Evaluating Information Literacy in First-Year Writing: What We Are Learning

John Carroll University, OH 44118
Nevin Mayer, MSLS    Todd Bruce, Ph.D.   Tom Pace, Ph.D.

Do students apply what we are teaching them about information literacy in first-year writing?

The Sample
The Assessment Office had access to 240 student research papers from 17 different sections of EN 125, the introductory writing course. The sample for this work was taken from six sections selected at random. A condition of the random selection was that it represent 2 sections that had received library intervention (sections 61 & 65) and 4 sections that had not. Five student research samples were selected at random from each of the six identified sections for a total of 30 writing samples.

Process & Method
NM designed a rubric with a library intern from Kent State University. The rubric was
• Normed by NM and the intern, using 18 papers
• Reviewed by the University Integrated Core Committee
• Normed again by the Writing Assessment Team
• Used by the writing team to evaluate 240 papers

For the above sample, the librarians used the same rubric, but did not form one cohesive team.

Observations
The librarians noted that students are learning to
• Develop strategic searches of library resources
• Identify appropriate source types for developing arguments
• Present arguments based on research, data, and expert opinion
• Discover a cogent argument in a theme
• Demonstrate ethical use of sources

Contact: Nevin Mayer, Instruction Coordinator, John Carroll U. mayer@jcu.edu – 216.397.3055

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.

Library assessment scores

Average per course chart showing how different evaluation teams scored student outcomes

Statistical Analysis
Our data are suggestive that there is some impact of having a library session. Based on a Welch two sample t-test, there is a statistically significant difference (p<0.001). The difference is 0.34 (with a 95% confidence interval of the true difference lying between 0.16 and 0.52). However, we’re cautious about this finding because of how poor our inter-rater scores are (see below).

Since our data are ordinal, we calculated Cohen’s kappa twice comparing NM (English Liaison) scores to the librarian scores and to the writing team’s scores. NM and the librarians had k = 0.0938 (p =0.07). NM and the writing team had k = 0.214 (p < 0.001). Using Landis and Koch’s interpretation of these numbers, NM had only slight agreement with the librarians and are very close to the border between slight and fair with the writing team.

Conclusion & Recommendation
Despite poor inter-rater scores, there were some noteworthy similarities in the scores of both evaluation teams. For example, most overall scores were under expectation (less than score of 3). Next evaluation cycle we will
• Do a better job of norming the Rubric
• Create an assessment team of both writing instructors and librarians
• Examine the actual assignments given by the instructors
• Study the entire assignment sequence (proposal, annotated bibliography, and paper)

Source