanding of concepts covered in research instruction sessions:

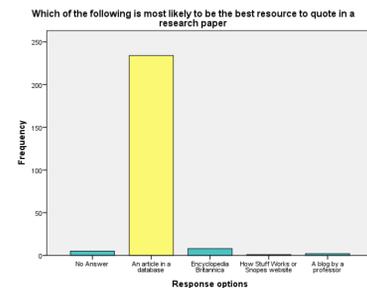
- Select the research question from the following example that, in your opinion, would set you up most successfully for completing a five-page paper.



- To search for journal articles, the best starting place is...
- To search for books on a specific subject, the best starting place is...



- True/False: If you need research help, you should contact Ask a Librarian.
- Which of the following is most likely to be the best resource to quote in a research paper?

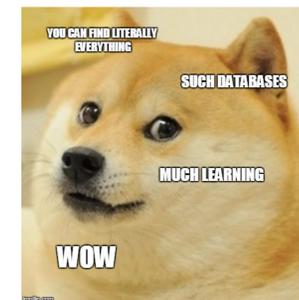


Qualitative Data – For the Word Nerds

Several booklet pages included questions asking students to reflect on what they were doing and learning. Two post-test questions were similarly designed to gather even more qualitative data and to gauge student understanding of concepts covered in research instruction sessions:



Word cloud of ENGL 102 students' booklet responses to the question "Reflect on the different databases you have explored. How would you describe the differences among the databases? Explain your understanding of the differences among the databases."



"I am reading student papers right now, and I have to say that most of them are using much better sources than in the past. And I used to deal with students saying they couldn't find ANY sources – not this semester."

- Email from a participating ENGL 102 professor, 5/5/2016

Word cloud of ENGL 102 students' post-test responses to the question "In the database(s) you searched, what features did you find the most helpful/useful?"



Everything is Awesome AKA More Lessons Learned and Best Practices

- **Student Learning** Even when students did not identify the best answer for a post-test question, they often picked a good "wrong" answer.
- **Leading a Team & Project Management** Put together a large team with diverse strengths and interests; communicate early and often with your team; don't call any more meetings than is absolutely necessary; and don't be afraid to delegate!
- **Deviate as Needed** If the circumstances call for it, don't be afraid to stray from the plan to address more immediate needs. In one section, we noticed the students were having difficulty brainstorming keywords; we dropped the study's lesson plan for the second session in favor of an in-depth exploration of keywords. It was immensely valuable for the students and a worthwhile reason to sacrifice data.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Belanger, J., Bliquez, R., & Mondal, S. (2012). Developing a collaborative faculty-librarian information literacy assessment project. *Library Review*, 61(2), 68-91. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/00344251211220726>

"we were able to make significant changes both to the way we taught our sessions, and to the assessment instruments we used to gather information from students....We were also able to use this assessment and feedback information to strengthen further the relationship between faculty and librarians" (p. 75).

"The ongoing dialogue opened up with the faculty as a result of this assessment process led to more authentic IL assessment and ongoing changes to instruction and class assignments" (p. 79).

Brown, C. P., & Kingsley-Wilson, B. (2010). Assessing organically: Turning an assignment into an assessment. *Reference Services Review*, 38(4), 536-556. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/030587324101960719>

"The authors wanted to test journalism students in as realistic a manner as possible, so they chose the authentic assessment model" (p. 545).

"The unexpected strength in the results was that most students seem to have mastered the skill of 'determining the nature and extent of information needed', demonstrating that they are able to ask strong, important questions that news consumers would care about" (p. 550).

Oakleaf, M. (2008). Dangers and opportunities: A conceptual map of information literacy assessment approaches. *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 8(3), 233-253. doi:10.1353/pla.0.0101

"In addition to educational and motivational theories, performance assessment is grounded in 'assessment for learning' theories...[which] suggests that 'good teaching is inseparable from good assessing,' and assessment should be thought of...as a 'primary means' of learning that requires the use of meaningful and complex assessment assignments" (p. 241).

"Rubrics are often employed when educators must judge the quality of performances or constructed-response items, and they can be used across a broad range of subjects" (p. 245).

Schilling, K., & Applegate, R. (2012). Best methods for evaluating educational impact: A comparison of the efficacy of commonly used measures of library instruction. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, 100(4), 258-269. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3163/1536-5026.100.4.007>

"Quality educational program evaluation includes both quantitative and qualitative measures" (p. 258).

"common affective measures, like questionnaires and self-reporting skills surveys, cannot substitute as reliable measures of skills and knowledge. The challenge becomes to implement a balanced approach" (p. 265).

"Although every assessment evaluation measure has value, retention of learning is evidenced most efficaciously through demonstrated skills that are assessed longitudinally" (p. 266).

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