

First-Year Seminar Information Literacy Program

Final Report for Fall 2018

Submitted by Christine Bombaro, Associate Director, Waidner-Spahr Library

Summary

Each year, the library participates in the First-Year Seminar (FYS) experience by assisting faculty members with integrating the college's information literacy (IL) goals into their courses. At the conclusion of the fall semester, we examine various elements of the program to identify areas that are working well and those we may improve the following year. Key results from this evaluation include:

- All inputs, feedback, and data indicate that the Library's FYS IL program is overwhelmingly successful and effective. Students and faculty alike report that skills learned in IL sessions are immediately useful and transferable, and that they help boost student confidence in their work.
- Discussions need to be initiated with faculty regarding whether and how far to "standardize" IL in the FYS experience.
- Faculty and students agree that IL sessions should emphasize locating appropriate sources, evaluating sources, and citing.
- The Library's Academic Integrity tutorial, which is the first step toward plagiarism prevention at Dickinson, is an effective teaching tool.

Introduction

A number of new librarians and existing librarians who had not previously served as FYS liaisons took on responsibility as liaisons to first year seminars in fall 2018. In order to ensure consistency in FYS IL instruction, during the summer of 2018, all FYS liaisons engaged in an all-day, in-house workshop. We reviewed and discussed the college's goals for the FYS program and good teaching practices, and we shared ideas for creating lesson plans and assignments.

The First-Year Seminar resolution passed by faculty vote in 2015 states that "All seminars will include at least one assignment that requires students to a) seek and evaluate information on a topic relevant to the seminar, and b) integrate that new knowledge into a project that allows students the opportunity to engage in scholarly conversation appropriate to the first-year level." It adds, "Revision is essential to developing the skills of critical analysis, writing, and information literacy. For this reason, all seminars will teach the research and writing process so as to provide opportunities for revision." This report focuses on the various ways in which teaching inputs and perceptions of students and faculty members demonstrate that these important aspects of the FY mandate are being met successfully. For this report, four areas were closely examined:

- Instructional data – Includes instruction statistics and the type of IL work conducted with each FYS. See page 2.
- Course evaluations – This data came from a questionnaire that was added to the FYS course evaluation packet. See page 5.
- ACRL IL Surveys – Librarians tested these new pilot surveys created by the Association of College and Research Librarians (ACRL) as a simple but instructive manner of assessment for situations when long-term studies are not feasible. See page 10.

- Faculty survey – This annual survey asks faculty about their impressions of the IL program and their students’ performance on research assignments. See page 11.

Also reported are the results of the college’s required Academic Integrity Tutorial, which was completely overhauled for the 2018 fall semester. See page 14.

Instructional Data

Sessions Held

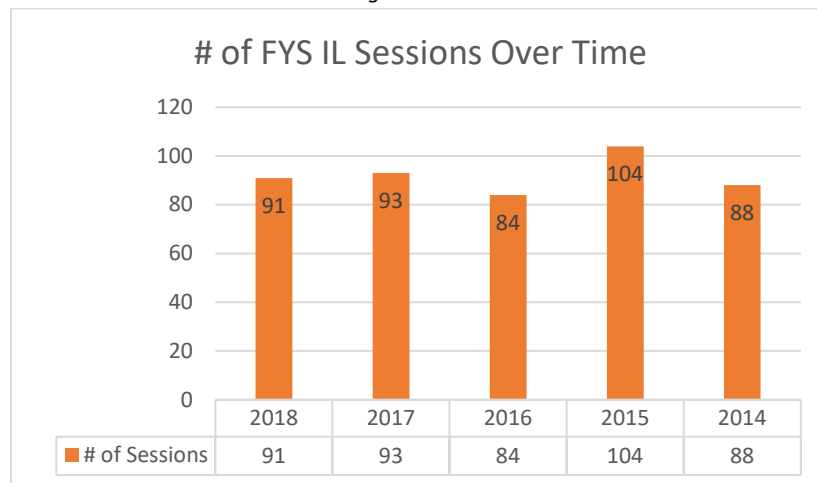
In fall 2018, 42 First-Year Seminars were offered and 11 librarians were assigned as liaisons to them. As illustrated in Table 1, all FYS instructors scheduled librarians for at least one in-person IL session (with two Learning Communities combining IL sessions), and 91 FYS IL sessions were taught. This pattern of sessions per seminar is typical, with most faculty requesting 2 or 3 sessions. For more detail about IL classroom activity, see Appendix A – Class Visits and Activity by Instructor.

Table 1

# of IL Sessions	# of Seminars
0 sessions	0
1 session	12
2 sessions	16
3 sessions	11
4 sessions	4

The number of IL sessions taught in individual FYS courses is illustrated in Figure 1. Note that 2015 is an anomaly because the college admitted an unusually large first year class. Librarians’ work with FYS remained steady this year despite the turnover of two liaison librarians.

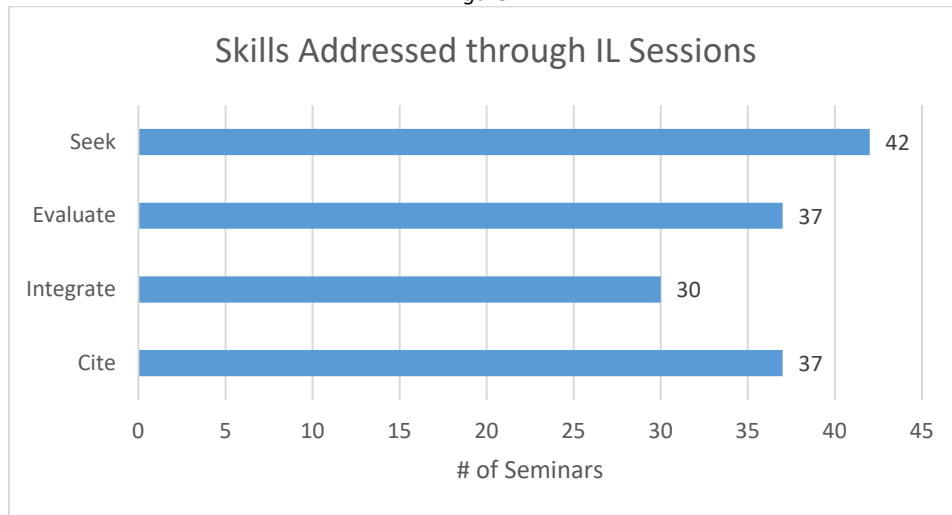
Figure 1



Content of Sessions

As noted, the current FYS resolution states that students seek, evaluate, integrate, and cite information through writing and revision. Within the context of IL sessions and librarians' other work with their designated seminars, these skills were addressed as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2



Research Assignments Resulting from an IL Session

Many FYS instructors required graded homework immediately following the instructional session or graded in-class work. As noted in Figure 3, 93% of the seminars included a reinforcing exercise during or following the IL session; of those, 69% were graded either by the instructor or the librarian, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 3

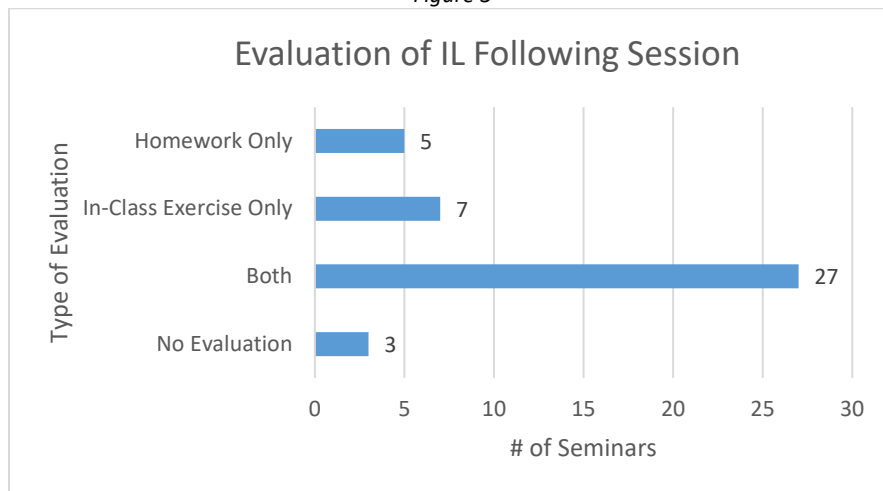
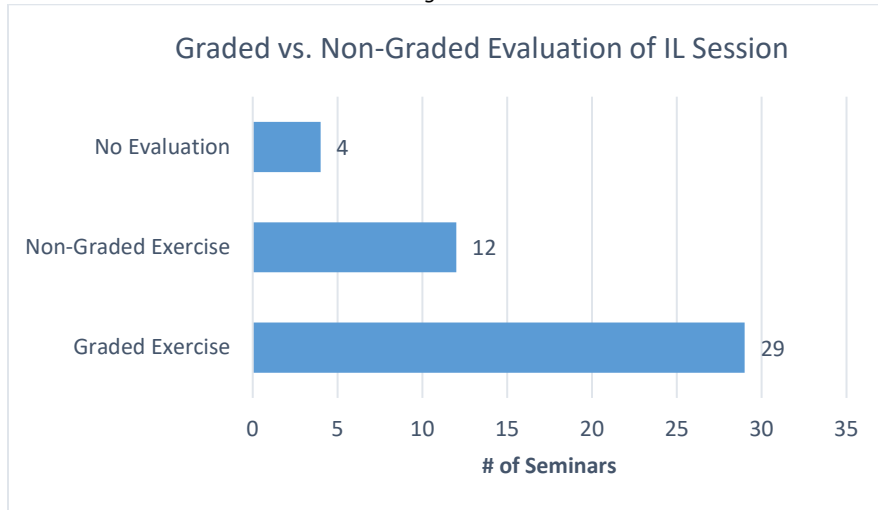


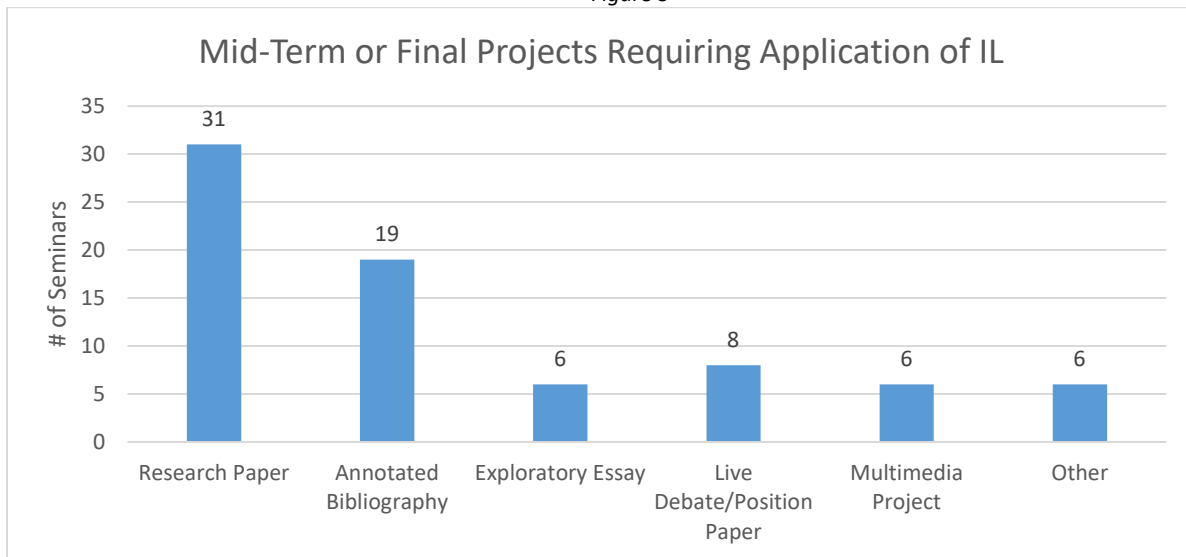
Figure 4



Mid-Term or Final Research Projects

All FYS professors required students to complete at least one mid-semester or final project that included the application of information literacy skills; 24 required more than one such project. Specific types of assignments are noted in Figure 5.

Figure 5



Projects in the “Other” category included comparative analyses, cause/effect papers, and issue papers.

Online Tutorials

In 2015, the library staff developed a series of [information literacy tutorials](#) designed to help students learn how to do simpler research tasks so that librarians could concentrate on higher-order information literacy skills during their limited time in the classroom. In 2018, 21 instructors required their students to take at least one online IL tutorial. Tutorials used in FY seminars this year were:

- Choosing a Database
- Choosing Search Terms
- Distinguishing Among Source Types
- Finding Books
- Finding a Journal Article from a Citation

Course Evaluation

For the fourth year, a questionnaire on information literacy was added to traditional FYS course evaluations. The intent is for students to self-report on the extent of their IL experiences within the course. We received results from 539 students (85% of the Class of 2022)¹.

All but three seminars are represented in the data reported below. The ones that are not included in the results had their forms misdirected. They were subsequently located too late to be included in the data analysis, but their results are addressed in the comments when possible.

Course Evaluation

The course evaluation’s first question asked students to recall if they had the opportunity to practice library research skills during the course. All but three respondents answered affirmatively, as shown in Figure 6. The 38 surveys from the FYS sections not included in the original data set all indicated “Yes” to this question.

Figure 6

During this course, did you have an opportunity to practice library research skills? (For example, by searching databases, creating and analyzing a list of sources, etc.)



¹ The official 2022 class size was 635 students:
https://www.dickinson.edu/info/20048/history_of_the_college/1909/quick_facts/2

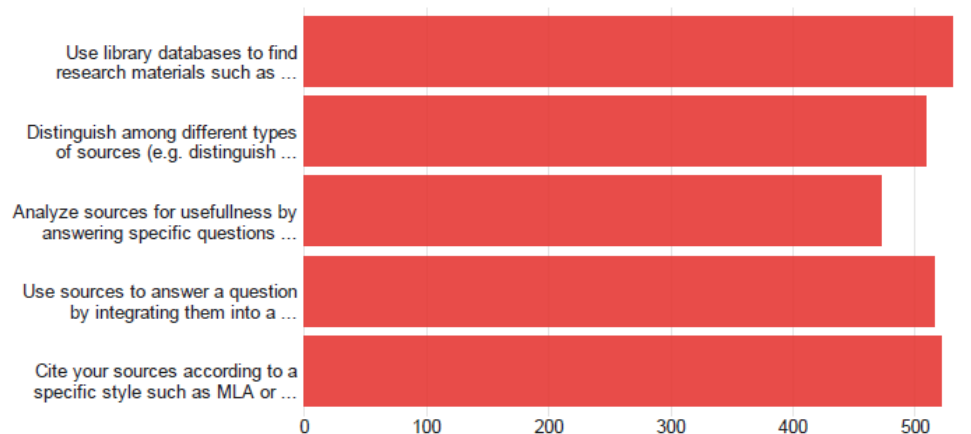
Students were then asked to identify the types of IL skills that were required as they completed course assignments that included a research component. Possible answers for this question were:

- Use library databases to find research materials such as books and journal articles.
- Distinguish among different types of sources (e.g. distinguish between scholarly and non-scholarly sources, or between books and journal articles).
- Analyze sources for usefulness by answering specific questions about their content (e.g. writing an annotated bibliography/source analysis).
- Use sources to answer a question by integrating them into a written assignment such as a research paper, exploratory essay, or other project.
- Cite your sources according to a specific style such as MLA or Chicago.

As illustrated in Figure 7, most respondents reported that they engaged in a variety of research-related activity during their seminars. Respondents from the three seminars not included in the original data set reported similar results, with the majority of them having checked all 5 possible answers.

Figure 7

During this course, did you complete an assignment that required you to do any of the following (check all that apply):

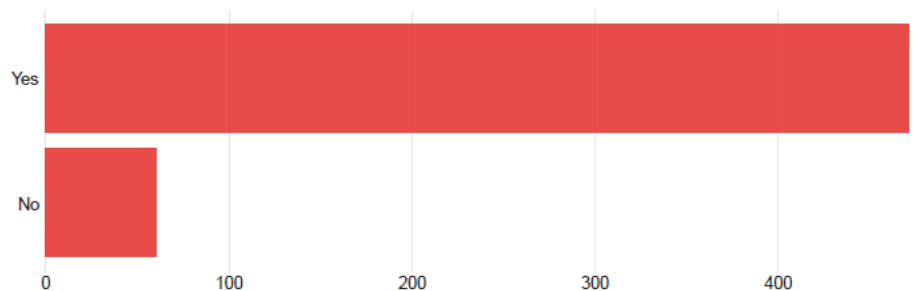


Selected Responses	Choice Count
Use library databases to find research materials such as books and journal articles	530
Distinguish among different types of sources (e.g. distinguish between scholarly and non-scholarly sources, or between books and journal articles)	509
Analyze sources for usefulness by answering specific questions about their content (e.g. writing an annotated bibliography/source analysis)	472
Use sources to answer a question by integrating them into a written assignment such as a research paper, exploratory essay, or other project	516
Cite your sources according to a specific style such as MLA or Chicago	521
Total	2548

One important aspect of the FYS course is revision in research and writing. As shown Figure 8, 471 respondents to the question “Did you revise your original research strategy after completing a first draft of a research assignment? (For example, by improving/adding to your source list or by revising an annotated bibliography/source analysis.)” reported that they had engaged in revision of an initial research strategy. Of the 38 respondents from the seminars not included in the original data set, 29 responded “Yes” to this question.

Figure 8

Did you revise your original research strategy after completing a first draft of a research assignment? (For example, by improving/adding to your source list or by revising and annotated bibliography/source analysis.)



Response	Choice Count
Yes	471
No	60
Total	531

The students from various seminars who answered “No” raise some questions. Considering that other students from the same seminars answered “Yes” in all cases, it is possible that these students misunderstood the question, did not themselves engage in revision even though it might have been a requirement, or did not understand that a given task constituted revision. It seems safe to conclude that students in all seminars had the opportunity to revise their research.

The next question asked students “Were the library research skills you learned needed in order for you to complete additional assignments during your First-Year Seminar?” As illustrated in Figure 9, 469 students answered affirmatively. Of the 38 respondents to this question from the seminars not included in the original data set, 26 answered affirmatively.

Figure 9

Were the library research skills you learned needed in order for you to complete additional assignments during your First-Year Seminar?



Again, considering other data points and the fact that most students from all seminars answered the question in Figure 9 affirmatively, it seems likely that students who answered negatively did so not because a research requirement was not part of the course.

The penultimate question asked students “What library research skills that you learned in your First-Year Seminar have been useful to you in other classes?” This was a free response section answered by 521 students, and many students listed more than one skill. Many students listed a number of skills that broke roughly into the broad categories shown in Table 2. (Responses from the three seminars not included in the original data set are not represented in Table 2.)

Table 2

What library research skills that you learned in your First-Year Seminar have been useful to you in other classes?	# of Responses 2016	# of Responses 2017	# of Responses 2018
Using databases to find books and articles	272	292	281
Citing sources	72	124	97
Navigating the library (physically and virtually)	57	66	73
Evaluating sources for appropriateness to the task	56	30	23
Distinguishing among source types	48	63	35
Creating an annotated bibliography	N/A	30	7
Refining a search	43	21	48
Other	36	50	63
Has not been useful in other courses	60	51	59

In the “Other” category, some students mentioned that they learned how to be patient during the research process, that they learned that there are a variety of databases to suit different needs, and that they learned how to use the Archives. In addition, some students mentioned specific courses for which they found their new skills to be useful, including Biology, Film Studies, Italian, and WRPG classes.

Students who responded that they did not use IL skills in other classes often added that their other courses were introductory-level (e.g. languages or STEM courses) and did not require research.

Finally, students were asked, “What challenges did you face while engaging in research for your First-Year Seminar?” This was a free response section answered by 511 students. Responses broke roughly into the broad categories shown in Table 3. (Responses from the three seminars not included in the original data set are not represented in Table 3.)

Table 3

What challenges did you face while engaging in research for your First-Year Seminar?	# of Responses 2016	# of Responses 2017	# of Responses 2018
Finding credible/relevant sources	150	194	215
Too many or too few sources available on the topic	106	74	66
No challenges or didn't do research for this class	49	54	48
Sources were not available locally; reliance on interlibrary loan services necessary	40	30	24
Integrating sources with writing	38	6	10
Citing sources	28	48	33
Sources found were beyond student's level of comprehension of the topic	23	14	18
Other	120	140	116

Representative comments from the students regarding their challenges include:

- “Sources were very challenging to read due to the language I’ve never heard.”
- “Accessing particular sources if they were not readily available online.”
- “Discerning when you need to use a reference vs. common knowledge.”
- “[Becoming] familiarized with different writing styles.”
- “Learning how to put multiple sources into conversation.”

Some students expressed trouble with finding sources related to “new” topics:

- “My research topic was new, so not a lot of content existed.”
- “Some topics I researched were very new, so there wasn’t much data on it.”

Like last year, some students misperceive that research process means they find sources that retroactively fit a preconceived notion:

- “Finding appropriate sources that fit my argument.”
- “Finding other scholars who are arguing what I am.”
- “Finding sources that best proved my point.”

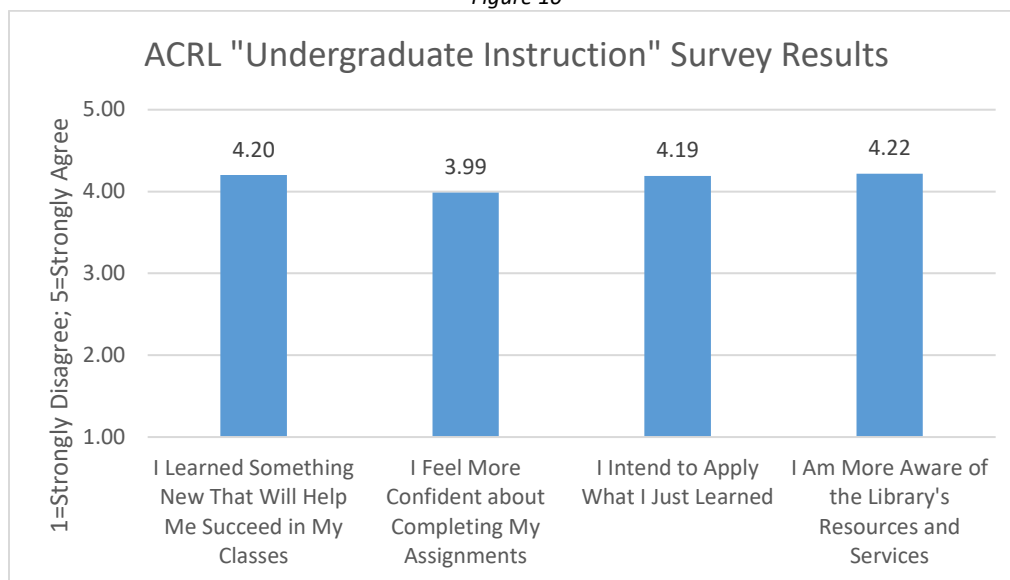
Others recognized that they were involved in a learning process:

- “I was challenged to find one source that was perfect, but by compiling a few together I found all the elements necessary to succeed.”
- “It was a new experience so it was scary. But my professor helped me through the process and it became a very fun learning experience.”
- “It was difficult to locate everything at first, but after practice it became easier.”
- “It was often difficult to figure out whether or not I was picking out sources of merit, however this skill was improved after my experience in my first year seminar.”
- “Sometimes there isn’t one clear answer and I have to look up multiple sources to find what I am looking for.”
- “[I experienced] several [challenges], and I am glad I faced them. I feel more prepared for the future.”

ACRL Pilot Survey

In 2018, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) released a series of pilot surveys to help libraries determine whether library programs and services are helping to assist undergraduate students in their coursework and enhance their learning.² To test the viability of this instrument, librarians who report to the Research and Instructional Services Team administered a survey titled “Undergraduate Instruction” in some FY seminars for which time allowed it to be completed. We received 186 Responses (30% of FY class) from 17 (40%) of the FY seminars. Each question used a Likert scale from 1 to 5 with 1 indicating “Strongly Disagree” and 5 indicating “Strongly Agree.” The questions and results are shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10



² ACRL Project Outcome for Academic Libraries, <http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/Field-testing-surveys.pdf>

As part of this survey, students were asked, “What was the most useful thing you learned in library instruction?” Their most common responses are recorded in Table 4.

Table 4

Response	# of Responses
Selecting the Best Databases for the Topic	52
Refining a Search	50
Citing Sources	28
Using the Library’s Website	24
Evaluating Sources	20
Other	20

Answers in the “Other” category included library map, using the classification system, and meeting the library liaison. In addition, 15 students commented further about wanting more help with creating citations when asked what more the library could do to help them succeed. Other recurring responses to this question included requesting additional help with:

- How to conduct research.
- How to evaluate sources.
- How to formulate a thesis.
- Acquiring sources not available in the library.
- Getting more feedback about their work from librarians.

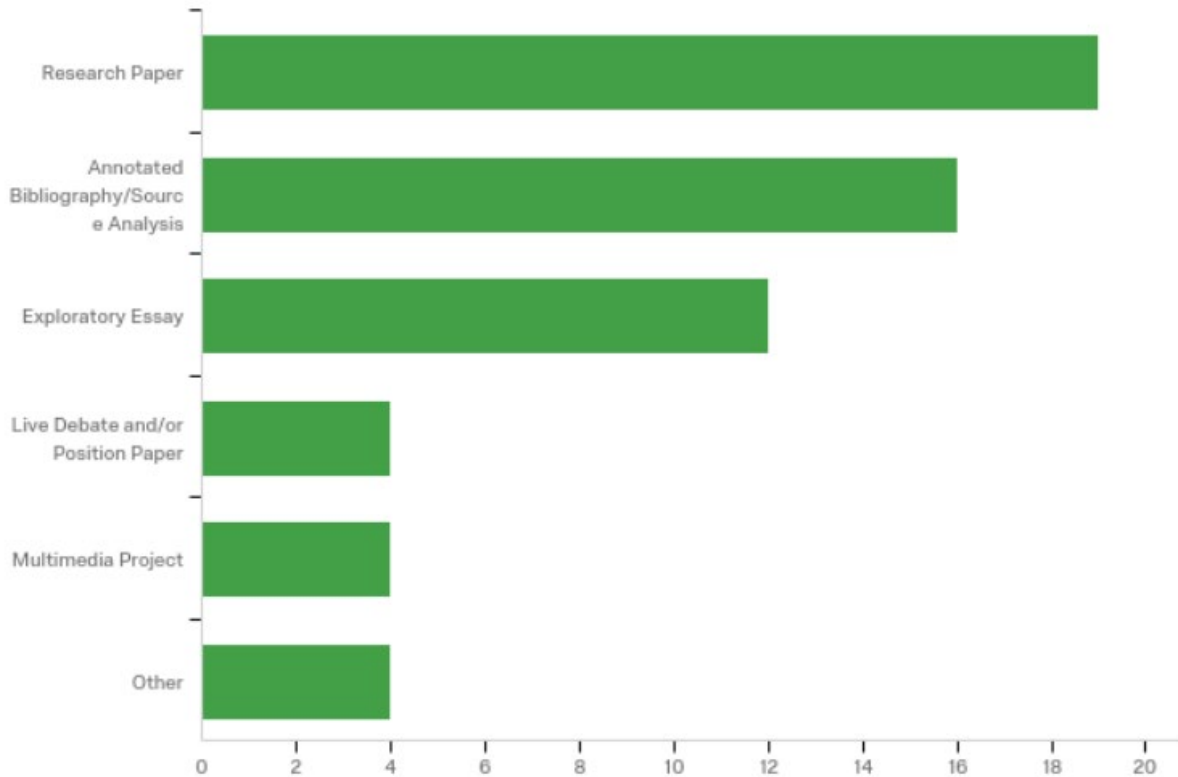
Faculty Survey

Each year, faculty members who teach First-Year Seminars are asked to complete a short survey about the effectiveness of library instruction in their classes. In 2018, 24 of 42 (57%) FYS faculty responded to the survey. It asked faculty to report on specific IL activities in their individual seminars, the details of which are noted in previous sections of this report, and asked for their perceptions of the FYS IL program.

All 24 faculty members confirmed that their students were required to complete a mid-term or final project that required the application of information literacy skills, with the breakdown illustrated in Figure 11.

Figure 11

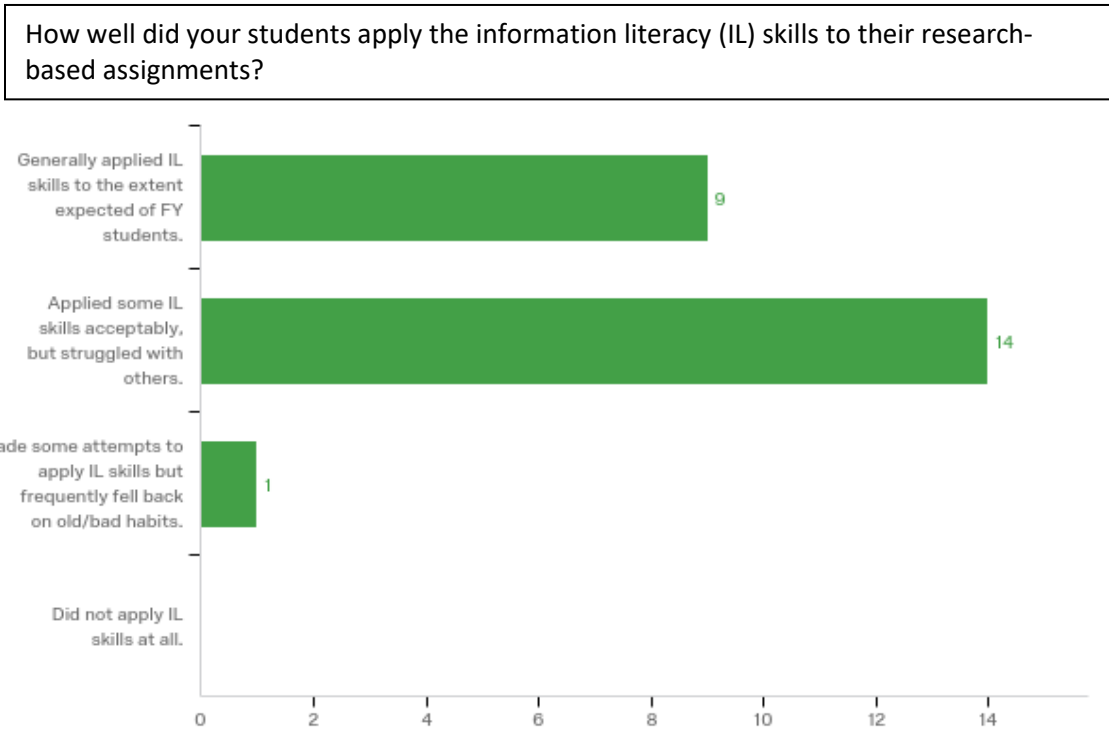
What type of assignment requiring the application of information literacy skills did you require your FYS students to complete?



This data matches what librarian observed for all seminars, with a traditional research paper being the most common assignment, followed by an annotated bibliography. Only two FYS faculty members who completed this survey required only one research assignment. “Other” assignments included citing exercises and archives analyses.

One question asked: “How well did your students apply the information literacy (IL) skills (e.g. finding information, evaluating information, citing information) to their research-based assignments?” The results are shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12



Faculty who responded that students struggled with some aspects of information literacy were asked to elaborate by responding to an additional question: “With what aspects of information literacy did your students struggle?” Thirteen FYS faculty members responded as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Students struggled with...	FA17	FA18
Citing	7	8
Evaluating sources	4	7
Identifying quality/scholarly material	4	3
Retaining or transferring skills to other research projects later in the semester	3	0
Finding sources	N/A	4

Additional comments included:

- “The notion that research is not as fast as a Google search. Surprisingly, I think they struggled with search terms.”
- “Simply uneven student commitment and skill-level.”

Faculty members were then asked: “What is working well about the library’s information literacy program for first-year students?” They provided 20 comments, summarized loosely by category below:

- Exposure to the library building and services – 6 comments
- Teaching students to use library resources – 6 comments

- Contact with library liaison – 6 comments
- Helping students with the intricacies of searching – 4 comments
- Librarian-designed homework or projects – 3 comments
- Citing/plagiarism instruction – 2 comments

Faculty were also asked what they thought could be improved about information literacy instruction in First-Year Seminars. They provided 16 comments, 3 of which were to the effect of “nothing.” Some comments that will be discussed with the next group of FYS faculty members include the following:

- Standardize and require certain elements of instruction – 3 comments
- Hold more sessions with each class – 3 comments
- Make sure all sessions include a hands-on activity – 2 comments
- More instruction on citing – 1 comment

Academic Integrity

Fall 2018 was the thirteenth year in which all new students—first-years, transfers, and internationals—were required to complete the library-developed Academic Integrity (AI) instruction, which is currently in the form of an asynchronous online tutorial delivered through Moodle. Non-compliance results in a hold being placed on the student’s account, thus preventing registration for spring classes during the mid-fall course registration period. This year 111 students had not completed the tutorial by deadline; however, all except two students who were required to take the tutorial did so by the end of the semester.

This year the tutorial was completely redesigned based on three years’ worth of data collection and comments from students. A team of librarians took a year to complete the new tutorial. The new version is somewhat lengthier than the old, but it was difficult to determine how long it took for students to complete it since more than half recorded taking a day or longer to complete it, most likely because they took a break and left the tutorial open without logging out. However, most students completed it in less than 60 minutes, with about 30% taking 30 minutes or less.

The revised tutorial appears to have been a successful learning experience. Most of the comments that students offered were positive, with some of those positive comments specifically referring to new aspects of the lesson such as use of translator services and added information about citation.

Effectiveness

Assessment results suggest that the tutorial continues to be informative and helpful for many students. When asked near the beginning of the tutorial, “Have you ever committed an act of plagiarism?” 80% responded that they had not. When asked the same question a second time near the end of the tutorial, there was a 42% increase in those who thought they might have engaged in plagiarism. This compares consistently with prior years as noted in Table 6.

Table 6

“Have you ever committed an act of plagiarism?”	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
“No” at beginning of tutorial	73%	73%	78%	77%	80%
“No” at end of tutorial	48%	50%	51%	48%	47%

Students are also asked to indicate how much of the material is new to them. Their responses had remained fairly consistent over the past few years until our 2018 redesign, as noted in Table 7. This year, more students than usual indicated that at least some of the information was new to them.

Table 7

“How much of this material was new to you?”	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
All of the information was new to me	1%	1.5%	1%	1%	2%
Most of the information was new to me	5%	4%	7%	9%	12%
Some of the information was new to me	40%	45%	43%	38%	46%
Very little of the information was new to me	42%	36%	36%	40%	30%
None of the information was new to me	12%	12.5%	11%	10%	9%
No response	0%	0%	2%	2%	1%

Additionally, students are asked if they found the tutorial to be effective. Those responses along with prior year comparisons are noted in Table 8.

Table 8

Did you find this tutorial to be effective?	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Extremely	6%	8%	10%	8%	11%
Very	43%	46%	49%	47%	40%
Somewhat	35%	33%	29%	31%	37%
Only a little	12%	11%	7%	9%	8%
Not at all	4%	2%	3%	3%	4%
No Response	0%	0%	2%	2%	0%

With the redesign, fewer students than in prior years responded “very” but more responded “extremely” and “somewhat.”

Comments

Comments were generally positive. Thirty-four students commented that the section on citation (almost entirely new) was particularly helpful. A few self-identified international students noted that plagiarism is not an issue in their home country and so found this to be a welcome lesson. Other students were surprised to learn that particular types of unattributed source use (such as patchwriting and paraphrasing) are plagiarism.

A few students complained that the tutorial was “boring” or “too long” or that they already knew the material from high school, but not enough to raise general concern. However, we agreed that some of the slides could have been removed or phrased more succinctly, so we have made some minor edits in that regard for 2019. Some students requested a printable handout of important points which we can easily provide. There were also a few complaints about lack of optimization on mobile devices which is largely out of our control, but we were able to solve some issues with image sizing and the navigation bar. Finally, some students thought that the tutorial would benefit from additional images or even short video clips; we agree and will work on improving visuals as is possible within our technological capabilities.

Conclusion

This report points to a highly successful season of partnership between librarians and First-Year Seminar instructors. Faculty members helped librarians renew focus on source selection and evaluation, and where students reported facing challenges it was with finding the most reliable and credible material, and with refining searches. What we do not see here is students struggling with the most basic aspects of the research process, such as navigating the library's website or choosing appropriate resources (e.g. library databases vs. Google). This year we had fewer faculty members report that students had trouble retaining what they had learned as compared to past years.

Both students and faculty members were asked about the aspects of research with which students struggled. The top two challenges reported by students were "finding relevant or credible material" and "narrowing or expanding searches." Another recurring challenge reported by students in the various surveys was citing. Faculty observed that students struggled with citing and evaluating sources.

It is clear that our instructional efforts should stay focused on finding quality material, evaluating it, and acknowledging it. What may require some discussion is how exactly to go about that. This year some faculty members suggested that we standardize IL instruction. This issue has been discussed in faculty FYS workshops periodically over the years, and there is invariably a mixed reaction to the suggestion. In addition, its practicality under the current autonomous teaching model is questionable. However, we can bring this before the next group of faculty instructors for discussion in May. Another area for discussion this year will be how best to encourage students to make appointments with their librarian when they have trouble completing research assignments.

Finally, data from the surveys given to liaison librarians and faculty suggest that there could be a link between the use of the library's online information literacy tutorials and the seminar professors reporting the most successful information literacy experiences. This information is currently not statistically significant. We will examine this in future years to see if there is in fact a correlation.

Appendix A – Class Visits and Activity by Instructor

Librarian	FYS Faculty	Title of FYS	# of IL sessions	IL Tutorials Required?
Lonergan	Arnold	The Science of Competition	2	Yes
Boucher	Bai	Does Finance Benefit Society?	2	No
Triller-Doran	Ball	Civil Disobedience in History	3	Yes
Boucher	Bova	The Future of Democracy:	2	Yes
Gerencser	Bruno	Before Carlisle: Illuminating the Native American Histories of our Community	3	No
McGeary	Castellanos	Race in Brazil: Challenging Discourses	3	No
Suppok	Diaz	The Secret Life of Language: Reasons We Speak the Way We Do	3	Yes
Gerencser	Farrell	Indigenous Education: Native Americans, Schooling, and the Carlisle Experiment	4	No
Bombaro	Feldman	Death Penalty	1	No
Gerencser	Gray	Music and Soundscapes of Everyday Life	4	No
Doran	Harper-McCombs	No Strings Attached: The Puppet as Performance Object and Metaphor	2	No
Lonergan	Hayes	Science and Sci-Fi: Fictional Earth Is and Isn't as Strange as it Seems	2	Yes
Lonergan	Holden	You Mean You Burned ALL the Oil? Energy in the Time of Trump	2	Yes
Lonergan	Jackson	Where is the Electron? The Strange and Fascinating Theory of Quantum Mechanics	2	Yes
Suppok	Kann	Ideas That Have Shaped the World	1	No
Bombaro	Kushner	Bioethics and Bioissues	2	Yes
Suppok	Lee	The Uses and Abuses of Photography	2	Yes
Suppok	Lewis	From Facebook to Face Time: Living and Learning in Digital Times	2	Yes
McGeary	Ma	Bridging East and West: Cosmopolitans and Cultural Mediators in Modern China	1	No
Bombaro	Maggidis	Who Owns the Past? Illicit Trade, Appropriation, and the Repatriation of Antiquities	1	No
Boucher	Marshall	The Great Recession:	4	Yes
Suppok	Mastrangelo	Ideas That Have Shaped the World	1	No
Boucher	Middaugh	PAYING the Game of Life:	4	Yes
McGeary	Ngong	Life in Africa and the Caribbean: Insight into the French Imperialism Narratives	2	No
McGeary	Pagano	Founding Modernity: Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud	1	No

Sailer	Pawley	In the Society of Machines: Human-Technology Relationships in their Cultural Context	2	No
Howard Sailer	Phillips Qualls	Gender and Food Culture Modernity and Its Legacy: Past Ideas and Their Contemporary Importance	3 1	No Yes
Boucher	Reiner	Good and Evil in the Human Imagination: Ethical Issues in Fiction	3	Yes
McGeary	Rivas	More than a Laughing Matter: Theories of Humor	3	No
Lonergan	Roberts	Precision Medicine: Promises and Pitfalls	2	Yes
Bombaro Sailer	Sartwell Schubert	Conceptions of God Modernity and Its Legacy: Past Ideas and Their Contemporary Importance	1 1	Yes Yes
Triller-Doran Lonergan	Seiler Smith	Literacy and Liberty Risk and Resilience	2 3	Yes Yes
Lonergan Triller-Doran	Strock Sweeney	Where Have All the Wild Things Gone? "Daddy, What Did YOU Do in the Great War?" How Societies Mobilized for Modern War	3 2	Yes No
Arndt	Tynan	Water: From Abundant Resources to Scarce Good	1	
Boucher	Wang	The Art and Science of Exchange: A natural History of Global Markets	2	No
Boucher McGeary	Webb Yost	Science Friction—Dystopian Visions Reasonable Faith: The Psychology of Religion	3 2	Yes No
McGeary	Zhang	The Divided Mind: Reasoning and Intuition in Our Moral and Political Lives	3	No