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# **Bibliographic Instruction Survey Report**

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This survey was conducted at the University of Missouri-St. Louis during the 2003 Winter Semester.

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## **Executive Summary**

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Teaching is central to the role of academic libraries. This is accomplished in many ways including: interactions with patrons at public service points, development of subject guides and tutorials, and through a structured program of Bibliographic Instruction (BI). By their participation in the teaching process, the Reference Librarians at the Libraries of the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL) work together with other members of the campus community to realize the educational mission of the University and to promote the goals of information literacy.

Evaluation and assessment of the BI program is needed to make sure that the libraries are meeting these goals. No formal, campus wide, evaluation of BI has been undertaken since 1997-98, when an evaluation of the English 10 BI program was conducted. During the 2003 Winter Semester, the standing Survey Committee was asked to develop and execute a survey, which would evaluate the current BI program and provide ideas on ways in which the BI program could better serve the campus community. To this end, the Survey Committee was expanded to include the Library Instruction Coordinators. Chris Niemeyer represented the Thomas Jefferson Library and Helen Shaw represented the Ward E. Barnes Library.

In order to gain insight into how both faculty and students perceived the BI session, two questionnaires were prepared and sent out, one to faculty who had received BI sessions for their classes during the 2003 Winter Semester and one to their respective students. The response rate to the surveys was very good and the statistics compiled indicate that the majority of the participants benefited from the sessions. A thorough analysis of the survey questionnaire which included both multiple choice questions and comment responses offered insight into ways to strengthen and increase the BI program and to better serve those who participate. Additionally, we found that the lessons learned from this survey are also applicable to other aspects of our jobs as Reference Librarians, such as the Research Consultation Program and interactions at the Reference Desk.

## **Acknowledgements**

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We extend our thanks and appreciation to the faculty. In addition to responding to the questionnaire, they participated in the survey by distributing and collecting the questionnaires from their students on our behalf.

We would also like to thank the 667 students who responded to the questionnaire. These students attended one or more of the BI session(s) taught at UMSL during the 2003 Winter Semester

Finally, we would also like to extend a special thanks to Mary Tygett. Mary is our colleague and was the Head of the Survey Committee until she left the University in May. We thank her for her leadership and wish her continued success in her future endeavors.

## Introduction

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The objective of the Library Instruction Survey was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Libraries' BI sessions for UMSL students and faculty. "In shaping and evaluating its undergraduate curriculum, the University of Missouri-St. Louis fosters intellectual independence, sound judgment, clarity of expression in writing, aesthetic refinement, and sharpened analytical skills". This is an excerpt from the UMSL mission statement. In turn, the Libraries' mission is to maintain and develop collections and services in support of the present and future teaching and research needs of the University. One of the ways that this mission is accomplished is by conducting BI Sessions. BI sessions are designed for discipline-specific course assignments; they provide an introduction to the library resources, a demonstration on searching the Libraries' online catalog, and to searching electronic databases.

Library BI unveils the information world to students, enhances the quality of students' work, [improves students' research ability], and empowers students with the self-confidence to be lifelong learners. Via the BI sessions, UMSL Reference Librarians strive to support the University's and the Libraries' mission. They also strive to meet the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education as described by the Association of College and Research Libraries.

The Survey Committee is comprised of Clinton Berry, Lisandra Carmichael, Chris Niemeyer, and Helen Shaw, Reference Librarians at the Thomas Jefferson and Ward E. Barnes Libraries at UMSL. The Survey Committee has been meeting since January to plan the execution of the survey. The committee members met approximately four times a month from January to October, 2003.

The Survey Committee conducted this survey on both UMSL North and South Campus classrooms during the 2003 Winter Semester. The participants in the survey consisted of faculty who brought their classes to a BI session in the 2003 Winter Semester and students who attended those sessions. UMSL students, faculty and staff are the target beneficiary population of this survey. The classes taught by faculty covered a wide array of disciplines. Among them were social work, English, art history, criminal justice, political science, anthropology, sociology, communications, business administration, education, and nursing. The students ranged in classification from freshmen to graduate-level.

## **Participant Selection Process**

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In order to ensure student confidentiality the questionnaires were anonymous. The packages with the questionnaires were mailed to faculty who passed them out in their classes and later mailed them to us. Two simultaneous questionnaires, one for faculty and a different one for the students, were prepared (Appendix A & B).

Participants were selected based on whether a BI session had been done for their class in the 2003 Winter Semester. Each faculty member was given a questionnaire for each one of the BI sessions that his/her class attended. In some cases, faculty brought two to four separate classes to BI sessions. Thus there were 52 surveys sent to 32 faculty, of which 36 were returned.

Of a total of 1130 UMSL students attending BI sessions during the 2003 Winter Semester, 667 responded. Of those 667 replies, 42 questionnaires were incompletely filled out and were not counted or included in our results, thus resulting in 625 usable student questionnaires.

## **Methods Used**

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As was previously indicated, two different questionnaires were designed, one for faculty and another one for students. The motive for two separate questionnaires was to ascertain if the librarians were meeting faculty's expectations and needs in the sessions and if the librarians were effectively teaching students how to do library research.

Once the survey questionnaires were completed, they were routed for comments by other UMSL librarians who teach BI sessions. The questionnaires were revised and amended based on their comments. Student sampling was not done prior to administering the questionnaires.

After reviewing the BI log to determine approximately how many sessions had been and would be held in the 2003 Winter Semester, a letter was mailed to faculty explaining what the Survey Committee was doing and asking for their assistance with the process (Appendix C).

Three weeks prior to the end of the semester, 52 survey packages were sent to 32 faculty. Each package contained a faculty questionnaire, enough questionnaires for all the students in the class, a return self-addressed envelope, and an instruction letter (Appendix D).

Timing was a crucial issue with this survey. The survey was conducted at the end of the semester when the students would have had time to use the skills learned in the BI session. We felt that it was better to wait until then, when students could reflect upon what they had been taught, rather than surveying them immediately after a session.

The questionnaires were color-coded. The faculty's were blue. The student questionnaires for classes conducted on North Campus were white and the ones conducted on South Campus were yellow.

Replies began arriving during finals week. Once all replies were received, the tabulating process began. Each package was labeled with a number from one to 42 (of the 52 packages sent to faculty, ten were not returned). Then each student survey was given a control number. The number consisted of two separate numbers: the first number represented the same number given to the package and the second number represented a count of the questionnaires. For instance, the first questionnaire was numbered 1.1 (first package and first questionnaire), and the last questionnaire was numbered 42.625 (package 42 and the 625<sup>th</sup> questionnaire received).

In order to expedite the process of tabulating the results, the work was divided among the Survey Committee members. Each member was given 10 or 11 packages of questionnaires to tabulate.

Two Microsoft Excel spreadsheets were designed to tabulate the results, one for faculty and another one for students. A number listed each question on the Excel sheet and the results were transferred from the questionnaires to the spreadsheets. Each Survey Committee member was responsible for inputting the data from their assigned group of packages. The results are discussed at length later in this report. Charts representing the findings are also included in this report.

## **Limitations Imposed by Survey Scope**

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Although BI sessions are held throughout the academic year, the survey was limited to the sessions held in the 2003 Winter Semester only. The majority of the BI sessions are held in the Fall Semester of the academic year and the student pool could have been much larger. However, the Fall Semester is also the busiest time of the year for Reference Librarians. The personnel hours and time needed to conduct an in-depth survey of this nature simply weren't available during that busy period.

Additionally, by relying on faculty to distribute and collect the questionnaires, the number of student respondents was limited if faculty chose not to participate. If

all contacted faculty had participated, an additional 250 replies could have been received.

Finally, because tabulating the written comments received from faculty and students would be a monumental and subjective task, the Survey Committee decided to submit a preliminary report. This was done in August 2003. This report represents the final and full report.

## **Results of the Student Questionnaire (Overall)**

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Overall, we are extremely satisfied with the results of the student survey. An overwhelming majority of the students indicated that the library session introduced them to new concepts about finding information in the library. The majority of the students indicated they learned new skills that they could use toward the completion of a specific assignment or in their other classes. This is particularly of interest to us because this was the first library instruction session for the majority of the students. Their overall library research skills were improved dramatically by the BI sessions they attended. Some students are still facing some problems with the library, yet the majority of them are not having any problems at all!

Of the 625 students that replied to the questionnaire, ten or 1.6% were freshmen, 52 or 8.32% were sophomores, 244 (the majority) or 39.04% were juniors, 234 or 37.44% were seniors, 68 or 10.88% were graduates, and finally, 16 or 2.56% were "other". The "other" could refer to students who are returning students not seeking degrees, students auditing a class, etc. (Chart 1)

This was the first library instruction session attended by 61.44% of the students. For the other 38.08% of the students, this was anywhere between their second to their eighth library instruction session. (Chart 2)

Students were asked to compare their knowledge of doing research in the library prior to and after coming to the library instruction session (Chart 3). We saw a marked increase in how they perceived they had improved their knowledge of doing research. Initially, 10.88% considered themselves novices, compared with only 1.44% after the session. Likewise, 5.60% considered themselves as having advanced knowledge of doing library research; this changed to 15.20% after the session(s). (Chart 4)

Students were asked if they were still having problems in the library after having attended the instruction session. Two hundred seventy-seven or 44.32%, the majority of the students, replied that they were not having any trouble with the library. Of those that replied that they were having problems with the library, 35 or 5.60% of the students were having problems knowing where to get help in the library. Ninety-eight or 15.68% were still having problems understanding how to



construct a search while doing research. Seventy-two or 11.52% were still having problems finding books related to their topic. One hundred thirty-three or 21.28% were still having problems finding articles related to their topic. One hundred and sixty-two or 25.92%, the majority of those still having problems, were having problems using electronic databases to locate articles. And finally, 125 students or 20% were still having problems obtaining library materials not owned by the UMSL Libraries. (Chart 5)

Perhaps the most important question we asked students was: "Did the library session introduce new concepts to you about finding information?" An overwhelming majority, 495 or 79.20% of the students replied yes. One hundred twenty or 19.20% replied no, and 12 or 1.92% replied this was not applicable. (Chart 6)

When asked if the library instruction session was helpful for their class assignment, 494 or 79.04% agreed, whereas only forty-two or 6.72% disagreed. Eighty-nine students or 14.24% either had no opinion or weren't present at the session. (Chart 7)

When asked if they learned about the library in ways that would help them with other classes, 516 or 82.56% of the students replied that they agreed, whereas 37 or 5.92% disagreed. Sixty-nine students or 11.04% either had no opinion or weren't present at the session. (Chart 8)

## **Results of the Student Questionnaire (Student's comments for questions 6, 7, and 10)**

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In question number six, we asked the students: "After attending the instruction session, where are you still having problems in the library?" Additionally, we asked them to comment on this. The comments from the students were divided into three main categories: problems, no problems, and miscellaneous. The problem category contains all comments made by students indicating that they were still having problems using the Libraries. The no problem category contains all comments made by students indicating that they were not having any problems using the Libraries. The third category, miscellaneous, refers to comments about other issues not relevant to this particular question.

Of 116 students commenting on this question, twelve students indicated that they were not having any problems. Twenty-two indicated that they were still having problems. The area that the majority of the students, nine, identified as still having problems were the electronic databases, followed by six students still having problems with locating resources in the Libraries. The remaining seven students were having problems with gaining remote access to library resources, retaining the information presented at the session, finding print sources in the

Libraries, information overload, and confusion as a result of too much information.

Of the 108 comments that fell into the miscellaneous category referring to issues not relevant to this particular question, twenty-nine students commented on what a good BI session they had attended and thirteen students said the instructors were helpful, enthusiastic, articulate or passionate about their jobs. Additionally, seven students commented on the librarians being extremely helpful, knowledgeable, or doing a wonderful job. Seven students described the Libraries as wonderful, accessible, or as having a large selection of useful books. Nine students found the sessions to be boring, repetitive, not helpful, or a waste of time. Seven students had problems retaining the information taught at the session. One of these students stated “they had learned to use the electronic databases at the beginning of the semester and did not need to use it until the end of the semester; it was hard to recall how to locate the articles”. Five students stated they were overwhelmed by the amount of information presented at the session. Additionally five other students suggested they be given handouts during the session to help them remember the information presented. Four students commented that the Libraries, librarians, or the sessions were not good. They stated the books they wanted were overdue, the librarians assumed the students were already familiar with the system, and sessions were too fast-paced. Six students had not used the Libraries and five had no problems with using Libraries’ resources. Two students would have liked additional help with how to narrow a search. One student stated, “For what I needed, my knowledge was enough”. (Chart 9)

In question number seven, students were asked: “Did the library session introduce new concepts to you about finding information?” Of the 114 students that commented on this question, 84 indicated they had been introduced to new concepts about finding information. Of those 84, fifty said they learned how to use electronic databases. Some of the specific databases mentioned by the students were ERIC, CINAHL, Polling the Nation, Lexis-Nexis, Art Full Text, and Medline. Additionally, twelve students mentioned they were introduced to new concepts about finding print sources in the Libraries. Examples the students gave included how to find public laws, statutes, and bills. Students majoring in Education talked about finding curriculum textbooks and understanding the meaning of Library of Congress subject headings. Ten students commented on the advantages of accessing materials that are remotely located. In particular, they were referring to accessing materials via the MERLIN and MOBIUS consortiums. Another eight students commented on learning how to narrow a search by using keywords, truncation, or Boolean operators. Three students identified the sessions as well explained and the instructor as tremendously helpful. A student commented that the instruction was too fast-paced and she/he couldn’t remember how to use the information learned.

Thirteen students indicated that the session had not introduced them to new concepts because they already knew the materials. A student indicated the session reinforced concepts she/he already knew. Another student said it was nice to hear about other resources again. Yet another student indicated that the session was not helpful, but that it was helpful to others. Two students considered the sessions inadequate because the pace of the session and the instructor were too fast and they couldn't keep up. Yet another student indicated it was a waste of their time.

Seventeen students made comments that didn't answer the question if the session introduced them to new concepts about finding information in the library. However, the comments expressed student's concerns in regards to other aspects of library instruction and are thus included in this portion of the report. Some of these comments are very similar to the ones made above. For instance, four students expressed frustration over the amount of information presented at the sessions and their inability to remember everything after the session. To this effect, three other students recommended that handouts be given to them to help them keep-up with the session discussion. Four students indicated the librarians and the instructors talked too fast and the session was paced too fast. One student said it was a good session and another said it was a bad session. A student indicated that he wasn't taught how to choose a specific electronic database. (Chart 10)

Question #10 on the student BI survey was written with the intent of giving each student the opportunity to comment, in a positive or negative fashion, on the library instruction session that he/she attended. Question 10 was stated: "In your own words, what impressed you the MOST (whether good or bad) about the library instruction session?" The open-ended nature of the question produced diverse comments on all aspects of the library instruction sessions and also comments about library services in general.

There were 390 written responses to question 10. The survey committee categorized each response as no problems, problems, or miscellaneous. Thirty of the responses were counted under more than one heading bringing the total number of responses to 420. Some examples, from Question 10, of these "double" responses are:

"I was disinterested because I already know how to operate mygateway. " (Problem) "But learning about CINAHL was helpful for my nursing papers." (No Problem – learned about a database.)

"Was presented in a good manner," (No Problem) "but should of actually found articles on shelf after finding it on the database" (Problem with resource location in the library.)

"Not much hands-on" (Problem)-"long lecture" (Problem.)

“I enjoyed the lecture and the knowledge from the presenter.” (No Problem – good instructor) “I feel more informed about Merlin and other databases located at TJ library.” (No Problem – using online resources.)

Comments for Question 10 were as diverse as the needs of the students who wrote them. Student responses were thoughtfully written and many provided good insight into what the Libraries/librarians are doing that is right/wrong in regards to library instruction and library services. In addition, the responses provided suggestions which could be incorporated into future library instruction sessions.

Content for the Thomas Jefferson / Ward E. Barnes Libraries' instruction program varied by presenter and included lecture/demonstration, lecture/hands-on sessions, and hands-on only sessions. Content also varied by perceived audience, with general sessions for undergraduates and subject-specific sessions for upper-class undergraduates and graduate students. These subject-specific sessions were often mentioned as helpful for introducing students to databases and resources in the student's field of study.

Of the 420 responses, 320 were no problems, 84 were problems, and 16 were miscellaneous (ex.: “nice chairs”). The 320 no-problem responses were broken down into 118 who responded that it was a good/excellent session; the next highest number of positive comments, 82, said that the instructor was organized, enthusiastic, knowledgeable, etc.; 48 of the students stated they had gained better knowledge about searching a database(s); 21 stated that the library had good/excellent resources; while 17 stated that they had received good/outstanding service from other librarians in the library. Here are some of the comments; (Charts 11, 12, 13):

“The session was tailored for a student's needs for writing a research paper. The session was concise but contained all the necessary information.”

“The advanced search methods ABI/Inform. etc. the librarian was excellent and had a very good attitude.”

“If you know where & how to look, there a (re) tons of resources and information to be found.”

“The workers in the library really seem to know what's happening and are very helpful.”

“Very helpful and a lot of information was presented to me. I wish that I had it during the previous semester and a better grade would have been obtained in a research paper.”

“Very well organized session, very informative”

“Stupendous intensity and fire for the library and its dynamic references. The instructor needed to be good and he was!”

“Well organized and let us have hands on experience with the research”

“Strong visual examples to illustrate verbal instructions.”

“Detailed instructions on searches”

“It seemed very informational; I wish I could do it again.”

“The accessibility of the help students can get from the reference librarians. They will not do the work for you but they will gladly (& enthusiastically) show you how to find it”

“Another chance to learn more about getting the full use of my money.”

“The help desk is a wonderful resource”

Of the 420 comments, approximately one fifth (82) mentioned problems with the library instruction session, instructor, or library: 14 students commented negatively about the librarian’s instruction style; 25 felt the library session was not helpful, was too long, or was too fast.

“Time is always a concern for everyone, it was too fast - a lot of information crammed into a little time slot”

“I thought it should have been more in depth in regards to electronic searches.”

“It’s a great class, but not for a Jr./Sr. class - I do think it should be required for freshman classes.”

“If it was a little shorter that would help”

“How incredibly boring it was. It was redundant about narrowing searches.”

“Repetition of the same facts became tedious. Would like to see an in depth presentation of online sources.”

“It was too long”

### REMOTE ACCESS:

“That I can visit the library home page from my computer at home making it easier on me to obtain the information I need.”

“Finding out that it was/is possible to get books from other campuses”

“How it is easy to conduct research using databases and how it is convenient being able to use MERLIN and MOBIUS”

“It was not helpful. I needed to know how to do research through the online library at home.” (Problem)

“How we can access the articles and journals from our home computers.”

“I like that you could access the library and its resources from home!!!”

### ONLINE RESOURCES / DATABASES:

“The ability of the UMSL library to get almost any materials a student needs.”

“The section on electronic databases and how to use them. I've used these extensively in most of my class.”

“I had no idea how to get to all the electronic databases with full journal articles prior to the session and that has been very helpful.”

“There are many more ways of obtaining info than I ever imagined.”

“In the library instruction session, he only introduces a few lessons about how to search in different database.” (Problem)

“Reviewing the search techniques (for the online databases) was helpful.”

### PRINT RESOURCES:

“I believe I found the opportunity to find curriculum & textbooks relevant to my discipline the most helpful.”

“It was unclear where the books were located either on the shelves or at a desk” (Problem)

“Was presented in a good manner. But should of actually found articles on shelf after finding it on the database” (Problem)

 HANDS-ON:

Comments reflect some very positive aspects of hands-on instruction but also some of the difficulties that need to be addressed when teaching a diverse population with a wide array of computer skills.

“The instructor was going so fast I had a difficult time keeping up with her.” (Problem)

“It was helpful to actually do an example instead of just talking about it.”

“It was detailed and on a beginner level. She did assume we knew a lot about computers.” (Problem)

“The session was helpful (No Problem). I would suggest having more than 1 librarian in the session to help students navigate through” (Problem)

“I am usually scared or discouraged to use the computer in the library, but this session helped me see that it wasn't that bad and actually quite easy to do.”

“Not much hands-on, a long lecture” (Problem)

“Knowledgeable instructor & incorporation of technology in facilities were very good.”

“Very long when a handout would have sufficed.” (Problem)

While the total number was small, twelve students expressed as a problem confusion or overload of material presented. Related problems were information retention and that the library lesson was not presented at the optimal time of need.

“I don't know that anything really impressed me. It was pretty basic and boring to those of us with prior knowledge.” (Problem)

“I didn't think it was very helpful. It was kind of confusing.” (Problem)

“I would never remember what we went over in that class.” (Problem)

“I did not find the session helpful at all. (Problem) However I did meet with a research consultant and she made everything clear. Thanks to her I now have no problem finding information or obtaining information available here. Prior to meeting the consultant I did.” (No Problem - one-on-one

instruction, Research Consultation, was a better match for this student's learning style.)

A final problem, addressed by four students in their comments, was how does the library reach a student at least once in their academic career without overkill?

"I think this session is beneficial, but have sat through it several times now and no longer find it something I personally benefit from." (Problem)

"I really wish that instructors wouldn't make these sessions mandatory. It's okay learning about the library once but, every semester-ugh!" (Problem)

While over 75% of the comments received for Question 10 were very complimentary to the Libraries' BI program, UMSL Libraries/librarians will continue to proactively address issues which will forward the goals of providing varied instruction in a timely manner. To this end comments have been very helpful in providing insights for improving library instruction.

## **Results of the Faculty Questionnaire (Overall)**

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The highly positive response to library instruction by this relatively small sample of faculty was gratifying. It should be noted that most library instruction is initiated at the request of a faculty member. The results of this survey may in some way reflect the importance with which faculty respondents regard library instruction. However, it is good to confirm that faculty indeed perceive library instruction as beneficial to their students in terms of what was taught, in the students' understanding of free web based resources vs. library databases, and perhaps most importantly in terms of the quality of research in assignments the students submitted.

The stated purpose of the faculty survey was to determine the effectiveness of the library instruction session. Eighty-one percent (30 classes) of the surveys returned by faculty were from classes taught by reference librarians from the Thomas Jefferson Library at North Campus locations. Twenty-nine classes were taught in the Thomas Jefferson Library Instruction Room with only one class conducted in a North Campus classroom. The remaining nineteen percent (7 classes) of the returned surveys came from instruction sessions taught by Ward E. Barnes reference librarians at South Campus locations. Of that total, four classes were taught in South Campus classrooms. The remaining three classes were "hands-on classes" taught in a South Campus computer lab. (Chart 14)

Ninety-seven percent of faculty either agreed or strongly agreed that the librarian discussed resources that were important to his/her students. (Chart 15)



Eighty-five percent of faculty agreed that there was evidence in assignments handed in after the library instruction session that his/her students were using more appropriate research sources. Six percent felt there was no evidence of improved use of research sources. Another six percent responded with “No Opinion” and three percent marked “Not Applicable.” (Chart 16)

In response to the question, “After the library session, do you feel that your students have a better understanding between a free web-based resource, such as Google, and a web-based library database...” 91% of responding faculty said yes, 6% had no opinion, and 3% said no. (Chart 17)

Faculty were asked to indicate all methods of presentation that they observed being used by the librarian in the BI session. (Chart 18)

## **Results of the Faculty Questionnaire (Faculty Comments for All Questions)**

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As has been indicated, faculty were also given a questionnaire which, among other things, contained space for comments for four of the eight survey questions provided. Of course the total number of faculty who could have participated in the survey was quite small (52) compared to the hundreds of students who participated. But it is interesting that of the 36 faculty who returned surveys, the great majority (33), wrote comments at some point. Indeed, three faculty scribbled-in comments to questions that had no comment line. It is at once obvious that faculty were more than willing to provide thoughtful feedback about the library session and its impact on students. Generally speaking, most of the comments about the library session and its effects were positive.

For instance, in question #3 “The librarian discussed resources that I felt were important for my students” some faculty wrote the following:

“The librarian has spoken to my classes on several occasions and has always done an excellent job”.

A faculty member even relayed a student comment: “One student said it was the most she had learned about how to do research at UMSL”.

“Being new to the UMSL system libraries, this session was informative for me as well.”

“The resources discussed were essential for my students, not just students in the social science fields but every student in a university experience!”

"[The librarian] was great – thorough, helpful, prepared!"

There were even more comments attached to question #5: "After the library session, do you feel that your students have a better understanding between a free web-based resources, such as Google, and a web-based library database, such as Expanded Academic (which includes many full text scholarly journals)?"

"Most of them seem to have grasped this central idea"

"[The librarian's] presentation graphically illustrated the difference in a manner in which all of the students could understand."

"Strong yes!"

However, question #5 also struck a responsive chord among some faculty. They used the comments option for question #5 as an opportunity to express their frustration with students' use (or misuse) of the web for doing research. Their comments show that they still see this as a problem even after an instruction session that tried to clearly delineate the difference between library databases and 'the web'.

"But this could be beaten to death some more. I don't know why this is so hard for them to get."

"They should because that point was stressed. I think I will have to be more proscriptive in my assignments to stop students from using free resources."

"I was very disappointed that 80% of the students did not seem to have made use of the art history database or MERLIN/MOBIUS [*note: these were library resources which were the main focus of the session*] – but I don't think the problem was the instruction [session]. Next time I teach this course I will require such items on their bibliography and schedule enough time in the library to help them in the process: hopefully that will ease their fears!"

Question #7 asked: "What were your impressions of the usefulness of the above methods of presentation for your students"? There were some very positive responses to this question:

"I found the various methods useful since my students have different learning styles."

"Very effective"

"It was exactly what my students needed to know."

"I think it gave them a place to start and an idea of the myriad resources to which they have access".

However, interspersed with these positive comments were constructive suggestions about making the instruction sessions more effective. These comments almost always urged that there be hands-on practice during the session:

"I think these were very useful - but clearly more is necessary. I think hands-on instruction is perhaps the answer."

"Very useful. Hands-on would add to the effectiveness but that wasn't possible in TJK #315" [*note: this is a reference to the bibliographic instruction room at the Thomas Jefferson Library*]

"All valuable we could have used hands - on computer work"

"Good - - some hands-on would be helpful"

"Very good although students may need more follow-up"

Probably the most enthusiastic comments were saved for question #8, the very last question of the survey: "We'd like you to have the last word! Please use the space below for any comments about library instruction that weren't covered by the questions above".

"A few of my students said that they wished they had this info as freshman. How about a FRESHMAN Librarian to aid ALL first yr. Students"

"Thank you for providing an opportunity to introduce students to the modern, university research library. The service is invaluable"

"These sessions really help the students become acclimated to the library and underscore that assistance is available from reference librarians who are always willing to help."

"Thanks. An extraordinarily valuable resource"

"I would do this again – my students need higher standards set for their writing. Thank you!"

"Thanks, very helpful!"

Yet as in question #7 some of the comments were also constructively critical:

“Maybe say some more about books. It looks like students don't even consider them anymore. They think in terms of very specific electronic searches. Otherwise, very helpful - - thanks as always, [librarian name].”

“A broad overview of the different research approaches and more time to experiment alone with those approaches would benefit most students.”

“We learned from this session running long that students needed time to look online to research their own topics - - until they tried it themselves - - it wasn't as useful - - next class [the librarian] allowed time for this, which helped.”

Judging from their comments it appears that most of the faculty were quite pleased with the instruction sessions provided by UMSL librarians for their classes. Many of the comments were a solid endorsement of the UMSL Libraries' instruction programs. Even so, faculty offered feedback about ways that they thought the sessions could be improved. The faculty surveys were thus positive, sometimes enthusiastically so. Yet they also contained much appreciated suggestions for increasing the usefulness of our library instruction programs.

## Recommendations

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Based upon the findings expressed in detail in the previous pages, we have made four major recommendations. These four recommendations express areas of improvement in the BI program. They identify needs for bibliographic instruction in a student's first year of study, standardization among librarians teaching BI sessions, increased faculty awareness, and resource prioritization.

**Recommendation #1:** All freshmen and indeed other new students (i.e., transfer and graduate) should have a mandatory and significant orientation to the University Libraries as part of their first-semester experience at UMSL. By 'significant' we mean that the orientation should be substantive and not merely brief and perfunctory. In fact, such an orientation can be accomplished in a simple and effective way using *current* library instructional resources available through the Libraries' Homepage. Very few freshmen (2%) and sophomores (9%) attended our BI sessions; the majority of our attendees were seasoned students by the time they received library instruction. We thus recommend that new University students do:

1. The *Walking Tour for the UMSL Libraries*
2. The *Tutorial for the UMSL Libraries' Homepage*
3. The *Tutorial for Learning the Library Catalog*
4. One of the tutorials for an UMSL electronic database, especially the *Tutorial*

*for Learning Expanded Academic ASAP* that is generalist in approach and teaches many important information literacy concepts

All of the above resources can be easily incorporated into existing or forthcoming orientation programs, whether these are at a class, departmental, or University-wide level. All of the above are comprehensive in their approach, are interactive in nature, and can be done by students with virtually no time-consuming input from UMSL librarians or other University staff. The latter point is important in this age of budget cuts and understaffing.

Whether any University department accepts the above 4-part scenario or not, we still highly recommend that an in-depth introduction to the UMSL Libraries be provided for new students in some way. Logical vehicles for doing this could be the Freshman Composition course (English 1100), as well as the programs that are being created by the task forces for “New Student Orientation” and the “First Year Experience”.

**Recommendation #2:** Reference Librarians should make certain points during each bibliographic instruction session they teach. Just exactly how presentations are carried out should be up to the professional judgment and skills of Reference Librarians in consultation with the faculty. Flexibility is important given the diversity of information resources and fields of study. So we encourage and recognize the need for instructional flexibility as long as it meets the goals set forth by both the librarian and the faculty member. Librarians should instruct and inform students about the following:

1. They should always ask for help at the Reference Desk if they have problems finding information or have any other concerns with their library research
2. The substantial differences between the information in library databases and the information gleaned off of the Web
3. Quick and easy access to millions of books from many libraries in the state of Missouri through the MOBIUS system
4. The Research Consultation Program for UMSL students, faculty, and staff who need more in-depth help with their library research
5. Tutorials and subject guides are available to everyone from the Libraries' Homepage
6. How to use an electronic database
7. Maps of the libraries are available at the Reference Desk (as a resource locator tool)
8. Handouts covering the materials they discussed in the sessions will be provided to assist with retention and overload issues
9. Presentations to be made at a level that is understood by most students

**Recommendation #3:** Increase faculty awareness and use of Libraries' BI programs. To promote faculty awareness of the Libraries' instruction and research consultation services the Libraries should:

1. Email faculty at the beginning of each semester alerting them to these services
2. Ask Library Liaisons to mention these services to faculty liaisons
3. Place an announcement about these services on the UMSL Libraries' homepage at the beginning of each semester
4. Include flyers about these services when mailing the Libraries' Newsletter

**Recommendation #4:** The Ward E. Barnes Library should always have priority access to a South Campus computer facility for hands-on bibliographic instruction. To accomplish this we recommend:

1. That the Barnes librarians develop a closer relationship with campus computing to promote more flexibility in the scheduling of the two South Campus computer hands-on classrooms
2. That a Library Resource Center be established in the Barnes Library
3. That the library liaison to campus computing be seen as a valuable aid in forwarding this goal

## Conclusion

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This thorough report accomplishes several goals. It outlines the objective of the library instruction survey, it explains the reasons why the Survey Committee chose to conduct a survey of the library bibliographic instruction program, and it compiles the tabulated results of the questionnaires used in conducting the survey. Additionally, this report explains the criteria used to select the participants and provides detailed explanations of the methods and processes used to conduct the survey. Any limitations that may have affected the actual conduct of the survey are also included.

This survey helped us look at the current condition of the BI program from many different angles. We read the opinions of 625 students and 32 faculty members of different ages, educational and experience levels, and numerous academic disciplines. However, the question about the effectiveness of our BI program, which we sought to answer with this survey, produced a satisfying conclusion: the BI program is effective. A majority of participants acknowledged the importance of information literacy in their educational experience and were satisfied with what the UMSL Libraries taught them. Even so, faculty, students, and librarians can look forward to changes in the program that will make it more effective in the not too distant future.

The recommendations listed in this report, when incorporated, should greatly improve our library instruction program. A fringe benefit of our findings, are their applicability to the Research Consultation Program, the reference desk, and our overall teaching techniques with our students. In the end we are very pleased with our survey effort, both in what it taught us and how we can use this knowledge to better support our campus community.

## STUDENT LIBRARY INSTRUCTION SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to determine the effectiveness of the library instruction session you attended for this class earlier in the semester. Please complete this survey in class and return it to your professor. We appreciate your cooperation!

1. For what class was the library instruction held? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Status (please select one):
  - a. Freshman \_\_\_\_\_ b. Sophomore \_\_\_\_\_ c. Junior \_\_\_\_\_ d. Senior \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Graduate \_\_\_\_\_ f. Other \_\_\_\_\_
3. Was this the first library instruction session you've attended?
  - a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ b. No \_\_\_\_\_ c. If no, how many sessions? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Prior to coming to this library session, how would you have ranked your knowledge of doing research in a library?
  - a. Novice \_\_\_\_\_ b. Beginner \_\_\_\_\_ c. Intermediate \_\_\_\_\_ d. Advanced \_\_\_\_\_
5. After having attended this library session, how would you rank your knowledge of doing research in a library?
  - a. Novice \_\_\_\_\_ b. Beginner \_\_\_\_\_ c. Intermediate \_\_\_\_\_ d. Advanced \_\_\_\_\_
6. After attending the instruction session, where are you still having problems in the library? (Check all that apply).
  - a. Knowing where to get help in the library \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Understanding how to construct a search when doing research \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Finding books related to your topic \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Finding articles related to your topic \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Using electronic databases to locate articles \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. Obtaining library materials not owned by UM St. Louis \_\_\_\_\_
  - g. I am not having any trouble with the library \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Please continue on the other side!*

## Appendix A



7. Did the library session introduce new concepts to you about finding information?

- a. Yes\_\_\_\_\_                      b. No\_\_\_\_\_                      c. Not applicable\_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS:\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. The library instruction session was helpful for my class assignment.

- a. Strongly agree\_\_\_\_\_              b. Agree\_\_\_\_\_              c. No Opinion\_\_\_\_\_
- d. Disagree\_\_\_\_\_              e. Strongly disagree\_\_\_\_\_              f. I wasn't present\_\_\_\_\_

9. I learned about the library in ways that may help me with other classes.

- a. Strongly agree\_\_\_\_\_              b. Agree\_\_\_\_\_              c. No Opinion\_\_\_\_\_
- d. Disagree\_\_\_\_\_              e. Strongly disagree\_\_\_\_\_              f. I wasn't present\_\_\_\_\_

10. In your own words, what impressed you the MOST (whether good or bad) about the library instruction session?

COMMENTS:\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

***Thank you for your participation!***

**FACULTY LIBRARY INSTRUCTION SURVEY**

The purpose of this survey is to determine the effectiveness of the library instruction session. Please complete this survey and return it to the library in the attached self-addressed envelope. We appreciate your cooperation!

1. For what class was the library instruction session held? \_\_\_\_\_

2. The library instruction session was held at (please choose A or B):

a. The Ward E. Barnes:  
\_\_\_\_ South campus computer lab, or  
\_\_\_\_ South campus classroom

b. Thomas Jefferson:  
\_\_\_\_ Library instruction room (#315), or  
\_\_\_\_ North campus classroom

3. The librarian discussed resources that I felt were important for my students.

a. Strongly agree \_\_\_\_\_ b. Agree \_\_\_\_\_ c. No Opinion \_\_\_\_\_  
d. Disagree \_\_\_\_\_ e. Strongly Disagree \_\_\_\_\_ f. I wasn't present \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Was there evidence in assignments handed in after the library instruction session that your students were using more appropriate research sources?

a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ b. No \_\_\_\_\_ c. No opinion \_\_\_\_\_ d. Not Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

5. After the library session, do you feel that your students have a better understanding between a free web based resource, such as Google, and a web based library database, such as Expanded Academic (which includes many full text scholarly journals)?

a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ b. No \_\_\_\_\_ c. No opinion \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Please continue on the other side!*

**Appendix B**

6. Please check any (or all) methods of presentation used by the librarian:

- a. Class time to explore library tutorials\_\_\_\_\_
- b. Hands-on computer instruction at individual work stations\_\_\_\_\_
- c. Demonstration of ONLINE library resources, such as library catalog, electronic databases, journal titles online, etc.\_\_\_\_\_
- d. Lecture presentation of print materials, such as handbooks, dictionaries, encyclopedias, journal titles relevant to the field, etc.\_\_\_\_\_
- e. Handouts or web pages created for your class by the librarian.\_\_\_\_\_
- f. Other (please state):\_\_\_\_\_

7. What were your impressions of the usefulness of the above methods of presentation for your students?

COMMENTS:\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. We'd like you to have the last word! Please use the space below for any comments about library instruction that weren't covered by the questions above.

COMMENTS:\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

***Thank you for your participation!***

Friday, January 16, 2004

Dear Professor «Professor»,

Earlier this year a library instruction session was performed for your «ClassAbbrev» class by a university librarian from either the Thomas Jefferson or Ward E. Barnes Libraries. We at the libraries are trying to assess the effectiveness of our instruction program.

Shortly you will receive a packet containing a **Faculty Library Instruction Survey** and copies of a **Student Library Instruction Survey**, with a self-addressed, return envelope. We hope that you will be willing to answer the survey sent to you and to distribute the corresponding survey to your students.

The UMSL Libraries have not conducted such an assessment in years and all answers will be very much appreciated. Survey results will be kept confidential. They will be tabulated and studied to determine how helpful we have been in the present and what we can do to improve our sessions in the future.

We prefer that you distribute the student surveys prior to finals. But this is a judgment call on your part and we are happy to leave it up to you to hand-out the surveys whenever you think is appropriate.

We realize that the student questionnaire will come perhaps many weeks after the library session. This is deliberate timing on our part. The intention is to survey students when they have the hindsight that comes after a semester of coursework. Such a student assessment is of greater interest to us than the impressions they may have immediately after a library presentation. We are thus eager to see responses to the questionnaires from students and yourself.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me should you have any comments, questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

---

Chris Niemeyer  
Library Instruction Coordinator,  
Thomas Jefferson Library  
Tel. :(314) 516-7008  
niemeyer@umsl.edu

**Appendix C**

Professor \_\_\_\_\_,

A few days ago you should have received a letter from the UMSL Libraries informing you about surveys we are conducting. The purpose of the surveys is to gauge the effectiveness of our library instruction sessions which we performed for one or more of your classes.

Enclosed in this packet you will find a single **Faculty Library Instruction Survey** in blue, and multiple copies of a **Student Library Instruction Survey**. You will also find a self-addressed, return envelope for your convenience when returning the completed surveys.

Answering the surveys is optional. However we highly encourage your participation to help us assess our instructional efforts.

Should you have any questions or comments please call Chris Niemeyer at 516-7008 or my colleague, Lisandra Carmichael at 516-5070.

Thank you!

The UMSL Libraries Instructional Survey Committee.

## **APPENDIX D**

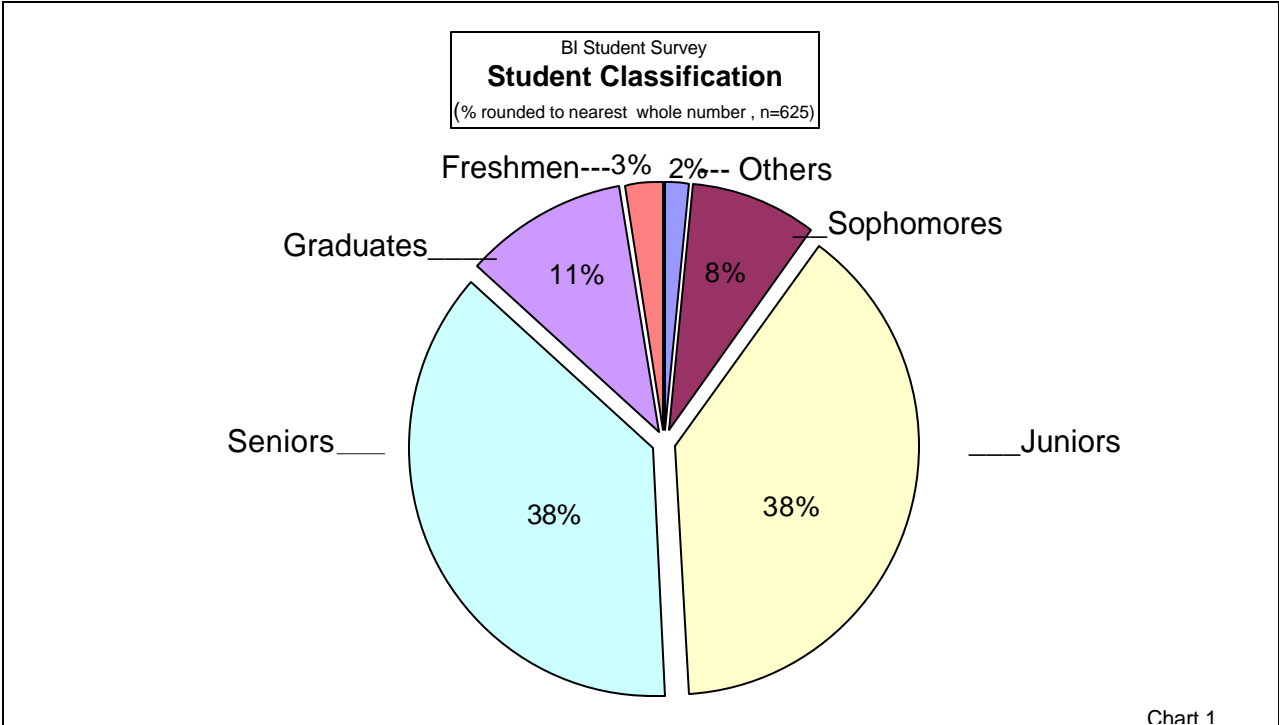


Chart 1

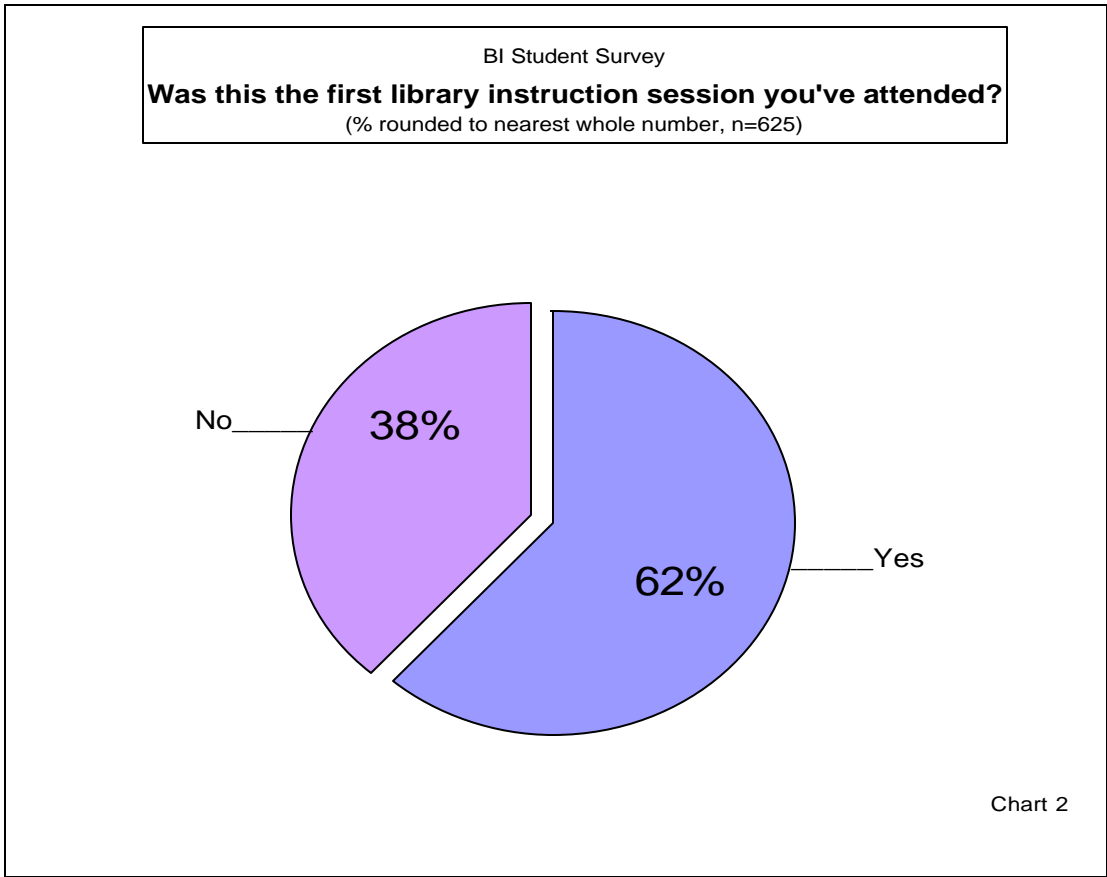


Chart 2

BI Student Survey  
**How would you rank your knowledge of doing research in the library PRIOR to attending a library session?**  
 (% rounded to nearest whole number, n=625)

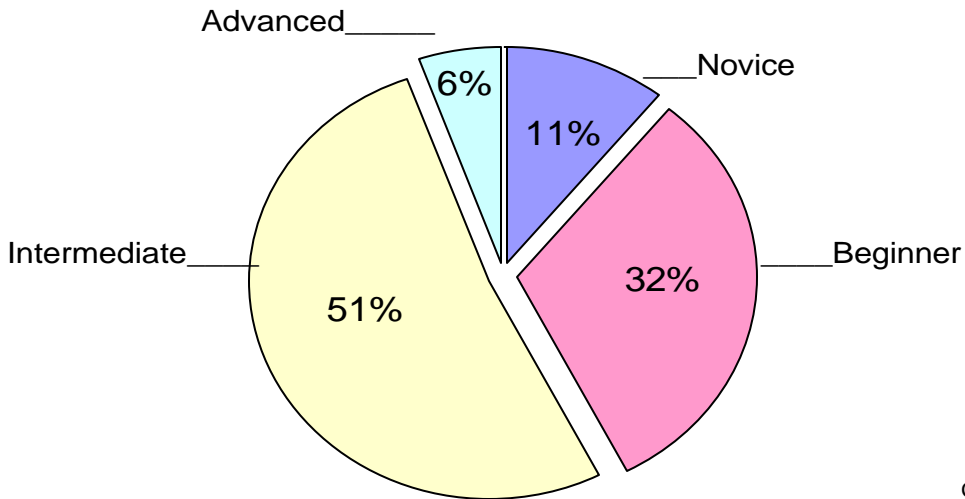


Chart 3

BI Student Survey  
**How would you rank your knowledge of doing research in the library AFTER attending a library session?**  
 (% rounded to nearest whole number, n=625, please see previous charts for comparisons)

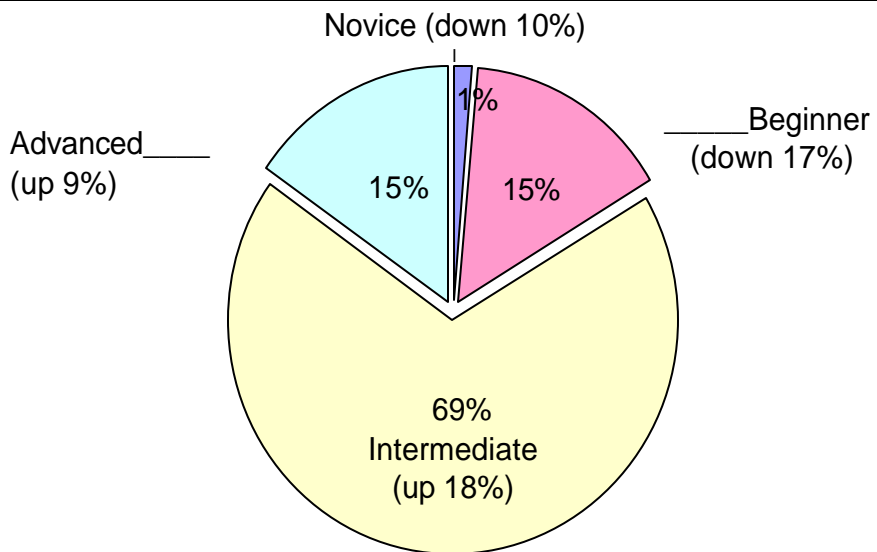


Chart 4

BI Student Survey  
**After attending the session, where are you still having problems?**

(% rounded to the nearest whole number, n=625)

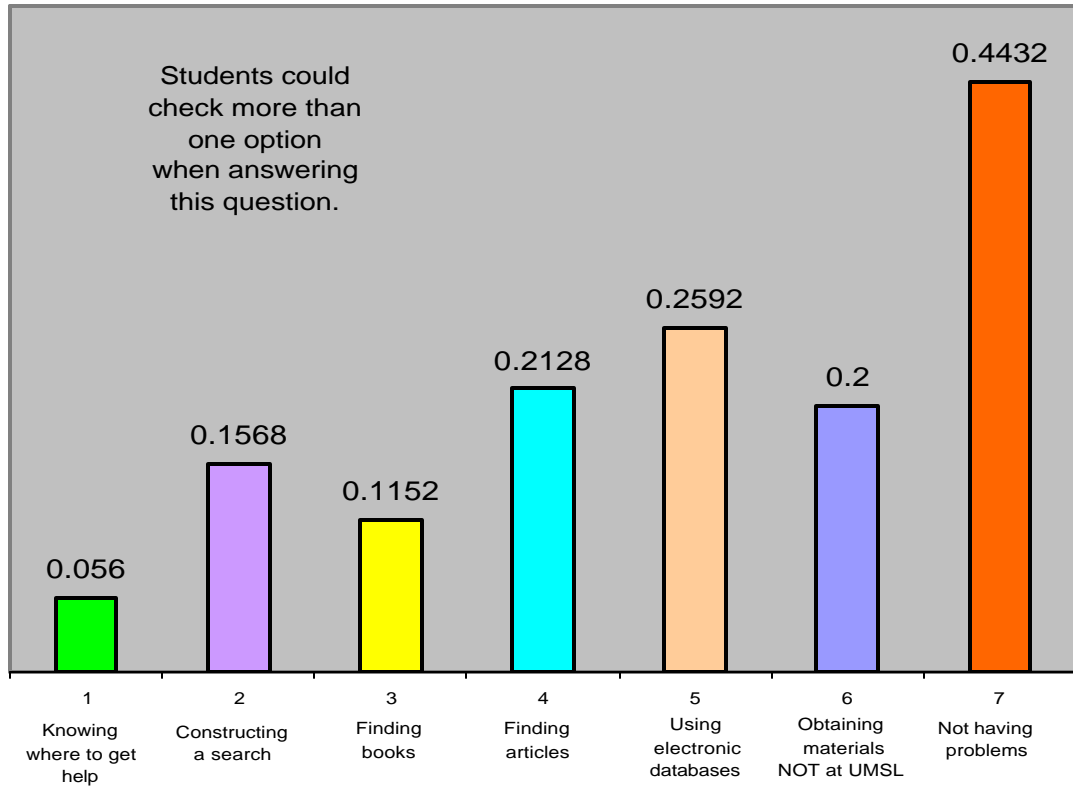


Chart 5



BI Student Survey

**Did the library session introduce new concepts to you about finding information?**

(% rounded to the nearest whole number, n=625)

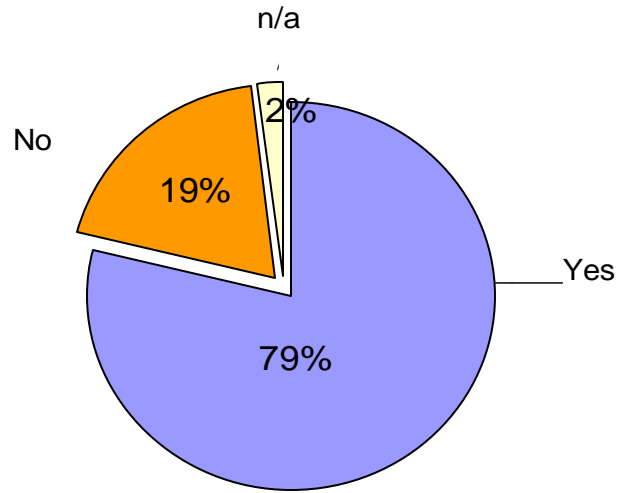


Chart 6

BI Student Survey

**The library instruction session was helpful for my class assignment.** (% rounded to the nearest whole number, n=625)

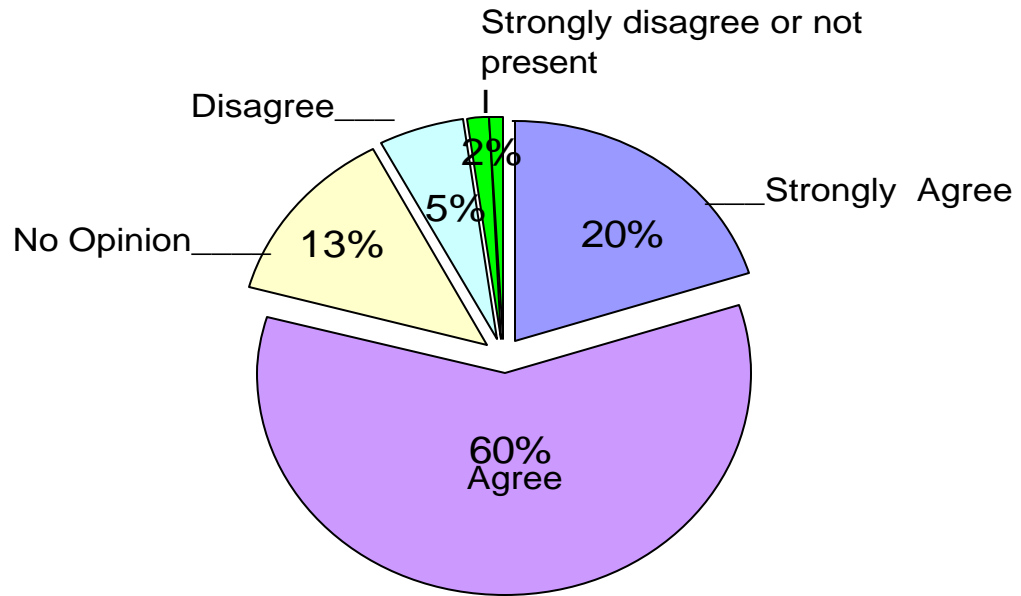


Chart 7

BI Student Survey

**I learned about the Libraries in ways that may help me with other classes.** (% rounded to nearest whole number, n=625 )

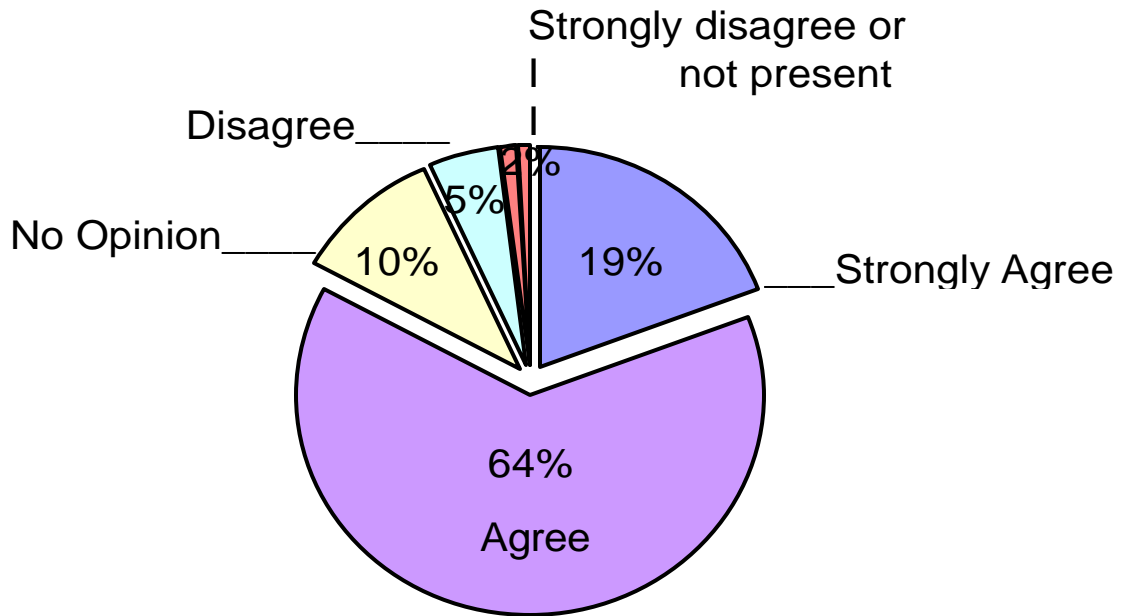
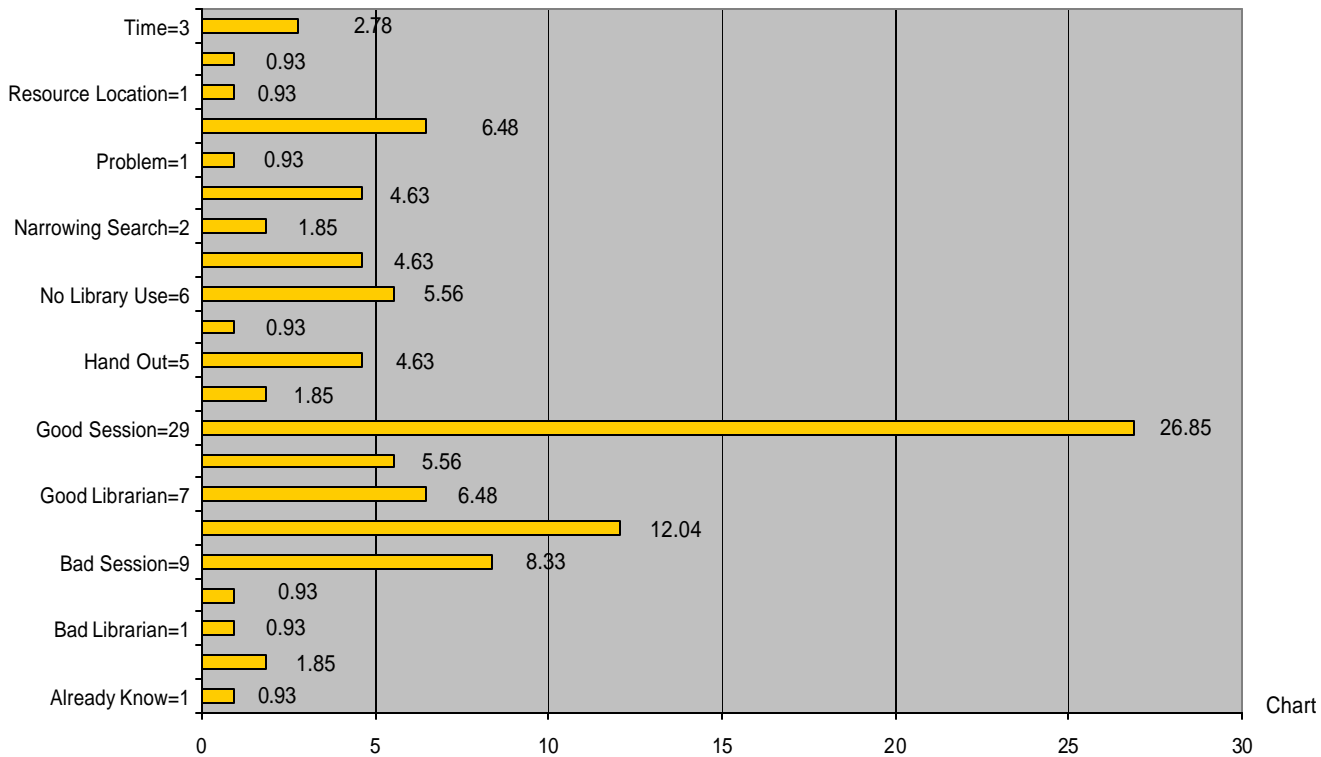
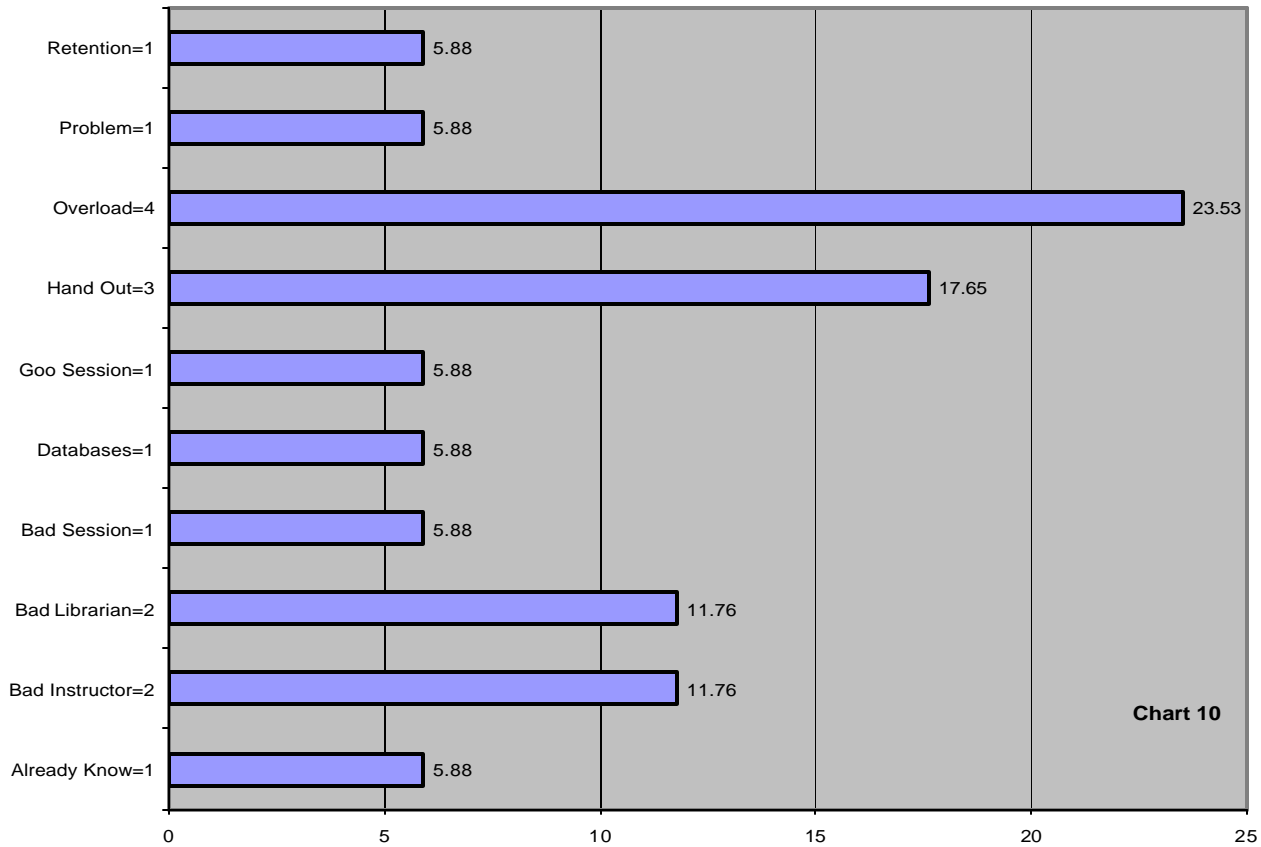


Chart 8

**Comments made by students while answering this question: "After attending the instruction session, where are you still having problems in the library?"** (% rounded to nearest whole number, n=625 )



**BI Student Survey**  
**Comments made by students while answering this question: "Did the Library session introduce new concepts to you about finding information?"**  
 (% rounded to nearest whole number, n=625 )



BI Student Survey  
 In your own words what impressed you the most (whether good or bad) about the library instruction session? -  
 Problems  
 (% rounded to nearest whole number, n=625)

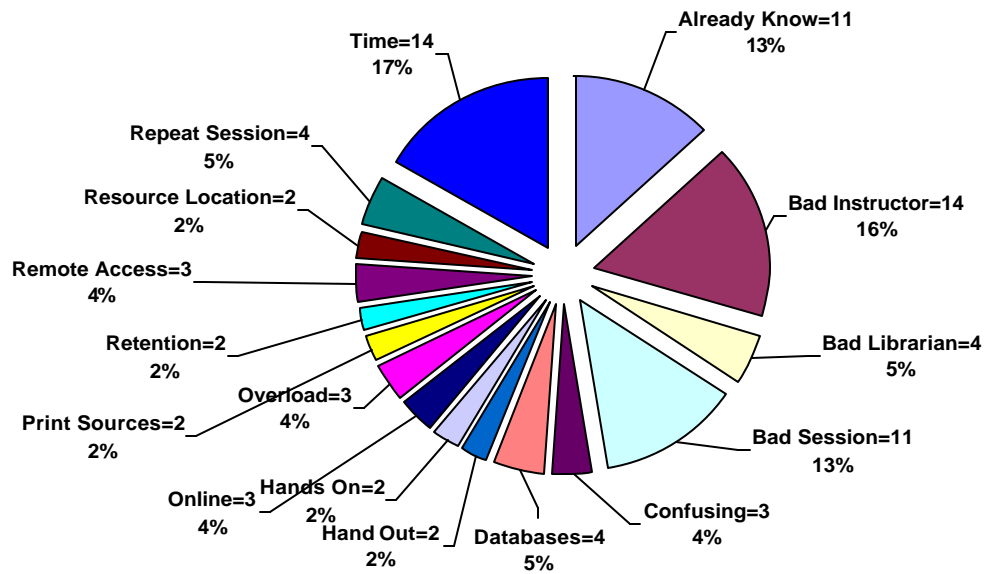


Chart 11

BI Student Survey  
 In your own words what impressed you the most (whether good or bad) about  
 the library instruction session? - No Problems  
 (% rounded to nearest whole number, n=625)

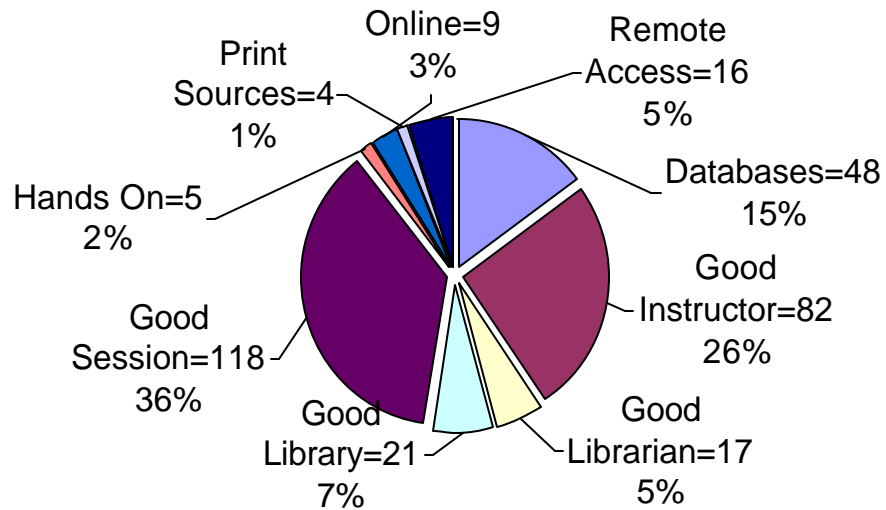


Chart 12

**BI Student Survey**  
**In your own words what impressed you the most (whether good or bad) about the library instruction session?- Miscellaneous Comments**  
 (% rounded to nearest whole number, n=625)

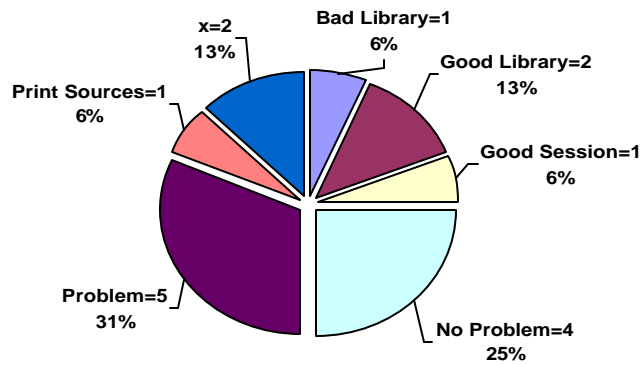


Chart 13

**BI Faculty Survey**  
**Library Instruction Session Location**  
 (% rounded to nearest whole number, n=36)

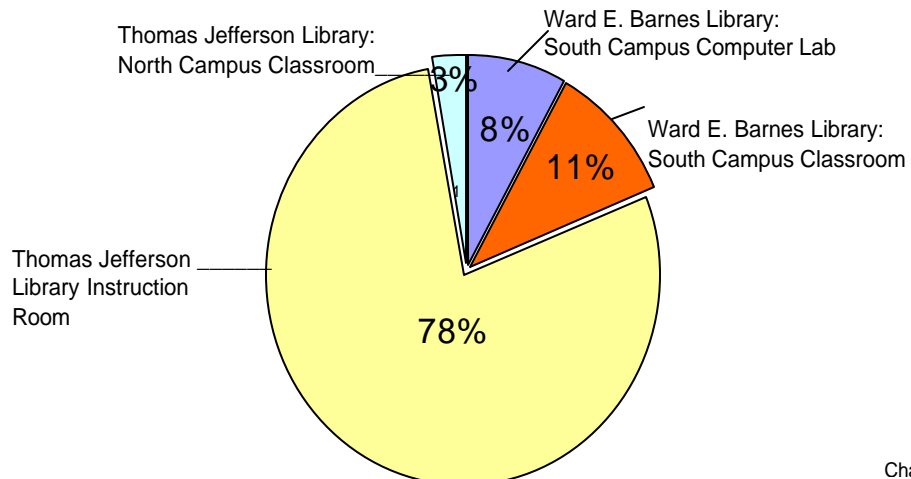


Chart 14

BI Faculty Survey  
**The librarian discussed resources that I felt were important to my students.**  
 (% rounded to the nearest whole number, n=36)

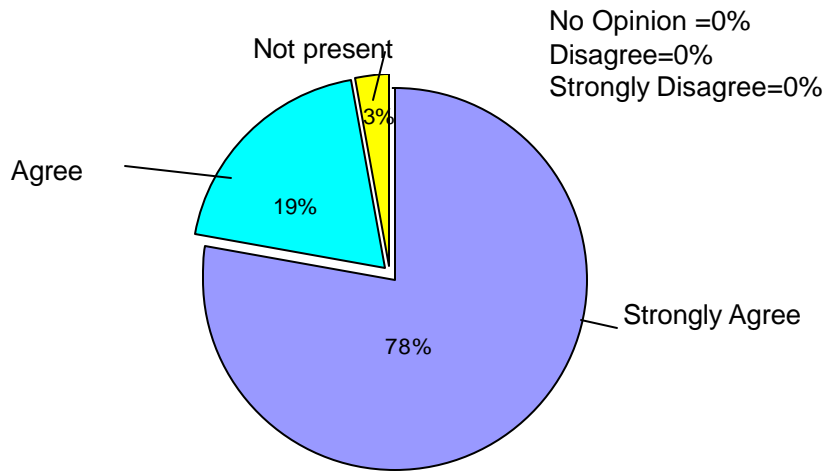


Chart 15

BI Faculty Survey  
**Was there evidence in assignments handed in after the library instruction session that your students were using more appropriate research sources?**  
 (% rounded to nearest whole number, n=36)

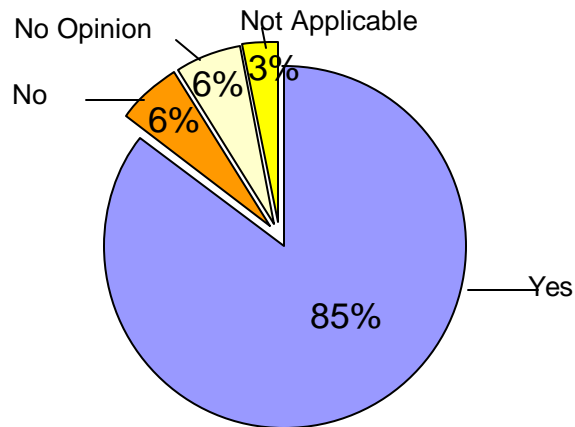


Chart 16



BI Faculty Survey  
After the library session, do you feel that your students have a better understanding between a free web based resource, such as Google, and a web based library database?  
(% rounded to nearest whole number, n=36)

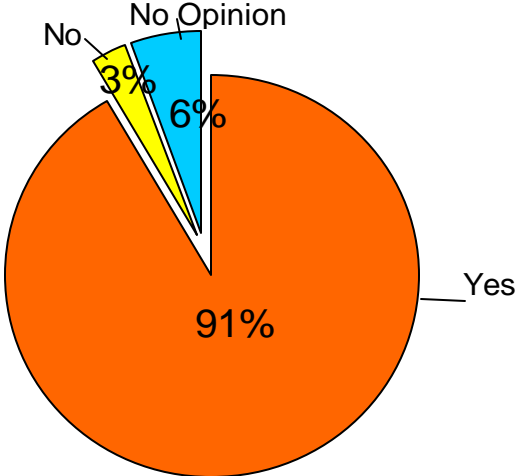


Chart 17

BI Faculty Survey

**Methods of presentation used by the librarian:**

(% rounded to the nearest whole number)

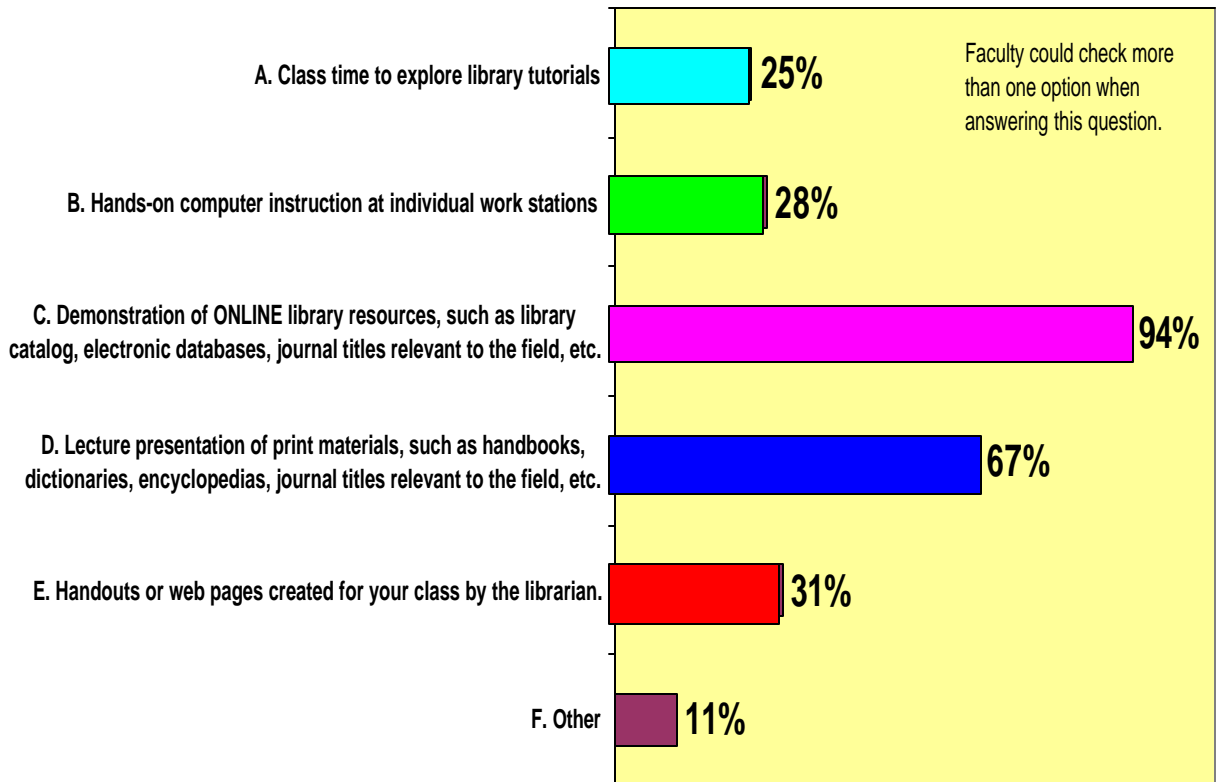


Chart 18

BI Faculty Survey

**Methods of presentation used by the librarian:**

(% rounded to the nearest whole number)

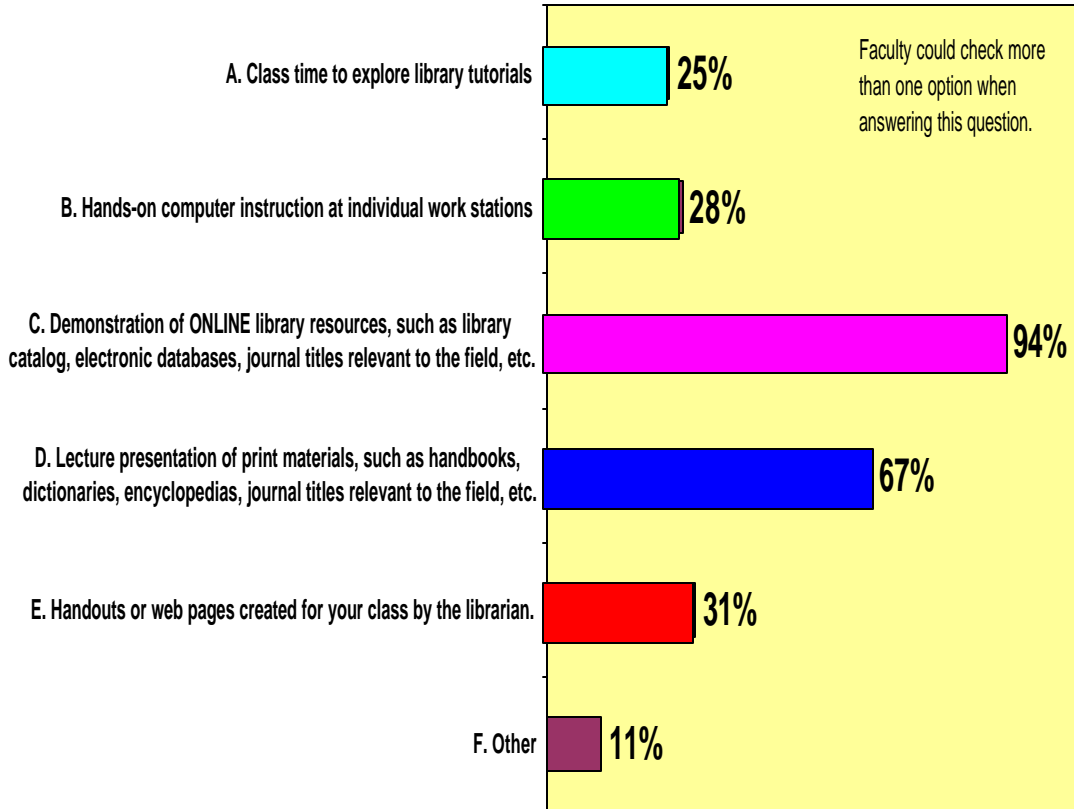


Chart 18