PLO: Fall 2012 – Cumulative Data on Self-Reported Ability to Use Databases and Cite Sources

Every semester, LIBR 100 students complete a survey on the first day of the course asking them about their research skills and their level of comfort in the library. They take the same survey on the last day of course. On this survey, they are asked to agree or disagree with statements. We looked at the cumulative data from 3 years (6 semesters) of LIBR 100.

First, we identified two statements of particular interest to us, since these statements are about skills that are important to college research:

"I know how to use a database to find articles from magazines, journals and newspapers."

And:

"I know how to cite books, articles, websites and other information in MLA format."

Below is a chart showing significant increases in students who agreed or strongly agreed with the first statement, which was about using databases. On the pre-survey, only 60 out of 149 (40%) students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. On the post-survey, almost all students – 120 out of 122 (98%) – agreed with the statement. Since knowing how to use a database is an important skill for college research, this increase is heartening.

"I know how to use a database to find articles from magazines, journals and newspapers."	Pre-Survey Number	Percentage	Post-Survey Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	8	5	48	39
Agree	52	35	72	59
Combined Strongly Agree and Agree	60	**40**	120	**98**
Disagree	72	48	3	2
Strongly Disagree	16	11	0	0
Total	149	99	122	100

Students' ability to cite sources also increased significantly. As the chart below shows, on the pre-survey only one-third of students – 50 out of 151 (33%) – agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they knew how to cite sources in MLA format. By the last day of class the number of students agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement had sky-rocketed to 123 out of 124 (99%). This new-found confidence will serve students well in ENGL 100 and other college-level courses.

"I know how to cite books, articles, websites and other information in MLA format."	Pre-Survey Number	Percentage	Post-Survey Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	9	6	59	48
Agree	41	27	64	52
Combined Strongly Agree and Agree	50	**33**	123	**99**
Disagree	78	52	1	1
Strongly Disagree	24	16	0	0
Total	151	101	124	101

These increases are expressed in the chart below. As stated above, students moved from 40% to 98% in agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement that they know how to use databases. Slightly more dramatic was the increase from 33% to 99% of students agreeing that they know how to cite sources. These data confirm our belief that LIBR 100 has, over 6 semesters, been valuable to students.