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Allen McKiel, "The 2014 Credo Survey" (2015). *Proceedings of the Charleston Library Conference*.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.5703/1288284316287>

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The 2014 Credo Survey

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Abstract

The Credo Survey addressed student research skills. Two parallel surveys over the same questions were addressed separately to students and faculty, which had respectively 2,606 and 472 respondents. Just less than 90% of the students were undergraduates split nearly evenly in progress to completion, with 87% of respondents attending full-time and a fairly representative spread of majors. Just less than 50% of the faculty had taught over 10 years with nearly even proportions spread across the first 10 years and with a representative sampling of disciplines. Seventy-seven percent were full-time. The majority of responses came from about a dozen institutions—half universities and half colleges or community colleges. This article reviews and compares the student and faculty responses. It also compares the student responses with similar questions from the 2012 Credo Reference Survey.

Survey Review

Finding Information

Faculty and Student Question 5: How often do you think your students [you], on average, use the library to do research or ask for help (not including studying, typing papers, printing, etc.)?

Answer Choices	Responses - Faculty	Responses - Students
At Least Once a Semester	53%	38%
At Least Once a Month	31%	29%
At Least Once a Week	15%	32%
Total Responses	424	2,477

Question 5 asked both faculty and students about how often students use the library to do research or ask for help (not including studying, typing papers, printing, etc.); once a semester, month, or week? Students viewed their use of the library for research as more extensive than faculty's perceptions. Students answered once a semester 39%, monthly 29%, and weekly 32%. Faculty answered 53%, 31%, and 15% respectively.

Faculty Question 12: Where do you think students start their research?

Answer Choices	Responses - Faculty	Responses - Students
Library - Encyclopedias	1%	1%
Library - Article Databases	7%	26%
Class Materials (textbook, notes, etc.)	9%	4%
Library - Catalog	1%	17%
Web - Google	72%	48%
Web - Wikipedia	10%	2%
Other (students only)		2%
Total Responses	392	2,315

In question 12, where faculty were asked where they think students start their research, 82% selected the web compared to 50% of the students. The faculty assumed students started in the library in 9% of the responses compared to 44% of the students' responses. Class material was selected by 9% of the faculty and 4% of students.

Faculty and Student Question 10: What do you think students are [What are you] most comfortable with regarding their [your] research skills? (open-ended responses)

Verbs	Students	Nouns	Students	Faculty	Nouns
Find/Search	1,114	Internet	170	Internet	25
Write	95	Online	167	Google	15
		Articles	158	Library	7
		Books	134	Database	7
		Databases	115	Online	3
		Google	49		
		Everything	30		
		EBSCO	9		
	Total Comments 2,092			Total Comments 339	

Question 10 was open-ended for students and asked, "What do you feel most comfortable with regarding research?" The most common verbs referred to the process of searching. Some variation of find or search was used in 1,114 of the 2,092 comments.

The most common nouns associated with what they liked were Internet (170 mentions), online (167), library (158), articles (134), books (126), and databases (115). All of these refer to online resources except libraries, articles, and books, which include both physical and online resources. Since library usage of print articles is a very small

percentage of article usage and book versus e-book usage varies based on their percentage of availability, the term library refers mostly to online resources. There was a noticeable number of references to the wealth of resources available through the library and the ease of using them, more than recollections from other surveys indicate. There were only 95 appearances of the word write and 30 of the word everything. There were only 9 references to EBSCO and 49 to Google, which both figured less prominently than expected. Both changes may be associated to some degree with the increasing number of library systems that have discovery systems like Encore and Primo.

The faculty in question 10 were asked, “What do you think students are most comfortable with regarding their research skills?” The nouns the faculty used, in descending order, were Internet (25), Google (15), library (7), database (7), and online (3). There was no mention of books or articles in the 339 responses. Faculty commented on student use of the open web over library resources.

Faculty and Student Question 11: What do you think intimidates students [you] most about research assignments?

Students			Faculty	
Finding and Evaluating Appropriate Sources	320		Citations	61
Writing the Paper	249		Finding and Evaluating Appropriate Sources	26
Citing Sources	108			
Total Comments 2,136			Total Comments 354	

In question 11, students were asked, “What intimidates you most about research assignments?” “Finding” was the primary verb with 320 uses. Sources and information is what they were having difficulty finding. The most popular adjectives used to describe the difficulty were relevant, credible, and reliable. “Writing” was the second most used verb with 107

instances. The term “paper” was used 142 times in relation to comments like sorting it all out, putting it all together, and starting it. Citing sources was mentioned 108 times.

In question 11, faculty were asked, “What do you think intimidates students most about research assignments?” Faculty referred to the same problems the students reported. However, they mentioned them with different frequency. A greater percentage of faculty than students mentioned the problems students have with citations, which was mentioned 61 times in the 354 responses. Finding appropriate sources was reported 50 times with 11 of the responses referring to student difficulty evaluating information resources. Other prominent comments concerned students’ difficulties with knowing how to begin, selecting the topic, organizing the research, and writing the paper.

Guidance and Instruction on Research Skills

Question 15 asked students, “Have you taken a course on information or research skills?” Twenty-six percent reported that they had.

Faculty Question 9: Do you give your students guidance on sources to use for research?

Answer Choices	Faculty	Students
Never	3%	5%
Sometimes	24%	46%
Frequently	32%	37%
Always	42%	12%
Total	425	2,513

Students and faculty appear to have different understandings of guidance and instruction concerning research skills, which show up in their responses to questions about who does instruction. The instructors reported providing instruction much more often than the students reported receiving it. Students and faculty have a reverse order set of responses to question 9, “How often do your instructors give you guidance on sources to use for research?” The students ranked options “sometimes” 46%, “frequently” 37%, and “always” 12%. Faculty ranked them 24%, 32%, and 42% percent respectively.

Student Question 13: Who do you ask for help when you have a research assignment?

Answer Choices	Student Responses	Faculty Responses
Your Professor	51%	34%
Classmate or Friend	27%	52%
Librarian	11%	14%
Family Member	6%	1%
Other (please specify)	5%	
Total Respondents	2,305	

Students reported asking instructors for help more often than faculty reported providing it compared to others to whom students might turn. Question 13 asked students, “Who do you ask for help when you have a research assignment?” Just over half (51%) of students selected their instructor. Classmates or a friend took second place at 27%, and librarians followed with 11% and family 6%. Faculty thought students asked a classmate or friend 52% of the time, their instructor 34% of the time, librarians 14% of the time, and family 1%.

Student Question 16: Have you received other types of instruction in research skills from a professor or librarian? Please select all that apply:

Answer Choices	Responses
English Class (professor)	73%
Other Class (professor)	35%
Library Presentation in Your Class (librarian)	35%
English Class (librarian)	27%
One-On-One Help From Professor	25%
Freshman Orientation	24%
Workshop in Library	13%
One-On-One Help From Librarian	13%
Other (please specify)	5%
Total Respondents:	2,223

Question 16 asked students, “Have you received other types of instruction in research skills [other than an information literacy course] from a professor or librarian? Please select all that apply.” One hundred percent of the students (73% from a professor and 27% from a librarian) reported receiving library instruction in an English class. Students reported having other in-class presentations from both librarians (35%) and the

class professor (35%). They also reported one-on-one help from both a professor (25%) and librarian (13%). The other categories of instruction selected were freshman orientation (24%) and workshops in the library (13%).

Faculty Question 17: Have you or a librarian given students instruction in research skills in your class?

Answer Choices	Responses
Yes - I Have	34%
Yes - Librarian	18%
Yes - Both	30%
No	18%
Total Respondents	374

Faculty in question 17 reported providing research instruction in their classes (34% by themselves, 18% by a librarian, and 30% by both). Only 18% of faculty reported not providing instruction in research skills in their classes.

Student Question 17: How useful was the research skills instruction you received?

Answer Choices	Responses
Not Useful At All	3%
Somewhat Useful	30%
Pretty Useful	47%
Very Useful	21%
Total Respondents	2,214

Nearly all of the students in question 17 reported that instruction in research skills was useful (97%). The breakdown was 30% useful, 47% pretty useful, and 21% very useful. So, regardless of what particular instruction the students are referring to, they overwhelmingly reported valuing it.

Student Question 18: How important is doing research to your field of study?

Answer Choices	Responses
Very Important	62%
Somewhat Important	33%
Not Important	5%
Total Respondents	2,256

Question 18 asked students how important doing research is in their field of study. Most, 62%, viewed it as very important, 33% somewhat important, and 5% not important.

Faculty Question 19: Do you use any of the following to deliver research skills instruction? Please select all that apply:

Answer Choices	Responses
Instructions on a Research Assignment	72%
Lecture	68%
In-class Practice	53%
Syllabus	49%
Homework Practice	45%
Supplemental Multimedia or Tutorials	41%
Learning Management System	34%
Total	348

In question 19, faculty reported using a variety of methods for providing instruction in research skills including instructions on a research assignment (72%), lecture (68%), in-class practice (53%), the syllabus (49%), homework practice (45%), supplemental multimedia or tutorials (41%), and a learning management system (34%).

Method of Teaching Research Skills

Faculty and Student Questions 19 and 22: What do you think is the best method for students [you] to learn these skills?

Answer Choices	Faculty	Student
Instructors Teach Research Skills in Disciplines	31%	32%
Take a Research Skills Course	25%	25%
Online Tutorials/Videos On-demand	9%	20%
Librarian Visits to All Classes With Research Assignment	17%	9%
Scheduled Research Consultations With a Librarian	10%	10%
Other (please explain)	9%	4%
Total Respondents	373	2,254

In questions 19 and 22, students and faculty respectively were asked “What would be the best way for you [students] to learn research skills?” Having faculty teach research skills in their classes was favored by the most students (32%) and faculty (31%). Taking a research skills course was second in order of preference for both students

(25%) and faculty (25%). On-demand tutorials/videos were in third place for students (20%) and fifth place for faculty (9%). A scheduled research consultation with a librarian was in fourth place for students (10%) and for faculty (10%). Visits by librarians to the class were fifth for students (9%) and third for faculty (17%).

Importance of Teaching Research Skills

Faculty Question 21: If you provide research skills instruction—why do you teach it? Please select all that apply:

Answer Choices	Responses
Responding to a Lack of Student Skills	72%
Necessary in Your Discipline	47%
Responding to Student Requests	29%
I Do Not Provide This Instruction	11%
Mandated by Your Institution	9%
Total Respondents	362

When faculty were asked in question 21, “If you provide research skills instruction—why do you teach it? Please select all that apply,” the top three selections were because students lack research skills (72%), it is necessary in their discipline (47%), and student requests (29%).

Faculty Question 20: How big of an impact did the research skills instruction have on the quality of your students’ work?

Answer Choices	Responses
No Impact	5%
A Small Impact	27%
A Moderate Impact	50%
A Major Impact	19%
Total Respondents	354

In question 20, faculty were asked, “How big of an impact did the research skills instruction have on the quality of your students’ work?” The responses were moderate (50%), small (27%), major (19%), and none (5%).

Faculty Question 15: How does a lack of student skills in this area impact your work as an instructor? (open-ended question)

Most Common Words	# of Times
Time	112
More	66
Research	67
Content	14
Total Responses	326

Question 15 asked faculty the open-ended question, “How does a lack of student skills in this area impact your work as an instructor?” “Time” (112) was the most common word used. The word “more” was used 66 times. Faculty reported using “more time” (26) covering basic “research” (67) skills. One faculty reported, “I have to spend a lot of time helping students and teaching them basic concepts about using research, even when I think they should know the information.” The word “content” was used 14 times in sentences, e.g., “It takes away from the time that could be spent teaching other topics.”

Faculty Question 23: What do you think is the most important thing students should know about doing research? (open-ended question)

Most Common Words	# of Times
Sources	45
Information	39
Find	28
Evaluate	13
Use	11
Citing	10
Time	9
Total Responses	301

Question 23 asked faculty the open-ended question, “What do you think is the most important thing students should know about

doing research?” “Find” (28), “evaluate” (13), and “use” (11) were the most used verbs. “Sources” (45) and “information” (39) were the most common nouns. “Time” (9) was used mostly referring to the time it takes to do research. There were 10 references to citing sources properly.

Student Question 20: Since you have started college, what is the most useful thing you have learned about how to do research? (open-ended question)

Most Common Verbs	# of Times
Use	307
Find	268
Most Common Nouns	# of Times
Sources	495
Library	260
Database	254
Time	69
Wikipedia	43
Total Responses	1,966

Question 20 asked students the open-ended question, “Since you have started college, what is the most useful thing you have learned about how to do research?” The two most frequently used verbs were “find” (268) and “use” (307). The most frequently used nouns were “sources” (495), “library” (260), and “database” (254). “Research” was used 206 times as a noun and a verb. “Time” was used 69 times generally associated with managing it. “Wikipedia” was used 43 times. Of those 19 were about not using it and 24 about how to use it.

Research Skills

Faculty and Student Question 14: Faculty were asked their levels of confidence in students’ information literacy skills as one of four levels: not very confident, somewhat confident, confident, and very confident; students were asked to rank their own confidence levels.

Summary Table Ranking of Percentages of Faculty and Student Confidence of Student Skills (“confident” + “very confident”)

	Student Skills	Students	Faculty
1	Understanding the Ethics of Using Information	71	24
2	Choosing a Topic	70	41
3	Incorporating Sources Into Your Paper	67	24
4	Using Scholarly Information	67	18
5	Searching Library Databases	60	26
6	Narrowing a Broad Topic	59	20
7	Writing a Thesis Statement	57	17
8	Properly Citing Your Sources	57	22
9	Evaluating the Authority of a Source	53	16
	Total Responses	2,317	383

The responses for faculty and students across all of the skills followed skewed patterns in their average confidence levels. The students’ confidence level overall was considerably higher on average than the faculty’s. The students selected “very confident” on average across the skills 22% of the time, and the faculty 4%. Students selected “confident” 41%, and the faculty 19%. They selected “somewhat confident” on average 29% of the time, and the faculty 46%. Finally, students selected “not very confident” 8% of the time, and the faculty 31%.

Faculty had the most confidence (“confident” + “very confident”) in students’ ability to select a topic (41%) and the least confidence in their ability to evaluate the authority of a source (16%).

Students had the least confidence in “evaluating the authority of a source” (53%) and the most confidence in “understanding the ethics of using information” (71%). See the confidence rankings table below Question 14 for a comparison of the student and faculty rankings on all nine skills.

In the 2012 survey, students were asked, “When writing a typical research paper in a college or university class, do you generally feel prepared to conduct the required research?” Their responses roughly align with student responses in the 2014/2015 survey.

2014 Survey	Not Very Confident	Somewhat Confident	Confident	Very Confident
Faculty	31%	46%	19%	4%
Students	8%	29%	40%	22%
2012 Survey	Not Prepared	Somewhat Prepared	Adequately Prepared	Very Prepared
Students	3%	34%	46%	16%

The 2012 Credo Student Survey article can be found in *Against the Grain*, April 2013.

(McKiel, A. (2013). Information literacy and e-resources: The Credo student survey. *Against the Grain*, 25(2), 83.)