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Research and Writing in the Disciplines: A Model for Faculty-Librarian Collaboration

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Research and Writing in the Disciplines: A Model for Faculty-Librarian Collaboration

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Our project

Funded by a grant from the Association of College and Research Libraries program “Assessment in Action: Academic Libraries and Student Success”

What happened: Faculty and librarians collaborated to support student research and writing in Writing in the Disciplines courses.

Our sources of data: Students completed surveys at the beginning of each semester. Students, as well as faculty and librarians, also completed surveys at the end of each semester.

Purpose: To determine *the impact* of faculty-librarian partnerships on students, faculty, and librarians and to determine which forms of collaboration were viewed by the participants as *most effective*.

Participating WID classes:

Fall 2015

- Exercise Science
- History
- Sociology
- Social work
- German

Participating WID classes:

Fall 2015

- Exercise Science
- History
- Sociology
- Social work
- German

Spring 2016

- Exercise Science
- History
- Psychology (2)
- COJO
- Spanish
- Justice and peace studies (2)
- English

The nature of the collaboration

What was covered: The librarians were to teach research methodologies specific to the form of **disciplinary research** done in the course and agreed upon with the professor.

How it was covered: **Formats ranged** from one-shot information sessions to multiple interventions, including one-on-one work with students.

Librarians did not grade student work, nor were they involved in the grading process.

The surveys

Students in participating courses **were surveyed at the beginning of the term and at the end of it.**

The surveys included both **quantitative and qualitative** questions.

Online surveys were **voluntary and anonymous.**

The surveys

➤ *Students*

Survey 1: aimed to assess **previous exposure** to library research and **comfort level** in conducting research.

Survey 2: asked students to **reflect on their experience** of working with a team of librarian/faculty during the course and its **impact, if any, on their comfort level with research as well as the usefulness of the collaboration.**

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➤ *Librarians and faculty*

Librarians and faculty completed surveys in which they **reflected on their experience**, **offered observations about the collaboration**, and considered the **impact on students' work**.

Results: *Students' confidence in their research skills increased*

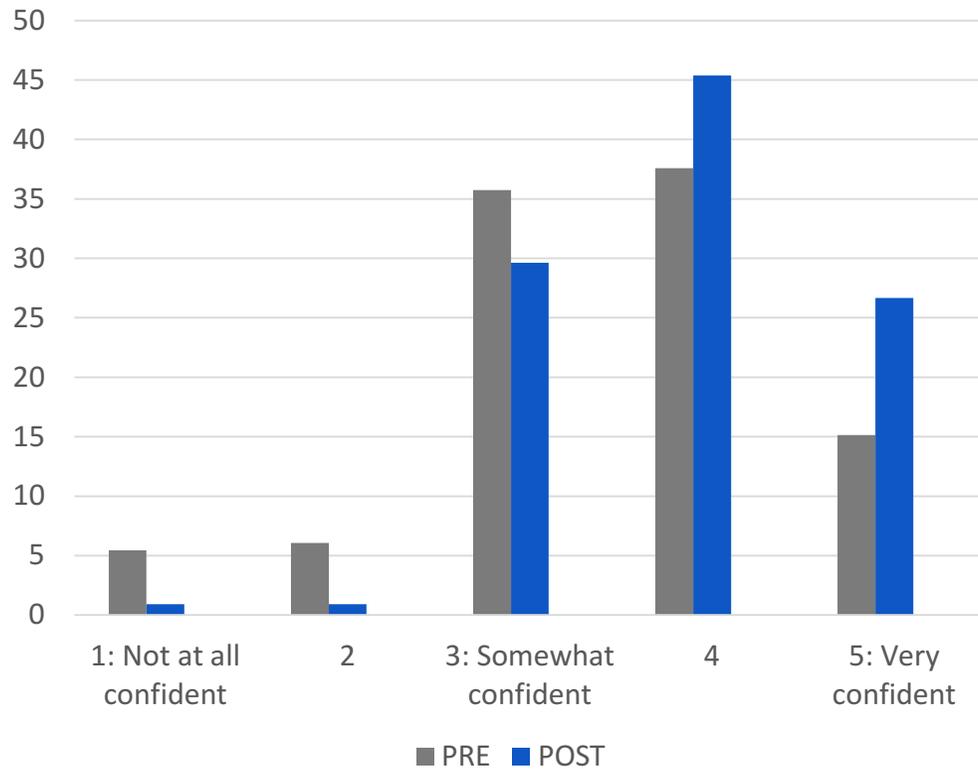
Fall 2015 + Spring 2016

Using the scale below, **how would you rank your level of confidence in...**

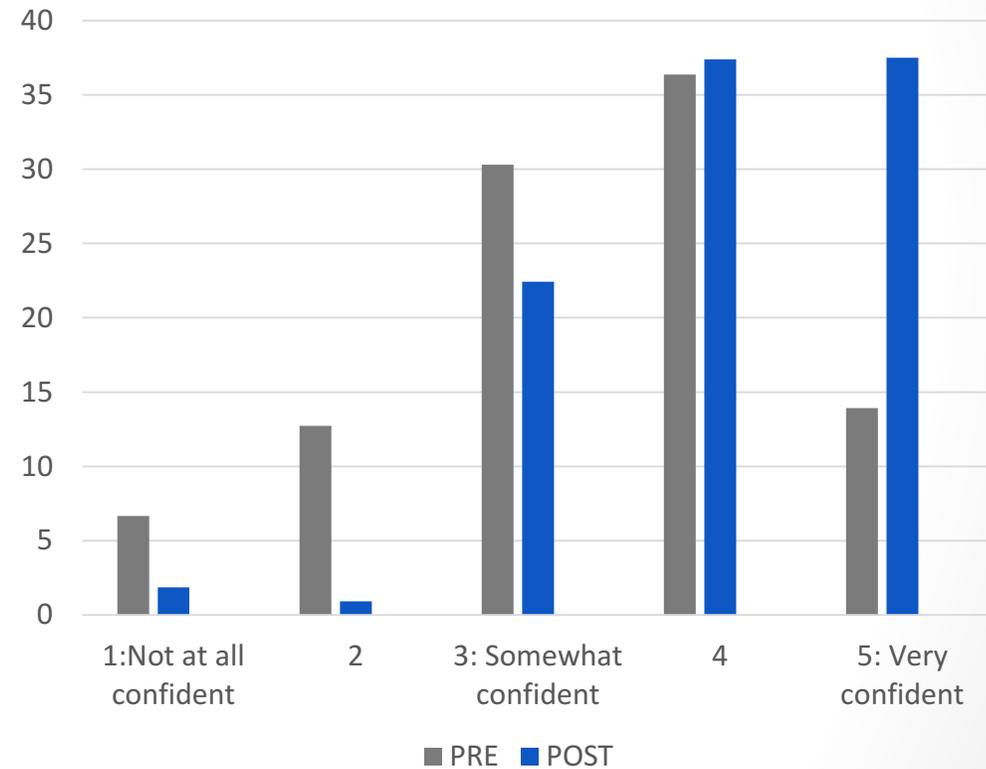
Question		Not at all confident 1	2	Somewhat confident 3	4	Very Confident 5
Using the library and its resources for general academic research	PRE N=165	9 5.5%	10 6.1%	59 35.8%	62 37.8%	25 15.2%
	POST N=108	1 0.9%	1 0.9%	32 29.6%	49 45.4%	25 23.1%
Using the library and its resources for research in your major	PRE N=165	11 6.7%	21 12.7%	50 30.3%	60 36.4%	23 13.9%
	POST N=107	2 1.9%	1 0.9%	24 22.4%	40 37.4%	40 37.4%

Changes in levels of confidence in library skills before and after WID courses

Using the library and its resources for general academic research



Using the library and its resources for research in your major



Percentage shift from low/neutral to high levels of confidence between beginning and end of course

*Confidence using the library and its resources for **general academic research**:*

16%

Upward shift in confidence

*Confidence using the library and its resources for **research in your major**:*

25%

Upward shift in confidence

Results: *Students found the faculty-librarian collaboration useful to their learning*

Please rate your level of agreement regarding library instruction (experience) in this course

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total number surveyed	Percent Agree + Strongly Agree
The library instruction related directly to the course.	6 5.6%	1 0.9%	8 7.4%	43 39.8%	50 46.3%	108	86.1%
Materials presented or covered were relevant to the course	6 5.6%	1 0.9%	6 5.6%	48 44.4%	46 42.6%	108	87.0%
The library instruction was helpful or worthwhile	7 6.5%	4 3.7%	7 6.5%	46 42.6%	44 40.7%	108	83.3%

Results: *What Students found Valuable*

- “How to use RefWorks was the biggest thing. However, I also found that **meeting with the librarian one-on-one** was extremely helpful and trying to find sources for research.”
- “I think it was extremely useful learning to access the different databases that fall under each class category. It was **applicable to all my classes** and even some work I did outside of class.”
- “I would recommend having every class meet with you if you have the time. It was **incredibly helpful to meet at the library and learn about resources in relation to my topic.**”
- “Research is key, make sure to take a lot of time doing it. **The more in-depth the research, the easier the writing process will be.**”

Results: *What Faculty found Valuable*

Improved quality of student work:

- “Quality of research was **higher.**”
- “This year, **students gathered more resources** in their final paper. I am certain this is because I required it and gave students more tools (access to [librarian] and her expertise).”
- “**The quality of their research also is vastly different**, of course, and they walk away with valuable skills in navigating online databases and citation skills, as well as in finding sources related to their topics.”

Results: *What Faculty found Valuable*

Broader benefits of the collaboration:

- “**I think this type of collaboration is vital for students...having** a librarian available to assist students is a great benefit to them and to me.”
- “I have **thoroughly enjoyed the collaboration and learned much** in the process.”
- I try whenever possible to collaborate with [the librarian] in my core classes, and I appreciate that many **students seem to become energized about their research topics after our library instruction sessions**, more so than other classes where we haven't had the session.
- Personally, I love collaborating with other teachers because **I think that we provoke each other into more extended or in-depth discussions, with each other and with students**. I thought this was true for this experience with [the librarian].

Results: *What Librarians found Valuable*

- “There is a **better relationship** between the librarian, the students and the faculty.”
- “...It was valuable for me **to be able to see where the needs were/adapt my teaching style to help students where they were instead of where I thought they might be**, and for the students to understand all the of the various ways I could be of assistance throughout the research process.”
- “Collaborating with faculty is often the only way we, as librarians, can reach students **so it’s crucial we partner with them.**”
- “**I am better able to tailor my instruction sessions and the individual research appointments** I have with students to meet those goals.”
- “The benefits to students is obvious – **they get a more well-rounded learning experience....**[students] like knowing they can ask me questions without worrying about it affecting their grades.”

What works best?

What works best: *Faculty-librarian communication and coordination*

- Faculty and librarians are on the same page regarding **outcomes for student learning** in the area of research.
- Early on, librarians and faculty **communicate about the nature of the research assignment.**
- Early on, teams clarify where the **roles** of librarian and faculty are distinct and where they overlap. Be explicit.
- **Ongoing communication** between faculty and librarian is key (early and often!).

What works best: Faculty-librarian communication and coordination

FACULTY:

- “**Plan ahead before the start of the semester** to schedule time the librarian is available to attend your class.”
- “...[I]t is **essential to discuss** what goals the faculty member has for the collaboration and provide the librarian with a syllabus copy, and specific course assignments if the research librarian will be actively involved in assisting students.”
- “Do **be in contact** – discuss what you need.”

What works best: Faculty-librarian communication and coordination

LIBRARIANS:

- “Frequent communication with the faculty member is **vital.**”
- “I think the biggest ‘Do’ is to make sure to **keep honest and open communication** flowing throughout. Set **expectations and goals** beforehand about what you each see your role to be, and **stay positive.**”

What works best: *One-on-one individualized instruction*

- **Just a presentation from the librarian—especially** if it is more generic and not specific to the assignment—**is not enough**. Students were less satisfied in those courses, stating that they had seen these presentations before.
- The library element should not be a stand-alone presentation. Research is a process so the ideal is **multiple interventions**, both whole group and individual.
- Faculty, librarians, and students all commented on how valuable **one-on-one instruction** was for student learning.
- One way to facilitate this is to offer **extra credit** if the student has a one-on-one meeting with the librarian and writes a reflection.

What works best: Seeing the librarian as teaching critical thinking, research as a process

Many of the faculty and student survey respondents mentioned how much working with the librarian saved time, energy, made life easier, etc. This, of course, is good...

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BUT...

It helps if all three parties—faculty, librarians, and students—recognize that what the librarian is doing is **teaching critical thinking about research**, not just providing tools

We see larger systemic problems: #1

Although these were Writing in the Discipline courses and usually fell somewhat later in students' academic careers, 19% of the Fall semester students and 24% of the Spring semester students reported **no prior experience doing library research**.

While almost three quarters of the students had experienced library instruction sessions before in other courses (Fall: 72%; Spring: 73%), **the remaining quarter had received no instruction of any kind up to that point**.

One possible solution:

Scaffolding

Major:

**Discipline-specific
approaches to research**

**Essential skills embedded in
the core curriculum**

***First Year Experience:* dispositions and ways
of thinking about IL.**

In our three-phase core curriculum revision proposal for an IL Component

Phase 1:

First-Year Experience Co-Curricular Module

Through exercise and activities, this required module, **led by University Libraries**, will introduce students to ***dispositions and ways of thinking about information***.

This brief introduction will set up students to continue developing information/research skills through specific application in both the core curriculum and in their majors.

Phase 2:

Application in Core-area Courses. Information Literacy is attached to core curriculum objectives:

1. Thinking critically and creatively

- logically evaluating information, arguments and evidence
- interpreting data by explaining its meaning and significance
- being aware of one's own inferences and biases in order to confirm, correct, or develop ideas

2. Communicating effectively with diverse audiences

- accessing, evaluating, and using information appropriately

What this skills-development looks like in each course will vary. In addition to faculty members' own expertise, the research and instruction division of the University Libraries is an excellent resource to help core instructors develop information/research literacy course activities that help meet identified objectives in the context of the particular core-area criteria and the course. Assessment for this phase will be tied to core assessment.

Phase 3:

Discipline-specific information/research literacy

Each program that offers a major will develop a plan for addressing information/research literacy in its curriculum. Programs are encouraged to design a plan that is developmental (students gain increasingly sophisticated skills as they move through the major)

Each program's plan, which will include a description of how information/research literacy is integrated into their departmental assessment plan, will be submitted to the relevant college curriculum committee for endorsement.

We see larger systemic problems: #2

Faculty who have difficulty sharing authority and control, especially given the asymmetrical relationship.

- Just as we have worked to overthrow the idea of the writer writing in solitude, we work to overthrow the idea of the teacher teaching alone, captain of his or her ship.
- Our research shows that faculty who embrace a more collaborative view of their role as teachers fare better when working with their librarian colleagues.

Faculty who see support activities provided by the librarian as an obstacle to “coverage” of course content.

- Just as WAC encourages seeing writing as a means of covering course content, so should teaching research skills be seen as a means of coverage.