

Research Instruction Assessment Report

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Starting in September 2006, the reference department initiated a survey to be handed out at the close of each RI class. It underwent several iterations, and finally emerged as an online survey utilizing NSurvey, survey software provided by site license from the university. The online component allowed for librarians to administer the survey immediately after a class, while students were still at their computer stations. As a backup, it also is able to be printed, for those times when there is not hands-on instruction available. The survey was also administered by the Distance Services librarian at the Northwest Campus.

Very successful survey; close to 1000 responses so far. Wide range of class rank: 28% freshman, 21% senior, 20% graduate student. For most of the students surveyed this was their first or second class, and most (67%) self-reported their skills as intermediate.

Responses were almost evenly split as to whether a follow-up class was necessary. There are many possible reasons for this: it could be that the delivery was inadequate, and the students got little out of the experience. It could also be that the delivery was superb, but the attention span was lacking. Another factor could be that many of the RI classes were targeted toward a specific classroom assignment, and students rightly felt that the library instructor did everything they were supposed to. If we attend to the written responses (summarized below) we find that many students appreciated the content, and either want more of the same or the same material again; repetition is often the best tool.

And while close to 90% felt that the RI occurred at the proper time in the semester, it is interesting to note that 10% disagreed. It might be of interest to note that the vast majority of these votes were provided by graduate students in research-intensive classes, accompanied by comments such as 'should have occurred earlier in my graduate career,' indicating that the fault was not necessarily with the classroom instructor, but that the graduate program should include a library component.

When we turn to the written responses, we get more of an insight into what students retained and wish we had taught. A significant number stated that they would like another class on exactly what we went over; they needed another identical session to help have the information stick. This will be useful to help argue that we need an IL program. A lot of students requested help in 'doing general research,' 'more research skills,' 'how to actually conduct research,' 'ways to access more information,' etc. It would appear that those we reached were hungry for more of the same. The task ahead is to convey that excitement and need to the faculty and have it translate into more classes with us.