Assessing History Student Research Activity and Learning Outcomes Through the Understanding Library Impacts Project

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What is ULI?
Understanding Library Impacts (ULI) is a questionnaire-based tool that originated in a dissertation project by Derek Rodriguez (UNC). It measures student engagement with the library during “high impact” activities and seeks to link and translate this usage to broader departmental and campus learning outcomes.

Survey Timeline
- **May 2011** - Responded to invitation to participate in dissertation study
- **Fall 2011** - Survey conducted in four 300 and 400-level history courses (n=15, 37.5% response)
- **Fall 2012** - Survey expanded to nine 100 to 400-level history courses (n=47, 45% response)
- **Spring 2013** - Final semester targeted 5 higher enrollment history courses, with particular focus on the 100-level research methods course (results pending)

Campus workload
- Completed Human Subjects Review Board training and application
- Identified target courses, completed library resources checklist and Curriculum Map checklist
- Distributed electronic survey to students
- Data management and reporting provided by Rodriguez

Key Features: Survey questions engaged the following areas

1. **Learning Activities Crosswalk**
   - Connecting Results to the Broader Campus Discussion
   - Critical Incident Technique (CIT) - “think back to a significant project or paper”

2. **Top 20 Most Used Resources, Fall ’11 and Fall ’12** (n=62)
   - Library catalog
   - Electronic journals
   - Electronic databases
   - Reference books
   - Interlibrary loan
   - Library instruction
   - Library computers

3. **Factors that were Helpful or Problematic in the Research Process** (Fall ’12)
   - Access to information
   - Access to tools
   - Aspects of space
   - Convenience
   - Ease of use
   - Getting help
   - Learning skills
   - Staff availability or affect
   - Student affect

4. **Critical Incident Questionnaire**
   - I was worried about being able to find enough information
   - I knew how to get started
   - I had confidence in my research skills
   - At times during this project I became anxious about finding information
   - I would be confident in my abilities to conduct research for a similar project

5. **Open-Ended Questions**
   - Top tool and alternate choice
     - Challenges faced and how they overcame them (57% info seeking, 49% academic tasks)
     - Recommendations for Library

Lessons Learned
- Faculty buy-in key (and communication!)
- Consider meaningful frameworks on your particular campus
- Survey-driven questions vs. question-driven surveys?
- Student identifiers = potential to connect to other assessment measures and performance data
- Assessment fatigue vs. longitudinal analysis

Bibliography