

UW Libraries and the Greater Western Library Alliance: Student Learning Impact Study

Background

UW Libraries provides library research workshops to first year students through the Expository Writing Program and the First Year Interest Group courses. These sessions are taught by librarians and graduate students. Workshops are designed around two-three student learning outcomes. Session themes include:

- Generating research topics and keywords
- Research question development
- Finding relevant sources
- Evaluating sources
- Citation management tools.



Research Questions

Over the past 10 years, there has been an increased focus on assessment and effort to define the role of the academic library in the success of an institution. The Greater Western Library Alliance has formed a research body of 20 institutions to investigate the following questions related to the impact of libraries on student achievement. The three-year project is in its pilot phase, with all institutions gathering data and creating norms for comparison. As part of a local pilot project, UW has gathered data from fall quarter 2013 and the academic year 2014-2015 to compare students' academic performance and retention. This project investigates the following research questions:

1. What effect does library instruction have on the retention of first-year college students?
2. What is the impact of specific library instruction methods on the retention of first-year college students?
3. What effect does library instruction have on the academic success of first-year college students?
4. What is the impact of specific library instruction methods on the academic success of first-year college students?

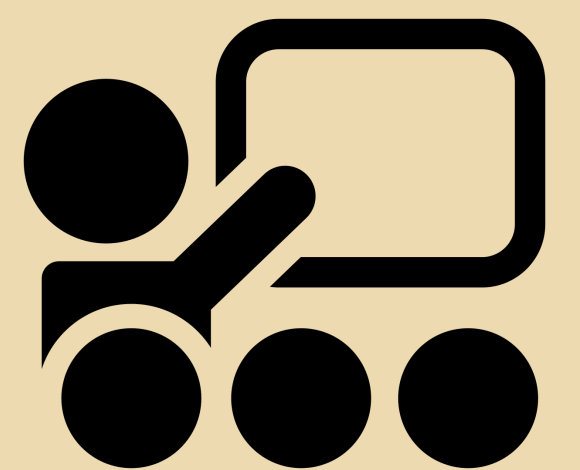
Methodology

For the pilot phase of the project, we gathered data from each library instruction session provided to the Expository Writing program for the academic year 2014-2015, including the types of instruction the students received. We tracked active learning techniques, flipped classroom design, and research assignment design to further explore the impact of specific types of library instruction. To determine the impact of these sessions on student success, we accessed anonymized student data through the UW Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW), and cross-referenced retention and GPA data for students who had a library instruction session versus those who did not.



Graduate Assistant, Marisa Petrich, leads a session for EWP students.

**250+ Library
Instruction
Sessions**



**5,500+
Students**



**Flipped instruction,
Active learning,
Assignment
design, Lecture,
Online tutorials,
and more!**



FALL 2013

FALL 2014

WINTER 2015

SPRING 2015

Findings

Results from our collaboration with UW EDW and the initial data analysis have yielded positive and interesting insights into the impact of library instruction interventions on the success of first-year students at the UW.

RETENTION

The data we collected indicates a correlation between students enrolled in classes that receive library instruction and those who remain at the university. These findings are consistent with our literature review of library impact studies, as well as the UW's Office of Educational Assessment 2014 report on undergraduate retention and graduation, which shows that intentional contact between faculty or staff and students improves retention.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

While our data analysis across all courses did not show a noticeable difference in the achievement of students who were enrolled in classes that received library interventions versus those who were not, trends emerged as we narrowed our scope to consider specific courses.

Course sections for **English 131** make up a significant portion of the instruction data we collected for Fall 2013 and Fall 2014, with penetration rates of 43%-57%. Among these students, average grades rose .2 on a 4.0 scale between the two quarters and years observed. This increase in achievement for students receiving library instruction in English 131 warrants further investigation as evidence of the library's impact on student success.



Recommendations and Next Steps

Student achievement and retention are complex concepts that are not easily evaluated in terms of narrow, specific interventions. Based on our analysis of the literature and the data we've collected this year, we recommend the following steps for further assessing the UW Libraries Teaching and Learning Program:

- Shifting focus from retention to assessing students' academic achievement, which is more clearly mapped to library interventions. Considering academic achievement as it pertains to specific courses will also uncover opportunities for growth and focus instruction efforts where they have the most potential for impact.
- This data represents only one component of undergraduate students' academic success, thus further qualitative investigation (via focus groups, satisfaction surveys, or a library impact map) is needed.
- A more granular look at specific types of library instruction (consultation, online course integration, and library workshop) will uncover effective intervention methods and inform best practices.



Graduate Assistant, Alaina Bull, leads a library session for EWP students.

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