A PLACE CALLED THE PLATEAU: Assessing the Short- and Long-Term Impacts of Information Literacy Instruction

At Temple University Libraries, we reach a large number of students through integration in the General Education program. This poster reports on our rubric-based assessment of student papers in a GenEd American Studies course. We explored whether students performed better on information literacy outcomes after receiving a brief library workshop, and looked for differences between students who did and did not receive prior library instruction.

INQUIRY QUESTIONS

We examined student papers from Philadelphia Arts and Culture, a GenEd American Studies course that enrolls students from all majors at all levels. Students complete the same research assignment three times during the semester, tending to display improvement between the first and second assignments, but hitting a plateau between the second and third. We assessed student work completed both before and after an intervention to look for differences in application of information literacy skills.

Our central research question was:

Did students use sources differently after attending a library workshop?

We were also curious about students’ retention of information literacy skills. TU librarians teach two workshops to every section of Analytical Reading and Writing (AR&W), which is a required GenEd course that nearly all undergraduate students take. We sought to learn more about students’ ability to recall and apply skills learned in those library workshops to their later coursework by examining students’ course-taking behaviors and looking for differences between students who had and had not taken AR&W.

Our secondary research question was:

Did students retain IL skills gained in previous library workshops?

While it can be tricky to measure impact after time has elapsed, we hoped to at least look for correlations that may be worthy of further exploration.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Rubric adapted with permission from Gioulis Library Reference and Instruction Department. “Information Literacy in Student Writing Rubric and Codebook.” Northfield, MN: Carleton College. 2012.

Did students use sources differently after attending a library workshop?

Thirty students consented to participate in the study. Totaling both raters’ scores across 30 sets of papers, Selection declined overall by 2 points, Integration improved by 8 points, and Attribution improved by 4 points. Below, we have summarized the changes between PEX #2 and #3 in each rubric criterion.

TIMELINE AND METHODS

The Philadelphia Experience (PEX) Lab Report assignment requires students to select an artifact, artwork, historic site, or building with a significant connection to the city, and write a 3-5 research paper combining their observations with arguments about the object’s cultural significance. In between the second and third assignment deadlines, students attended a brief, 20-minute library workshop that addressed the three criteria we were interested in evaluating.

FINDINGS

SELECTION

Half of the students in the study had previously taken AR&W. Students who took AR&W improved slightly in Selection and Attribution, but stayed the same in Integration.

INTEGRATION

For those who did not take AR&W, there was no improvement in Selection or Attribution, but Integration improved.

ATTRIBUTION

Overall, students who had taken AR&W scored a total of 10 points higher than those who did not, though there were improvements and declines in both groups.

NEXT STEPS

For future development of this project, we will:

• experiment with different delivery formats for the workshop. Research suggests that deeper integration of librarians leads to greater student learning. Are 20 minutes enough?
• interview students about their experience and attitudes. Did it make a difference that PEX #3 was due during exam week?
• spend more time on rubric norming, in order to improve intercoder reliability.
• perform statistical analysis of our data, in addition to reviewing summary findings.