

UW Faculty Perceptions of Undergraduate Research Skills

What? About UW Libraries

The University of Washington Libraries is constantly striving to improve its services, collections, and facilities in order to both maintain and extend its reputation as a leading academic library. Through the work of the Teaching and Learning Group, the UW Libraries is regularly implementing and assessing new and improved methods of library instruction.

UW Libraries by the Numbers:

- 17 libraries
- 178 librarians and professional staff + 157 support staff
- 1,560 workshops, orientations, + consultations reaching 26,000 students each year

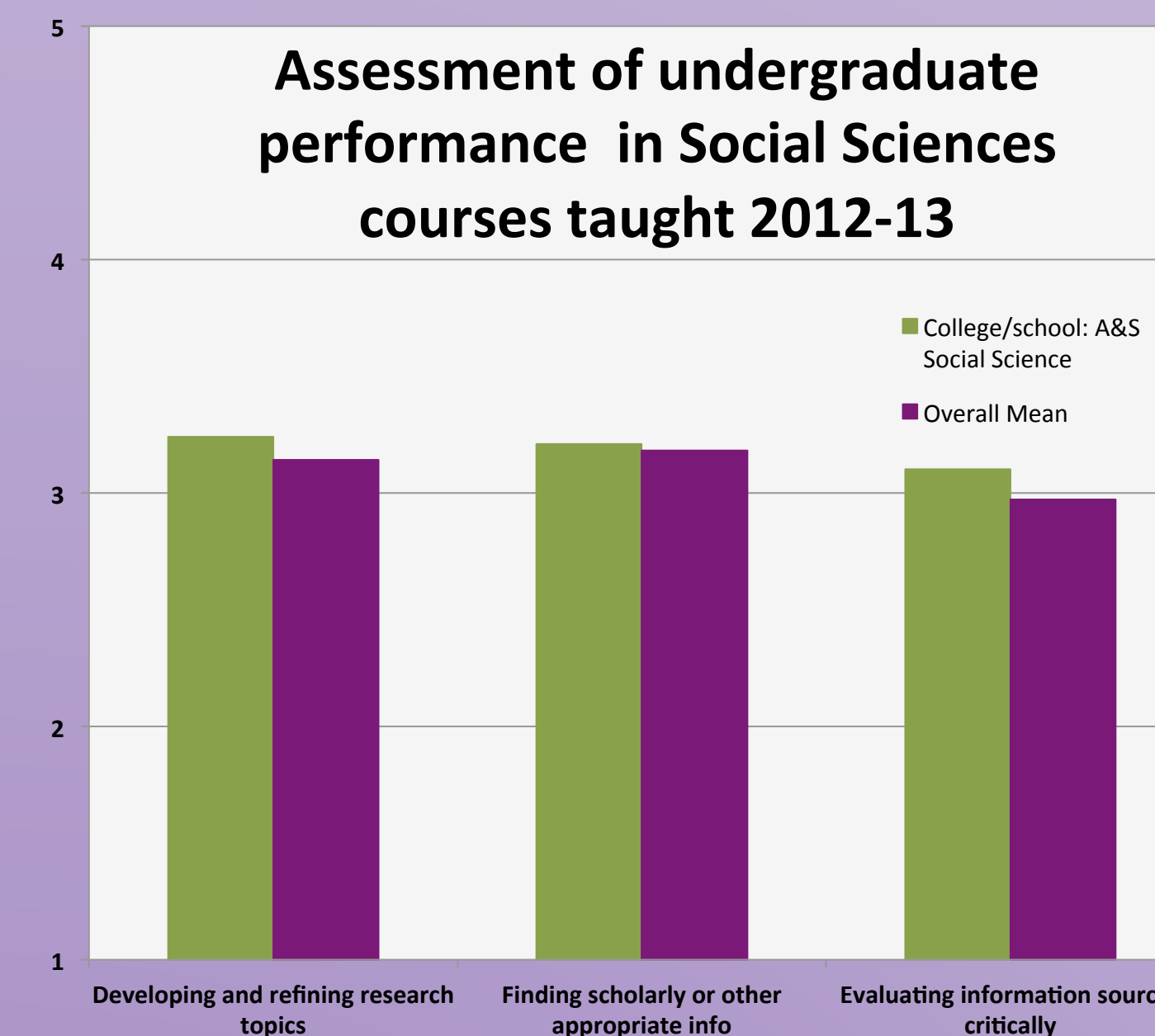
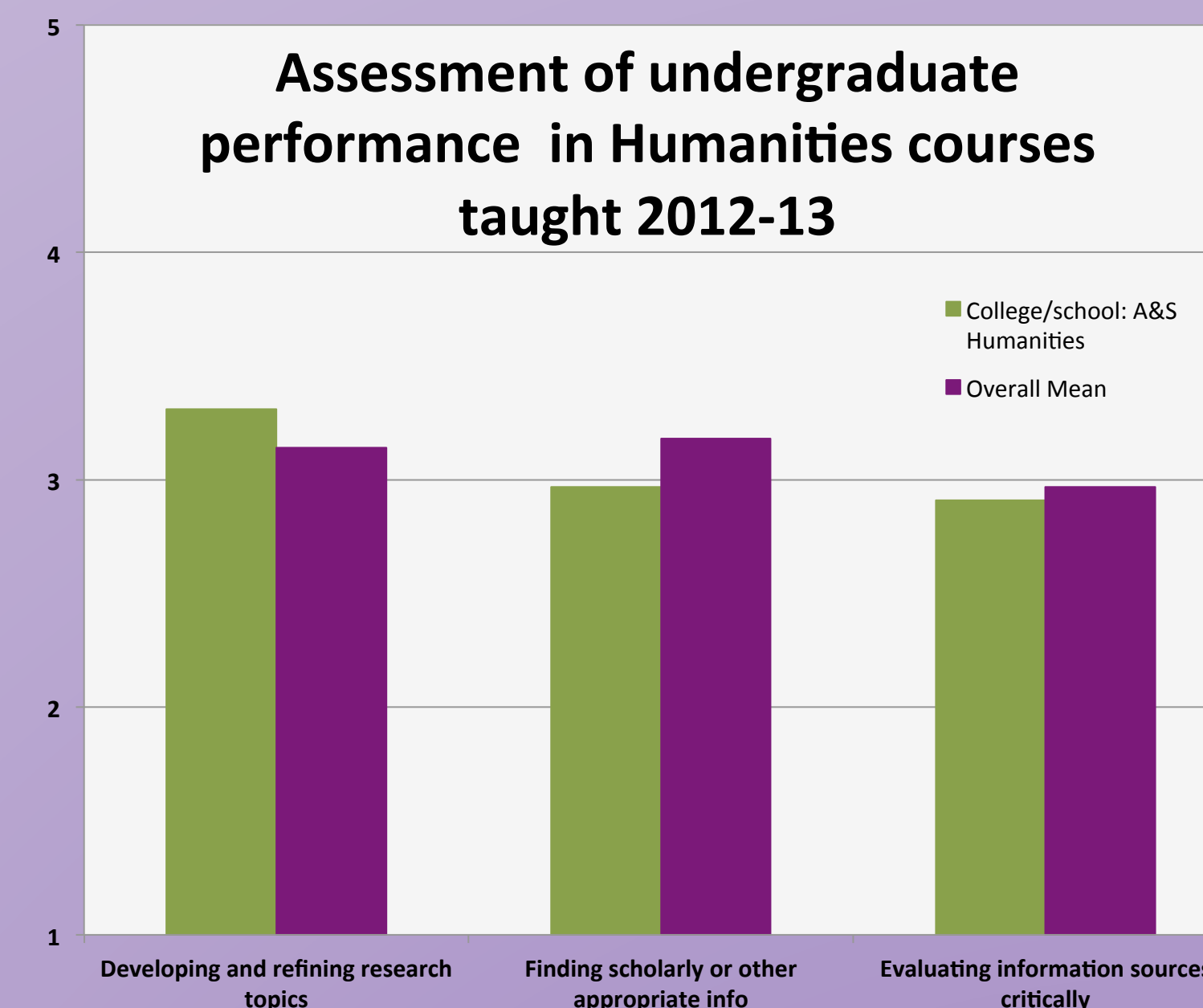
“The students really didn’t know how to distinguish between reliable academic research and other kinds of research.” – Humanities faculty member

“They aren’t very good at finding scholarly or other appropriate info- almost all my students until this quarter- wouldn’t really go beyond Google... that’s not terrible but you also want some other tools.” – Sciences faculty member

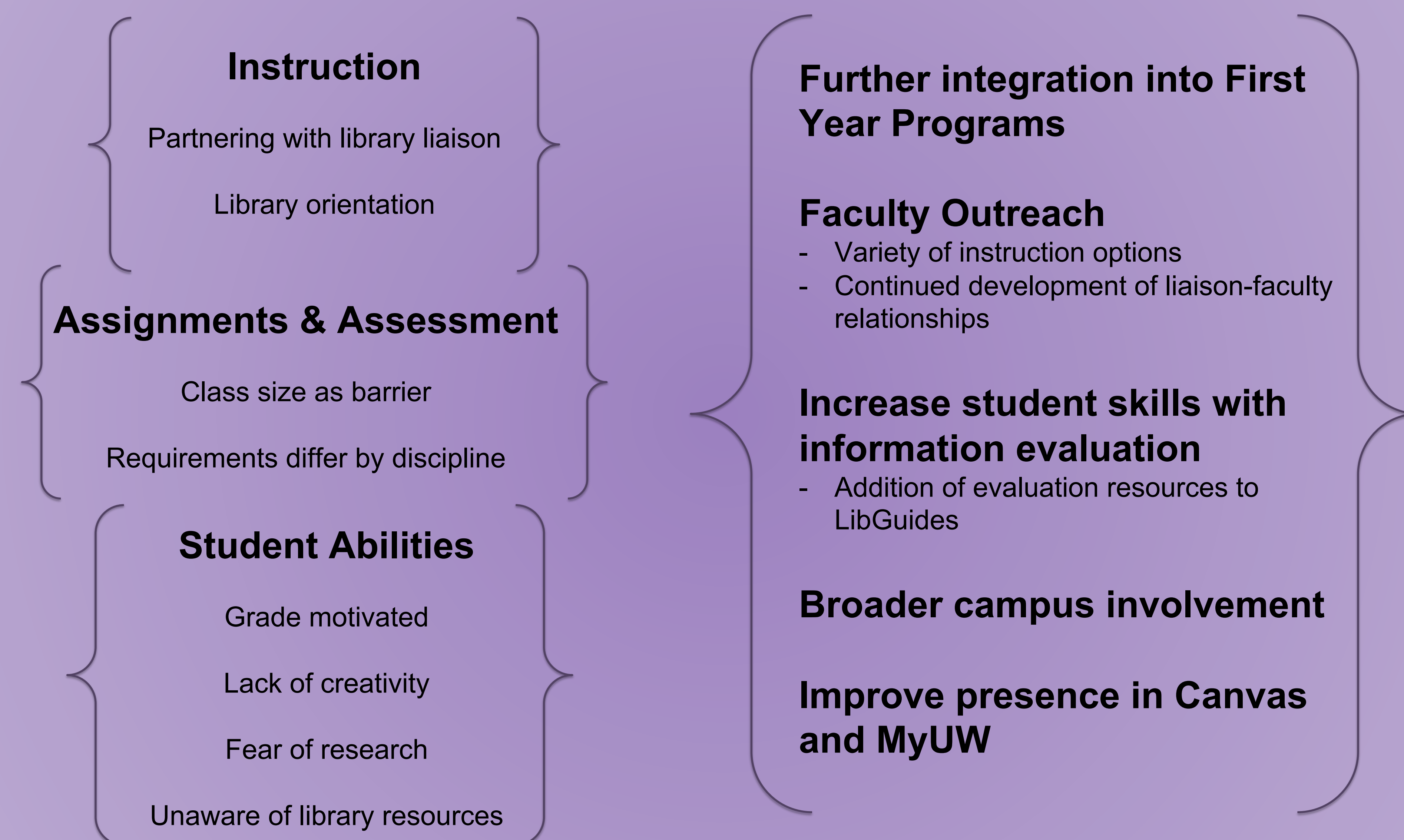
Why? The Research Need

Results from the 2013 Triennial Survey revealed a slight drop in faculty perception of their students’ information literacy skills: to develop and refine research topics, find appropriate and then critically evaluate those information sources. Using the existing research in the field of faculty perceptions of information literacy, we have built upon the current knowledge by focusing our research on faculty members who teach undergraduate students at the University of Washington Seattle campus.

What is your assessment of undergrad performance in courses you taught this year?	Mean	
	2013	2010
Developing and refining research topics	3.14	3.21
Finding scholarly or other appropriate info	3.18	3.40
Evaluating information sources critically	2.97	3.09



What’s Next? Findings and Recommendations for UW Libraries



How? Methods

This study involved in-person faculty interviews that took place on the University of Washington Seattle campus. To identify faculty members with a potential interest in being interviewed we worked with the Teaching and Learning Group to identify UW liaison librarians who had established working relationships with several faculty members.

We coded the interviews using four different topics:

- Instruction
- Student abilities
- Research assignments and assessment
- Important research skills

“I think they need to know the difference between primary and secondary research and they need to be able to understand how to assess sources and how to use evidence to test arguments.” – Social Sciences faculty member

“Because they don’t use print sources, they don’t know what process a work of print goes through- the editorial, the legal- they don’t realize those are slightly more reliable.” – Humanities faculty member

Who? Faculty Interviews

- 6 Humanities faculty members
- 5 Social Sciences faculty members
- 2 Sciences faculty members

The faculty participants in our survey were contacted based on lists provided by selected liaison librarians.

Sixteen liaisons provided sixty-five faculty names, thirteen of whom agreed to participate in our survey.

Our faculty interviewees represent the following departments: Astronomy, English, Geography, History, Math, Political Science, Psychology, Slavic Languages, Sociology, and Spanish.

Faculty-Selected Important Research Skills

Humanities

- Evaluating available sources
- Understanding use of sources
- Knowing how to formulate a question
- Understanding jargon
- How to manage data
- Critical thinking skills

Social Sciences

- Working with data
- Evaluating information
- Understanding the research process

Sciences

- Understanding the different definitions of conceptions of ideas
- Finding resources in the research literature
- Knowing how to work with discipline-specific literature