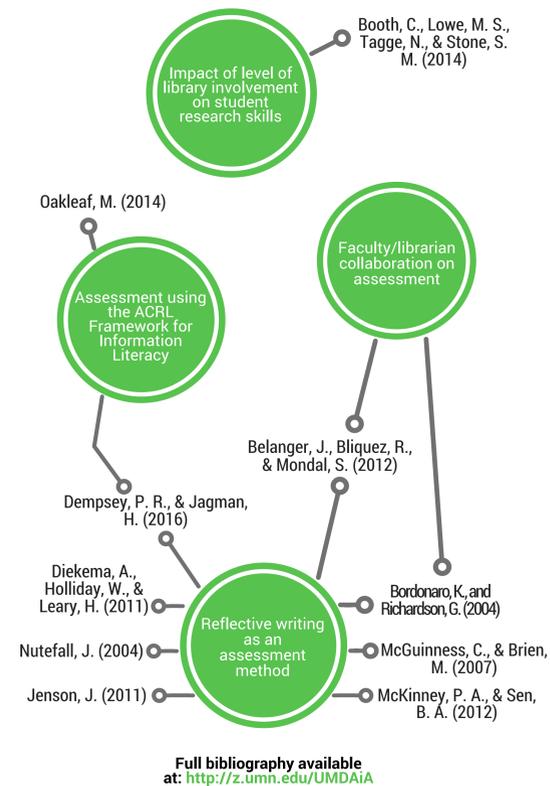# A Collaboration Toward Persistence:
The Impact of Library Instruction on First-Year Writers

Kim Pittman, Samantha DeVilbiss, Patrick Eidsmo, Elizabethada Wright

KATHRYN A. MARTIN
LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA DULUTH
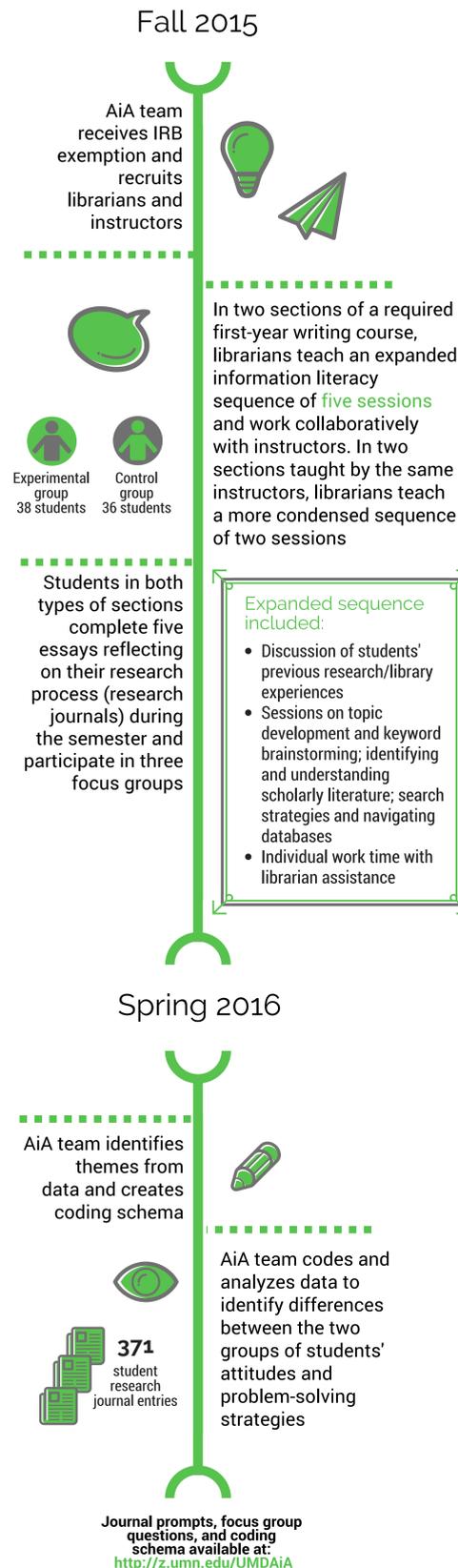Driven to Discover

Research Question

Will expanded library involvement in a required first-year writing course help students develop increased persistence and problem-solving skills when conducting research?

Literature Review

- Impact of level of library involvement on student research skills
- Booth, C., Lowe, M. S., Tagge, N., & Stone, S. M. (2014)
- Oakleaf, M. (2014)
- Faculty/librarian collaboration on assessment
- Assessment using the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy
- Belanger, J., Bliquez, R., & Mondal, S. (2012)
- Dempsey, P. R., & Jagman, H. (2016)
- Diekema, A., Holliday, W., & Leary, H. (2011)
- Reflective writing as an assessment method
- Bordonaro, K., and Richardson, G. (2004)
- Nutefall, J. (2004)
- McGuinness, C., & Brien, M. (2007)
- Jenson, J. (2011)
- McKinney, P. A., & Sen, B. A. (2012)

Full bibliography available at: http://z.umn.edu/UMDAiA

This project is part of the program "Assessment in Action: Academic Libraries and Student Success" which is undertaken by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in partnership with the Association for Institutional Research and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. The program, a cornerstone of ACRL's Value of Academic Libraries initiative, is made possible by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Methods

Fall 2015

AiA team receives IRB exemption and recruits librarians and instructors

Experimental group 38 students
Control group 36 students

In two sections of a required first-year writing course, librarians teach an expanded information literacy sequence of five sessions and work collaboratively with instructors. In two sections taught by the same instructors, librarians teach a more condensed sequence of two sessions

Students in both types of sections complete five essays reflecting on their research process (research journals) during the semester and participate in three focus groups

Expanded sequence included:
- Discussion of students' previous research/library experiences
- Sessions on topic development and keyword brainstorming; identifying and understanding scholarly literature; search strategies and navigating databases
- Individual work time with librarian assistance

Spring 2016

AiA team identifies themes from data and creates coding schema

AiA team codes and analyzes data to identify differences between the two groups of students' attitudes and problem-solving strategies

371 student research journal entries

Journal prompts, focus group questions, and coding schema available at: http://z.umn.edu/UMDAiA
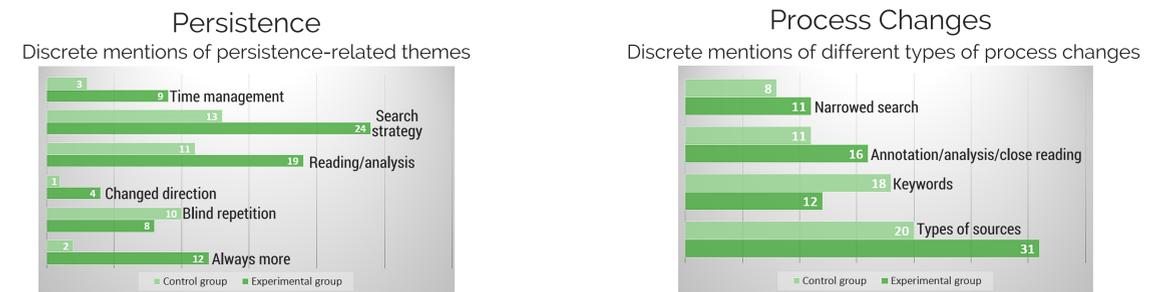
Results

Focus Groups
Comments on how their persistence has changed since high school

"From high school...if I didn't find something to research right away I'd be like, "Whatever, I'm not going to do that topic anymore." And now, it's not the same...My topics started to get harder and harder to find things, but I was still, like, pushing through, because I know that there's going to be information about it and I'm passionate about it."

"When you get shot down and you can't find an article, you kind of gotta keep looking, like, you can't just not turn it in, like in high school...with college, you're going to get a lot of points off, so you kind of have to force yourself to keep going."

Adjectives used to describe college research experiences

Fast Difficult Lengthy Irritating
Accurate Tedious
Not easy **Overwhelming**
Frustrating Productive Convenient
Credible Time-consuming **Hard**

Research Journals

Discrete mentions of themes in research journals
- Process changes: 64 / 79
- Persistence: 33 / 48
- Outlook changes: 19 / 26
- Asking for help: 16 / 24

Control group | Experimental group

Percentage of students with discrete mentions of each theme
- Process changes: 86 / 82
- Persistence: 61 / 58
- Outlook changes: 44 / 50
- Asking for help: 25 / 42

Control group | Experimental group

Persistence
Discrete mentions of persistence-related themes
- Time management: 3 / 9
- Search strategy: 13 / 24
- Reading/analysis: 11 / 19
- Changed direction: 1 / 4
- Blind repetition: 10
- Always more: 2 / 12

Control group | Experimental group

Process Changes
Discrete mentions of different types of process changes
- Narrowed search: 8 / 11
- Annotation/analysis/close reading: 11 / 16
- Keywords: 12 / 18
- Types of sources: 20 / 31

Control group | Experimental group

Time management
Initially, I wanted to kind of rush through my research...But, once I started to get further along, I realized that rushing it would do me no good and that I needed to take my time in order to properly research the topic...

Reading/analysis
I learned that it takes a long time to find sources that will be beneficial to my paper and it's important to be patient and read through multiple articles before choosing the ones I'm going to use.

Blind repetition
I just continued my search. What else could I do?

Always more
Before, I would stop researching after I got what I needed, but now I continue to read things throughout the whole project to see if I can gain any more knowledge on my topic.

Narrowed search
What worked when I was doing my research was first laying out the 3 key points that I wanted to address in my paper and then looked for articles ...on that topic. It helped weed out all the extra information that seemed to get in the way...

Types of sources
At the beginning of the year, I cannot really say that I had any specific research process; it mainly consisted of Google searches. Now, I have the capability of utilizing library databases and using different techniques to narrow my search options for ultimate efficiency.

Annotation/analysis/close reading
The one thing that worked effectively while I researched was digging into articles and actually reading them instead of taking them at title.

Conclusion & Recommendations

While a slightly higher percentage of students in the control group wrote about persistence and research process changes, research journals from the experimental group included more discrete mentions of persistence and process changes.

Process changes demonstrated by students in the control group help identify what we are addressing effectively in our existing model of library instruction: helping students utilize a wider scope of sources and generate effective keywords for searching.

Students who received additional library instruction:
- Employed more concrete strategies related to persistence, including revising searches, reading and analyzing sources, managing their time, and changing their research questions, rather than merely repeating searches
- Demonstrated an "always more" mindset more frequently, writing about a willingness to continue researching in order to learn more throughout the duration of their project
- Wrote about asking for help more frequently
- Wrote about experiencing a positive change in feelings about research (outlook changes) more frequently

Next steps:
- Include a larger sample size and explore links between students' attitudes and research skills in future research
- Continue to experiment with timing, content, and amount of library instruction in first-year writing courses
- Partner with writing instructors to incorporate teaching strategies that encourage students to develop an "always more" mindset and effective methods for persisting in the research process