Demonstrating the Value of Academic Libraries Using Student Level Data: Linking Library Use and Experiences with Student Success

The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point is part of the University of Wisconsin System which is made up of 13 four-year universities and 13 two-year campuses. Enrollment is just under 9,000 with the majority of students pursuing baccalaureate degrees in 27 areas of study.

**AIA ➔ ASSESSMENT IN ACTION 2 YEAR PROJECT**

The library was selected to participate in the second cohort of the ACRL Assessment in Action Initiative. Team members consisted of myself, the instruction librarian and two Department of English faculty members. I was hired by the library at the beginning of the second year and took over the project after our instruction librarian resigned.

**Fall 2014 ➔ Students in 36 sections of a required Communications 101 class received a 50 minute library instruction session and were given a 3 question pre and post-test to be completed in Desire2Learn, the campus course management software. 603 students completed the pre-test and 430 completed the post-test. The questions on the pre-test and post-test were very similar and were evaluated using a 3 category rubric to score participant skill levels as novice, developing, or excellent.**

**INITIAL PROJECT DESIGN CONCERNS**

- Varying degrees of library experiences and exposure. At that time Communications 101 was not a required class for freshman. As a result 35 percent of participants were first semester sophomores to seniors. It was very likely that uppersclassman and many freshman (first and second semester) had a library instruction session in a previous class.
- No meaningful incentive. Simply completing the survey was enough to get credit regardless of effort.

**RESULTS OF TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF DATA COLLECTED BEFORE ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT REVISION**

Examined the text to determine if the initial intervention had an impact on the "sophistication of language" as it relates to information literacy and the research process. When asked what type of resource would generally be the most credible and authoritative, use of the phrase "peer reviewed" increased by 25 percent from the pre to the post-test (despite 173 less participants in the post) and the word scholarly was used 35 percent more. When asked about the research process students mentioned contacting a librarian 22 times on the pre-test and 65 times on the post.

**STILL WORKING WITH THE DATA!**

We recently ran student ID numbers to determine if there was a correlation between library instruction and the use of library services and resources and student retention from the spring of 2015 when the data was collected and spring of 2016. Students who answered "YES" to 5 or more of the 8 library questions were retained at nearly a 13 percent higher rate than students that answered "YES" to 4 or fewer questions.

**UWSP AND THE LIBRARY**

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**TIME TO REDESIGN!!**

Spring 2015 ➔ 130 students in 6 sections of Communications 101 completed a hard copy version of the initial research survey with additional demographic and library services and resource use questions. This was completed in class before the instruction session. There was no pre-test. The revised assessment tool gathered student ID numbers which were anonymized by Institutional Research. Eight library “touch points” were added. The data showed that students with more exposure to library instruction and library resources had higher grade point averages!

**THE RESULTS**

Students who responded “YES” to the first 5 questions regarding library instruction experiences and use of library services and resources had notably higher grade point averages than those that answered “NO”. Students who indicated having one library instruction session had a .34 higher GPA when compared to those that indicated they had never had a library session. The difference was even more pronounced (.48 difference in GPA) between students who had two or more library instruction sessions and students that had one or none. It was interesting to find that students who responded “YES” to having had library instruction either in a high school or at another institution had slightly lower GPAs than students that did not. Students who had used EBSCOhost or another database and had instruction on distinguishing between types of sources also had lower GPA’s than students that did not. This is something that deserves further exploration.

**Library Assessment and Breaking New Ground at UWSP!**

The results were shared with colleagues across the state at the Wisconsin Library Association Conference and also with colleagues on campus at our annual Teaching Conference. The results brought local interest across the disciplines. Recently I was elected co-chair of the campus Assessment Committee. Sharing what we learned brought awareness to the fact that the library is as interested in student learning as departments are.