Assessing Information Literacy Skills of First Semester Freshmen

Thesis

With information literacy instruction embedded in University Strategies course curriculum, NSU first year students will increase their ability to evaluate websites for reliability and to select appropriate resources for an information need. This would be a successful first step toward accomplishing one of NSU’s institutional learning objectives for its graduates “to be able to evaluate the reliability and comparative worth of various information.”

Methods and Materials

Pre-Test Survey

Students were asked to complete an online pre-test survey which consisted of four sections:

1. Self-Identification
2. Selecting Proper Resources
3. Evaluating Websites
4. Attitudes toward library

Within the Blackboard online learning management system, students were assigned to view 2 instructional videos; one about search strategies and advanced Google searching, the second about evaluating websites for reliability.

After viewing the explanation of 5 criteria to use when evaluating websites, students had to apply those criteria to three different websites by completing a quiz about each site.

Post-Test Survey

Students were asked to complete an online post-test survey which was identical in every detail to the pre-test survey.

Intervention: NO. 1

Online / Blackboard

Each section of University Strategies was assigned a time to meet in a library lab for face-to-face instruction with library faculty.

During this interactive workshop, students compared and contrasted the differences across information resources Google, Google Scholar, EBSCO’s Academic Search Premiere and the NSU Libraries Catalog.

Intervention: NO. 2

Face-to-Face / Lab

Summary of Findings

- Participation
  
  Fall 2015 UNIV1002
  
  N=274
  
  This research had a possible sample of 823 student test subjects who enrolled in Fall 2015 University Strategies. Of those, 478 students completed both information literacy interventions. A total of 274 students gave consent to participate and took both the pre and post test surveys – they are the focus of our study.

- Evaluating Websites

  While 78% of students self-identified as having learned or stated already having the know-how and confidence to correctly evaluate websites, post-test survey results indicate that only 28% of the students could successfully do so.

- Selecting the Correct Resource

  Students showed improvement from pre to post tests in their ability to select the correct resource for the information need on all but one category where their familiarity and confidence with the Google search engine left little room for improvement.

- Retention

  The data showed that 91% of those students who completed all four information literacy components in the Fall of 2015 enrolled for the Spring 2016 semester, compared to a 77% spring enrollment rate for those students who did not complete all four of the information literacy components.

Conclusions

- Students are not successfully learning how to evaluate websites – we need to utilize new criteria and possibly new methods for teaching this.
- Students did learn how to select an appropriate resource for an information need – we will continue teaching this hands-on lesson.
- Students who participated in and completed all of the information literacy coursework tended to be retained into the following semester – our future instruction will emphasize the importance of students submitting all of their coursework.

The value of NSU Libraries to the university is more than a vessel for books and databases, we provide instruction tied directly to students achieving NSU’s institutional learning objectives for its graduates.

References


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ACRL

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Additional Information

Test your information literacy skills and learn more about our project.

Scan the QR code, or visit:
http://tinyurl.com/hB6ao3a