

Guarini Library Information Literacy Survey 2007-2009 Survey Report

Attendance at Prior Sessions

Of the 924 students who answered this question, 451 (48.8%) had never attended a library orientation. Of the 473 students (51.2%) who attended a prior session, 255 (53.9%) had attended one prior session. 114 (24.1%) had attended two prior sessions, and 55 (11.6%) had attended three prior sessions. 49 students (10.4%) attended four or more prior sessions. See Figure 1.

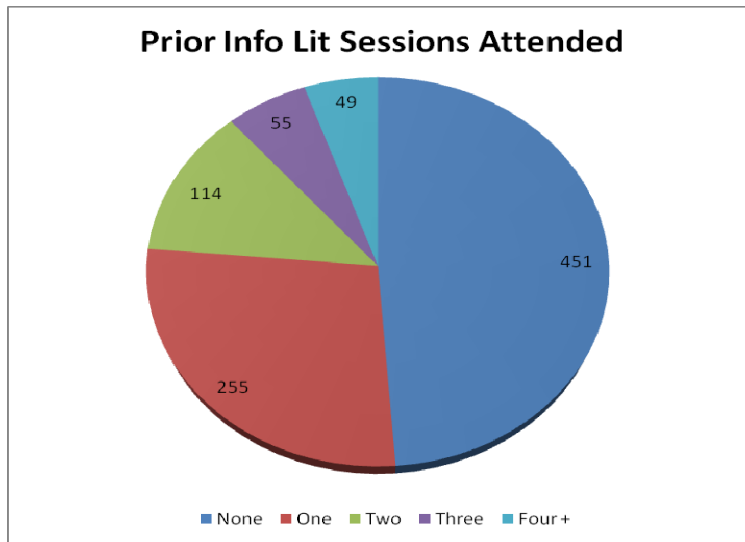


Figure 1

Learning

Students were asked to report if they had learned something new as a result of the session. Of the 934 students who answered this question, 897 (96%) said yes. 23 students said they had not learned anything and 14 students weren't sure. See Figure 2.

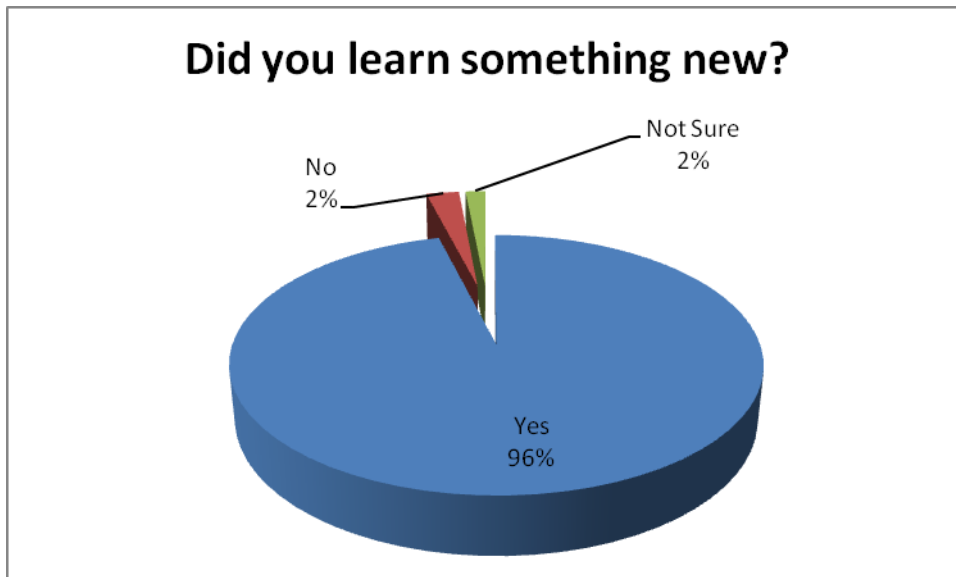


Figure 2

What They Learned

The next question required students to report what they had learned. 870 students (92.4%) answered this question and listed 1,342 items learned. These were placed into individual categories, a time-consuming procedure which yielded results fairly similar to those of the first survey. Students said they learned about library resources and services and acquired new skills including how to search and do research. The frequency distribution below details items learned. As in the first survey, databases, OSCAR and finding books, and search strategies were the items most frequently mentioned. The category General which appeared in the first survey was not used in this survey. Instead the individual components within it have been listed. See Table 1 below.

What They Learned

Items Learned	Times Mentioned
Databases including database features	449
OSCAR/Books	159
Search Strategies	110
Library web site/ virtual library / online library / library online	69
How to find articles	64
Citation, APA style/format, citation guides, how to cite	62
how to do research/how to search	61
New web sites/ online resources / search engines	51
How to find periodicals/journals	41
Using Google more effectively	39
QandA NJ and getting help online	34
Specific source types	28
VALE/Reciprocal Borrowing/ Interlibrary loan	26
Library policies, procedures, layout, etc.	21
Other	20
How to use the library	15
Access information more quickly and effectively	14
Learned to find references/sources/resources	14
Lesson Plans, Curriculum Materials, Teachers Resources	12
Periodicals List A to Z	12
Specific topics, not library related	12
Learned a lot, too much, many things, lots of stuff, etc	7
EZ Search	4
Library Blog	4
Specific Resources	4
Remote access	4
Peer Review	3
Differences between pdf and html	3

Table 1

The most frequently mentioned item was databases, reported by 449 students (51.5%). While many students

made general statements about learning to use databases, 206 students (23.7%) mentioned 24 specific databases shown below. Students also mentioned learning to use database features including Article Linker, folders, and how to save, email and print articles. One student mentioned learning how to use advanced search and another mentioned learning to sort results by journal title. See Table 2 below.

Databases Mentioned

Database Name	Times Mentioned
Academic Search Premier/EBSCOHost	40
Lexis Nexis	31
PsycArticles/PsycINFO	22
Wilson OmniFile	22
ProQuest	18
CINAHL	14
Facts on File	6
Literature Resource Center	6
Education Full Text	6
Health and Wellness Resource Center	6
Business Source Premier	5
WorldCAT	5
Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center	5
Medline	4
ACM Digital Library	2
Bloom's Literary Reference Center	2
CountryWatch	2
Ethnic Newswatch	2
United Streaming	2
Kraus Curriculum Collection	2
Business & Company Resource Center	1
Alt Healthwatch	1
Professional Development Collection	1
Praeger Security	1

Table 2

159 students (18.3%) said they learned how to use Oscar, the library catalog, or how to find books using OSCAR and on the shelves using call numbers. This was also the #2 item in the first survey period.

110 students (12.6%) mentioned learning specific search strategies including Boolean logic, truncation, wild cards, using quotation marks to search for phrases, the differences between keyword and subject searching, using the thesaurus, learning how to make a search broader and narrower and limiting search results. This was the 4th category in the first survey, but would have also been the 3rd if the general category had been broken down into individual components.

69 students (7.9%) said they learned how to use the library's web site, homepage or the online library, library online, virtual library or library system. Only 30 students reported this on the first survey.

64 students (7.4%) said they learned how to find articles but did not mention databases. They reported learning how to research articles, how to find articles from long ago, how to search for articles and also mentioned learning to find peer-reviewed articles and full-text articles. 52 students reported learning this in the first survey.

62 students (7.1%) said they learned about citation, how to cite, where to find citations, APA/MLA style and format and where to get help citing. This was a marked increase from the first survey, in which only 22 students reported learning about citation styles.

61 students (7.0%) said they learned how to search or to do research. 34 of these said they learned how to search for or look up information and 27 said they learned how to do research and expressed this in several ways including “make a good research” “research the right way” and “research in a proper direction.” Because these items were reported slightly differently in the first survey, a comparison is not possible.

51 students (5.9%) reported learning about new web sites, online resources and search engines that would help them with their research. It is quite likely that they were referring to databases, but because they did not use that word, responses were placed in this category. They used several words to describe these resources including research sites, library sites, library tools, library sources, business sites, reliable sites and research engines. This category did not appear in the first survey.

41 students (4.7%) said they learned to find, use, and search for periodicals and journals both in print and online. Several students mentioned learning about peer-reviewed journals and electronic journals. In the first survey, journals and articles were reported together so a comparison is not possible.

39 students (4.5%) said they learned how to use Google more effectively and cited several Google products including Google News, Google Alerts, Google Scholar and Advanced Search. A few students said they learned the differences between Google and subscription databases. This category did not exist in the first survey because Google was only mentioned a few times.

34 students (3.9%) mentioned QandA NJ, chatting with a librarian or getting help online from a librarian. This category also did not exist in the first survey since QandA NJ was only mentioned a few times.

26 students (3.0%) learned about VALE Reciprocal Borrowing and interlibrary loan. This item was not mentioned enough times in the first survey to warrant its own category.

26 students (3.0%) mentioned specific types of sources including children’s books, theses, biographies, government documents, history materials, primary sources, company information and profiles, nursing resources, ERIC documents, social science topics, newspaper clippings, poetry, online books, newspaper archives and videos.

21 students (2.4%) mentioned learning about the library’s layout including what to find on each floor, library functions, library procedures, hours and library services. This was mentioned 23 times in the first survey.

20 students’ (2.3%) responses were placed into a category labeled Other because they were only mentioned once, resisted classification or were vague and hard to understand. Items mentioned only once were: icons that were unfamiliar, color copiers, RSS feeds, embargo periods for journals, having to pay for articles through APA.org and the ability to buy books online through the university book store. Items that were difficult to classify or could not be understood included: Mr. Smith, “Fred developed my thesis topic, for which I am very grateful!” the information literacy, formats to follow, “you can check newspapers etc in website

before going on the floors to check”, “how to use different searches besides OSCAR”, “There is something more to use than Google & ProQuest”, about the clear conversation, Reference, net, web navigation, period (web) and “how to use the new interface.” The Other category contained 29 items in the first survey.

15 students (1.7%) reported that they had learned how to use the library. In the first survey, 7 students reported learning how to use the library.

14 students (1.6%) said they learned how to get, find or access information more quickly, more effectively, on specific topics, or from sources other than Google. 14 students (1.6%) said they learned how to find references, sources or new resources but didn’t elaborate so it is hard to know exactly what they meant. More students used these terms in the first survey: 41 as opposed to 28 in this period.

12 students (1.4%) said they learned about the Periodicals List A to Z, and this is the exact same number that reported it on the first survey. 12 students said they learned how to find lesson plans, teacher’s resources and curriculum materials. There weren’t enough mentions of this in the first survey to warrant a separate category.

12 students (1.4%) reported learning about specific topics, not library related. These were: the Great Depression, life in Liberia, Shirley Jackson’s *The Lottery*, Thebes, Agamemnon, Greece, headscarves, the Middle East, the world water crisis, desalination, children’s accidental exposure to pornography and global warming. 7 students reported learning about non-library topics in the first survey.

The following responses were mentioned by fewer than 1% of students so percentages will not be reported.

7 students didn’t say what they had learned but said instead how much. They said they had learned: everything, lots of stuff, a lot, very helpful, many things, A LOT!, too much, varies. 6 students said they learned pretty much what they had learned in the last session they attended but that this had served as a refresher.

4 students said they learned about E-Z search, and another 4 mentioned learning about the library blog. 4 students mentioned learning about specific resources: ethnomed.org, beliefnet.com, the NYT Archives and Annals of America.

4 students said they learned about offsite access. 3 students learned about peer review and another 3 learned about the differences between html and pdf.

As in the first survey of “how to” was the most frequently occurring phrase in the responses. In this group, it appeared a total of 603 times, or in 69.3% of responses. 214 students (24.6%) said they learned “how to use” something. In the first survey, 78.7% of students reported learning “how to” do something.

In summary, 870 students reported learning a total of 1,342 items in 46 categories. Responses were fairly similar to those provided in the first survey and reflect resources and services covered by librarians in most information literacy sessions. The first survey also tapped into the affective component by asking students to tell us what they had liked or not liked about the session. That component was not present in the current revision of the survey. Instead we asked students to rate three statements on a Likert type scale.

The next section was new to this survey. It required students to rate three statements using a 1-5 scale, where 1 meant strongly agree and 5 meant strongly disagree.

The information provided today will enable me to complete course requirements more effectively.

Of 934 students who answered this question, 554 (59.3%) strongly agreed with this statement. 361 (38.6%) agreed with this statement. 11 were neutral, 3 disagreed and 5 strongly disagreed. The mean score was 1.44.

98% of students who attended an information literacy session stated it would enable them to complete course requirements more effectively.

I would recommend this session to a friend.

Of 936 students who answered this question, 540 (57.5%) strongly agreed with this statement. 368 (39.3%) agreed with this statement. 13 were neutral, 7 disagreed and 8 strongly disagreed. The mean score was 1.47.

97% of students who attended a library orientation session would recommend it to a friend.

I wish I had attended a library session earlier in my academic career.

905 students answered this question. 464 (51.3%) strongly agreed with this statement and 356 (39.3%) agreed with this statement. 50 were neutral, 35 disagreed and 10 strongly disagreed. The mean score was 1.76.

90% of students who attended a library orientation wish they had attended one earlier in their academic career.

Comments and Suggestions

The last question was open ended. We invited students to comment on session or make suggestions for future sessions. 276 students (29.3%) did so. 270 (48%) did so in the first survey. See Figure 3 on the next page.

73 students (26.4%) said the session had been helpful, useful or informative. 57 students (20.6%) praised the librarians for being knowledgeable, helpful, approachable, informative, personable, clear, pleasant, interesting, articulate and patient. They used several words to refer to the librarians including presenter, instructor, librarian, teacher, person, speaker, lady, lecturer and advisor. 16 students mentioned a specific librarian by name.

37 students (13.4%) used this section to thank us and 31 (11.2%) said the session was good, great, excellent or awesome. 21 students (7.6%) made suggestions for improvement which encompassed a variety of areas. One student asked that we clean the glass over the computer monitors, three asked that the librarians speak louder or use a microphone. Several students suggested more hands-on time or more interactive learning exercises. One student wondered why the lab wasn't open more often, while another thought we should advertise the sessions better. One student complained about the heat in the room and another mentioned her disappointment at not finding books on the shelf too frequently.

20 students felt that information literacy sessions should be required, either of all students, or freshmen, or entering students, or students who need to write a research paper. 16 students made additional positive comments about the session. They said it was enjoyable, thorough, not boring, understandable, easy to follow, full of information and easy to comprehend.

Comments and Suggestions

- Session was helpful, useful and informative
- Praise for librarians
- Thanked us
- Session was excellent, great, good or awesome
- Suggested improvements
- Should be required
- Other Positive Comments
- Learned a lot
- Good Job!
- Wished they had been brought sooner
- Other

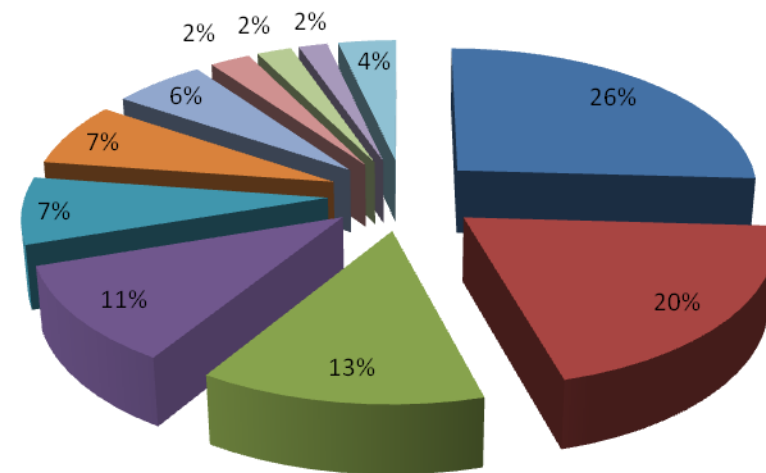


Figure 3

7 students said they learned a lot and 6 thought we had done a good or great job and 5 think they should have been brought to the library earlier in the semester. 10 students made comments that could not easily be placed in any of the other categories. These are:

1. By attending this session today has open my eyes to a whole new learning system at my school.
2. I will definitely be back in the near future.
3. It's sad that this is my last semester and I just found out about this information.
4. Great Technology!
5. searching the web with aptations is the best!

6. If I would have had this much training or known this much earlier in my academic career I'm sure I would have been more successful on my research topics.
7. I have attended this session since my freshman year.
8. I've written 3 scholarly journal articles.
9. I want to take it again to navigate more effectively the library information
10. The 2 searches will really help with my debate research.

Discussion

Results of this survey strongly suggest that students who attend information literacy sessions do learn something. 96% of students who attended an information literacy session reported learning something new. 98% of students said what they learned would help them complete course assignments more effectively, and 97% said they would recommend the session to a friend. 90% of students said they wished they had attended a library orientation session earlier in their academic career. This percentage may not have been lower than the others because several students who attended Info Lit sessions were first year students, who could not have attended any earlier.

Students mentioned learning about many resources and services and acquiring new skills, including advanced search strategies.

One interesting finding, which also appeared in the first survey, is the variety of ways in which students describe what they have learned. This is partly a reflection of the richness of our language, but it could also reflect student confusion surrounding library terminology as well as the synonymous nature of many terms librarians take for granted. To beginning college students, particularly those who may have had limited prior exposure to libraries or limited language skills, there are many words to learn and remember and so many of them sound similar and have similar meanings. Words that seem to cause confusion included research (used both as a verb and noun), resources, sources, system, references, searches, searching, web sites, search engines, online, virtual and electronic.

Anecdotally, librarians have observed that students refer to anything on the web as a web site, which although technically correct, tends to obscure greater understanding. There are differences between a database, a web site, a catalog and a search engine. Information literate students should understand these differences rather than lumping them all together under the heading web site or search engine, or as one student put it, research engine.

Students' confusion with language may point to their lack of understanding of resource providers, purposes and uses and this is an area that may present rich opportunities for librarians interested in improving information literacy instruction.

As in the first survey, this survey suffers from several limitations. The nature of self-report instruments is inherently problematic because participants want to present themselves in the best light possible and will tend to say what they believe the researcher wants them to say. As well, although they report learning about resources or acquiring new skills, since they were not tested it is difficult to say whether they actually did learn what they say they learned.

Despite these limitations, this study provides empirical support for something librarians have known for a long time: information literacy sessions do have a strong, positive impact on student learning.

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