

**Libraries Equal Success: Improving Student Performance
Through Bibliographic Instruction**

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Abstract

The importance of bibliographic instruction in community colleges and its relationship to student success has been qualitatively studied through the use of surveys and interviews since the 1990's. I argue that this success can be quantitatively measured by analyzing student's grades. By comparing the grades of students that have received bibliographic instruction in a college level English class to those that have not, I hope to find concrete evidence that bibliographic instruction improves academic performance in community college students. This study can provide empirical data that can further reinforce the significance of library instruction and encourage more collaboration between librarians and faculty: promoting library resources and giving students a greater chance at success.

Introduction

In their piece *Assessing the Effects of Library Instruction*, authors Portmann and Roush performed a study which showed that library instruction increases library usage amongst college students (Portmann and Roush 463). In a paper drafted by The Academic Senate for Community Colleges, it was stated: "research shows that student use of library services serves as a predictor of student retention in academic success" (Bowman et al. 1). Through these two concepts, I can logically reason that there is a relationship between library instruction and student success. I define library instruction (also known as bibliographic instruction or information literacy programming), as the teaching process between librarians and students regarding the usage of library resources (both online and print), and research strategies.

While researching sources about information literacy in community colleges, I found that there have been many studies about the topic, going back to the 1990's. They were mainly qualitative studies that assessed various information literacy programs and used surveys and

interviews of students and teachers to gauge the success of the instruction sessions.

Unfortunately, I could not find many studies that had more concrete evidence such as the actual grades of community college students involved in information literacy programming. While qualitative data is helpful to determine the impact of information literacy instruction in community colleges, the goal for my research project is to get harder evidence to assess the success of these programs. The central question of this project is: does bibliographic instruction improve academic performance in community college students? I theorize that it does based on the fact that bibliographic instruction leads to increased library usage, and increased library usage leads to a higher rate of student success. I argue that this can be quantitatively proven by analyzing the grades of community college students that have received instruction, to those that have not.

Literature Review

The Portman and Roush piece helps my argument by determining that information literacy programming does increase library usage amongst community college students. They surveyed students on how many times they have used the library in the last three weeks and issued this survey before and after a bibliographic instruction session. Through this, they were able to find that library usage went up amongst the survey participants (Portmann and Roush 463). These results satisfied their first hypothesis: “library instruction does have a significant influence on library usage” (463). The second hypothesis of this piece was: “library instruction does have a significant influence on library skills” (463). They used a similar survey technique (before and after bibliographic instruction), and the questions quizzed students on hypothetical situations regarding what they should have learned in the BI sessions. The results of this part of the survey showed that there was no distinct difference between the answers students gave before

the session and after the session. This indicated that “instruction did not increase library skills” (463), proving their second hypothesis to be wrong. It showed that while bibliographic instruction sessions may increase library usage, it may not positively affect library skills in the same way. While this may seem harmful, to my argument, the authors pointed out that they used a convenience sample of students in their study which is not as reliable as other forms of sampling. Also, the fact that students got extra credit for participating in the study may have resulted in superficial answers. One way that Portman and Roush’s study may further the research and discussion of bibliographic instruction in community colleges is by encouraging librarians to tailor their teaching towards library skills and not just library usage. Perhaps less on what types of resources there are, and more on how to use them. In contrast, Roselle’s qualitative study (interviewing librarians about their BI methods) shows that librarians do emphasize library skills in their teachings and highlights the importance of collaboration between faculty and librarians (Roselle 25). This idea of librarians and faculty working together is also echoed in both of the Argüelles resources (Argüelles 95) (C. Argüelles) as well as Feldman and Sciammarella who surveyed both faculty and librarians in their study (Feldman and Sciammarella 491). By comparing these works, I have come to the logical conclusion that information literacy programs are more successful when faculty and librarians collaborate, and that this is an important topic regarding bibliographic instruction in community colleges.

Another theme that emerged from my research were strategies on how to improve the methods of information literacy programming. The Wilson and Sigal study looked at embedded librarianship, virtual library instruction online, as well as working more collaboratively with faculty. By using these methods, attendance of library instruction sessions at the community colleges they studied went from 533 students in 2012, to 1,740 students in 2013. The Warren

piece also discusses the successes of the implementation of online library instruction at the Maricopa Community Colleges in Phoenix (Warren 301). Small, Zakaria, and El-Figuigui took a unique approach in their study regarding the strategies and methods used in information literacy programming. Their study carefully documented students' "on-task" and "off-task" behaviors during library instruction sessions. Off-task behaviors included students looking at their phones, talking to each other, or getting up to get a drink of water. On-task behaviors included interacting directly with the assigned activities, asking questions, and responding to questions (Small et al. 103). By analyzing which strategies were being used during the session (strategies such as giving students hands on assignments and incorporating humor into the lesson) and correlating them with the amount of on-task and off-task behaviors that were occurring while certain strategies were employed, Small, Zakaria, and El-Figuigui were able to determine the effectiveness of each strategy. The Herring study analyzes librarians' confidence in their ability to perform library instruction. This level of confidence is directly related to the methods used in the BI session as well as the overall impact of the lesson. By analyzing the methods of library instruction and assessing the quality, I argue that this can help information literacy programming become more efficient, effective, and improve students' academic success.

Out of the seven studies I looked at for my research, six were done using surveys and one was done by telephone interviews. This shows me that much of the research done on this topic is qualitative, and that there is a large gap of information regarding quantitative analysis of bibliographic instruction in community colleges. It is my hope that by concretely showing the improvement of grades as a result of bibliographic instruction, this will further the interest in researching methods to improve information literacy programming.

Significance

This study contributes to scholarship by quantitatively analyzing the relationship between bibliographic instruction and the academic success of community college students. By providing empirical evidence of the positive impact of library instruction on students' grades, I hope to spark further interest into this more concrete methodology. By reinforcing the importance of bibliographic instruction in community colleges, I feel this could lead to even more collaboration between faculty and librarians regarding information literacy programming. More students attending BI sessions, could lead to more students visiting and utilizing libraries. An increase in library user numbers could lead to more funding for library resources such as new technologies and programming: greatly improving the library experience for students, faculty and librarians.

Methodology

The basis for my study is the theory that bibliographic instruction improves the grades of community college students. In order to prove this, I will compare the grades of students that have received bibliographic instruction, to those that have not. The Los Angeles Community College District has nine colleges and each college has multiple introductory English classes. From a sample size of nine English classes (one from each campus), I will find nine professors that have used the same syllabus in the previous year and plan to use the same syllabus in the next upcoming year. They must also have kept the records of students' grades from the previous year (that did the work from that particular syllabus) and also had not arranged a bibliographic instruction session for the class.

Once the nine courses and professors for my study are identified, I will distribute each course syllabus to the corresponding community college's librarian. I will ask the librarians to collaborate with the course professors and design a bibliographic instruction session based on the

material of the syllabus with which to teach the students of the course in the upcoming year. This bibliographic instruction session will be ninety minutes and will be taught to the students in the second week of the semester. This is because I want the students to be introduced to the professor, course, and syllabus in the first week to have some familiarity with the class going into the BI session. The librarians will teach the session and I theorize that the students will use what they learn from this session to complete their assignments throughout the semester. At the end of the semester, the grades of the students that attended the bibliographic instruction session will be compared to the grades of the students from the previous year that did not receive a bibliographic instruction session. It is my hope that the average of the students' grades from the most recent year, will be better than the average of the grades from the previous year: thus proving my theory to be correct.

Limitations

As my research has described, the quality of a bibliographic instruction session can vary. This depends on the capability of the librarian to teach the session as well as the methods used. Students from one campus may receive better instruction than students from another campus, skewing the results. Another possible factor that may affect my study is the availability of resources from one year to the other. The students from the previous year still had access to the library, however the resources might have not been the same. For example between the two years, the library may have acquired new computers or purchased a package of new e-resources. This would give an advantage to the most recent batch of students than the earlier students did not have. Finally, although grades are a concrete method of measuring student performance, the process of grading (especially in an English class) can be very subjective. Professors often adjust their grading scale based on the quality of work turned in by the students. This could also

manipulate the results of the study depending on whether or not the professor was a harder grader to one class versus the other.

Conclusion

It is my hope that this study furthers the research on ways to improve bibliographic instruction, whether it is by altering the methods of instruction, or expanding the circles of collaboration between librarians and faculty. By quantifying the levels of improvement of student success by looking at the grades, I feel that this will inspire other researchers to diversify their methodologies from surveys and questionnaires and gather more concrete evidence regarding the impact of information literacy programming in community colleges. For example, does bibliographic instruction lead to students taking more advanced classes? Do community colleges that promote BI have a higher graduation rate than schools that do not? Providing empirical evidence that bibliographic instruction directly correlates with an improvement in students' academic performance reinforces the idea that libraries lead to success: clearing a path for students to excel.

Appendix

Multi-Session Library Instruction for COH

KINGSBOROUGH



Robert J. Kibbee Library Library Information Literacy Program

MULTI-SESSION LIBRARY INSTRUCTION FOR COH—12

Description The purpose of this session is to teach students the types of information resources and search techniques in order to retrieve on target results from the information resources available. These activities are best introduced once students have a research question or topic statement.

Knowledge Practices—Students will:

- Identify types of information resources.
- Identify and evaluate authority.
- Formulate research questions.
- Determine the scope of your research.
- Establish strategies for effective searching
- Develop a Critical Thinking mind-set about research.
- How to cite sources

Materials for this session:

- Computer with Internet access
- Keywords worksheet
- Power Point presentation
- Hand-outs with learning activities

Time allotment: 180 minutes (Three sessions)

Framework for Information Literacy

- Information Has a Value
- Authority is Constructed and Contextual
- Research as Inquiry
- Searching as Strategic Exploration
- Research as Inquiry
- Scholarship as Conversation

By the Association of College and Research Libraries

Learning Activity 1: Small group discussion of the information cycle and the types of information sources. Students participate on finding and locating books in the library catalogue. They will search for reference sources as well.

Learning Activity 2: A research discussion on the foundational purpose of conducting research. Each student will consider a topic to search; students will identify all keywords related to the topic of their interest. Several students will list some of the keywords found. (Note: It is imperative that all students participate in the process of listing the keywords in order to develop this skill.)

Learning Activity 3: An exercise to establish the different relations between keywords and to make emphasis on the purpose of the Boolean operators in an advanced search module- students will be able to design their own search strategy.

Learning Activity 4: Students will complete a search process using the keywords and reviewing the results. They will also print a relate article of interest.

Learning Activity 5: Students will select a Website from the list and complete the worksheet "What's in a Web page?" (a checklist to determine the authority, validity, and accuracy of the content of the Webpage selected)

Assessment: Students complete an open-ended question pre-assessment online prior to the first library session. A performance assessment will be conducted at the end of semester

Criteria:

To complete the Learning activities, students will participate and fill out a work sheet given at the first session.

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