Small Steps: Alternative Teaching Models & Student Information Literacy Development

Research Question

Which mode of information literacy (IL) instruction is most effective in helping students achieve the University’s “Critical Reflection” outcome?

Overview

Fall Semester 2013

Control Group

Experimental Group

Background

The basis for the project is educational psychologist Barak Rosenshine’s “Small steps” approach to teaching new material and cognitive psychologist Michelle Miller’s work on attention.

Previous library-related studies have explored alternative modes of IL instruction ranging from two sessions to full embedment. Results for this AiA project were similar to those in studies by Gilbert, Bean & Thomas, Bowler & Street, and Gandhi.

We expected Experimental Group to

- Use more library resources
- Use a greater variety of sources
- Use more credible sources
- More detailed reflections
Data from the *citation analysis* indicates that students receiving multiple IL sessions made greater use of library resources.

80% of multi session students used library resources compared to 53% in one shot sessions.

**Findings**

“Instead of googling my topic I used various online databases of scholarly sources.”

**Content analysis** of student reflection surveys show that students receiving multi session IL reported using a greater number of search strategies to access a greater variety of sources.

“I already use the skills when researching materials for other classes.”
Summary of Results

Classroom faculty at Pacific Lutheran University express concern about the type & quality of sources students cite in research projects.

Evidence from our research supports the idea that a series of shorter IL instruction sessions is more beneficial for student learning than one long session.

The multi session model provides students additional opportunities to interact with new concepts related to the research process, such as criteria for source evaluation, source types, and search strategies.

Development of these foundational skills during First Year Experience Program (FYEP) courses is likely to result in greater student confidence and positively influence upper-level course research. Further investigation into this claim is needed.

Next Steps

- **Recruit additional FYEP faculty** to take part in the multi session model of instruction.
- Work with the FYEP faculty to **develop a set of common elements** for final research assignments.
- **Revise assessment design** to integrate a more effective pre-test tool to gauge students’ initial IL skills.

More Details

Additional information on the project, including a complete bibliography, is available at:

http://findit.library.plu.edu/aia

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.