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Changing Library Operations--The 2014 Credo Survey

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Changing Library Operations — The 2014 Credo Survey

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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 ten years with nearly even proportions spread across the first ten 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.

Summary

Finding Information — The open Web was reportedly just marginally the primary source for student research with the library resources valued nearly equally. The 2012 survey reported a higher use of the Web over library resources. The students seemed in the 2014 survey to be more aware of the value of the online library resources. The faculty perceptions of student awareness of library resources were skewed more toward the open Web than the students reported. Students and faculty both described finding appropriate and relevant resources and the process of writing the paper as most intimidating for research. Faculty were more aware of student difficulties citing resources correctly.

Student Research Workload — Students quite naturally tend to exaggerate their workload a bit compared to the view of faculty. And faculty quite naturally have a more holistic understanding of how the assignments fit together.

With respect to students' assessment of the importance of doing research in their field, all but 5% viewed it as important.

Guidance and Instruction on Research Skills — Students report less research skills guidance or instruction from their professors than professors report giving. A higher percentage of faculty report providing instruction in research skills in their courses than students report receiving. Students may not recognize the difference between instruction about how to do their assignments and instruction in research skills that their professors provide, viewing it all as instruction in doing the assignment.

Students report asking professors for help with their research assignments more often than anyone else and faculty report thinking that students most often turned to classmates or friends. Just over a quarter of students have taken a course in research skills.

In the 2012 survey students reported asking their instructors for assistance slightly more than classmates, family, friends, or library staff (in descending order).

Method of Teaching Research Skills — When students were asked to select the best way to learn research skills, they reported in descending order: their class instructors, a research skills course, on-demand tutorials, scheduled consultation with a librarian, a class visit by a librarian.

Faculty preferences in descending order were very similar: faculty in their disciplines, a research skills course, class visits by a librarian, scheduled consultation with a librarian, and online tutorials. The notable difference was higher student preference for on-demand tutorials.

Importance of Teaching Research Skills — When faculty were asked why they taught research skills in their content courses, the primary reason was the lack of student research skills and secondarily because it is necessary in their discipline. When asked about the impact of their efforts almost half selected moderate and only a fifth reported a major impact.

In an open ended question about the impact of a lack of student research skills, faculty reported loosing time doing research skills instruction that should be used to cover course content. When asked what was most important for students to know with respect to research skills, faculty reported: finding, evaluating, using, and citing relevant resources (in descending order of frequency).

When students were asked an open ended question about the most useful thing they have learned about doing research, finding and using were the most common verbs and the most frequently used nouns were: sources, library, and database.

Research Skills — The faculty expressed much less confidence in student research skills than students reported having. Only about 20% of faculty were confident of student information literacy skills compared to nearly 50% of students. About 20% of students were very confident. None of the faculty were very confident.

Survey Review

Finding Information — **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 percent respectively.

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 31 % of the students' responses. Class material was selected by 9% of the faculty and 17% of students.

The 2012 Credo survey also asked students about their starting point. Nearly 40% reported using a search engine and 30% indicated they started with "electronic resources," which does not specify open Web or library and therefore could be either. However, the 2012 survey asked students which resources they valued the most and open Web and library databases were almost equally valued. "…students were asked to rank the value they placed on particular resources. On a scale of 1 to 5, "open Web sources" received the highest rating at 3.90 and "library databases" ranked right behind with 3.81 in student preferences as valued resources.

Though students in both surveys value library resources nearly as much as they value open Web resources in the 2012 Credo survey they reported using the open Web more than the current survey suggests. When asked a question seeking students' perceptions of how often they used different types of information resources, "Over two thirds (70%) reported regularly or almost always using the open Web. Less than half (46%) of the students reported using library resources regularly or almost always."

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. There were only 95 appearances of the word write and 30 of the word everything.

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 eBook usage varies based on their percentage of availability, the term library refers mostly to online resources. There were 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 9 references to **Ebsco** and 49 of **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 comment on student use of the open Web over library resources.

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.

Student Research Workload — The survey provides a picture of the research workload for students. Students report more assignments in their workload compared to the view of faculty. And faculty have a more holistic understanding of how the assignments fit together. In **question 6**, students and faculty were asked about the number of research assignments or projects over five pages that faculty assign. Just over 86% of faculty and just over 75% of students indicated 0 to 3 assignments. Almost 12% of faculty and just over 20% of students chose 4 to 6.

The same difference in faculty and student characterization of workload shows up in **question 7** when asked, "How many small research assignments (discussion threads, short answer) were assigned in your courses last semester?" Faculty 48% of the time and students only 27% of the time reported 0 to 3 assignments. Faculty 31% of the time and students 50% reported 4 to 10 assignments. Faculty reported over 10 assignments only 11% of the time and students reported having over 10 assignments 23% of the time.

Question 8 asked, "Do your professors break up large research assignments into smaller pieces?" The student and faculty responses followed the same pattern of responses among the options: never, sometimes, frequently, and always. However, students selected sometimes 69% of the time

and faculty 43% of the time with nearly 20% of faculty and only 3% of students selecting always. This difference may contribute to the discrepancy between faculty and student perceptions of the number of assignments. Student may see multiple parts of an assignment as separate assignments.

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.

In **question 9**, 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 the question, "How often do your instructors give you guidance on sources to use for research?" Faculty selected "always" 42% of the time to students' 12%. They selected "frequently" 32% of the time to students' 32%. And faculty selected "sometimes" 24% of the time to students' 46%.

However, 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% with librarians following 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%.

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 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 reported in **question 17** 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. This does not match the 35% of students who reported receiving research instruction from a class professor in any of their classes. If 34% of the faculty provide instruction in research skills, the experience would be ubiquitous for students. The probability that the students would receive research instruction in one of their courses is effectively 100%. It is likely that students do not differentiate research instruction from assignment instruction.

The understanding of what constitutes instruction in research skills may account for the discrepancy. Students have their English class experience, which generally more specifically addresses how to do research for a paper and generally takes up a significant amount of class time and is referred to as instruction in how to do research. Content professors may provide specific guidance related to the research for a given assignment, but it may seem by the students to be instruction in how to do the assignment, not instruction in research skills.

The 2012 survey used a different question type when asking about whom students went to for help. "In thinking about a typical quarter or semester, approximately how often do you ask the following individuals for help with a research paper?" The responses when asked in this manner level out among the choices, faculty, classmates, friends, librarians, and family. The April 2013 *ATG* article reporting the survey states, "Instructors at 68% garnered the most responses (tally of sometimes, regularly, or almost always). Family members and classmates were second and third respectively with 62% and 61%. Friend was fourth at 57% and library staff was last with 42%."

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.

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%).

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.

Method of Teaching Research Skills — 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 — 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%).

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%).

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). 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 like, "It takes away from the time that could be spent teaching other topics."

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.

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 — **Question 14** asked faculty their level of confidence in students' information literacy skills as one of four levels: not very confident, somewhat confident, confident, and very confident and students were asked to rank their own confidence level. The skills were:

- Narrowing a broad topic
- Writing a thesis statement
- Using scholarly information
- Searching library databases
- Incorporating sources into a paper
- Evaluating the authority of a source
- Properly citing sources
- Understanding the ethics of using information

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 to the faculty 4%. Students selected "confident" 41% to the faculty average of 19%. They selected "somewhat confident" on average 29% of the time to the faculty 46%. And finally, students selected "not very confident" 8% to 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* for a comparison of the student and faculty rankings on all nine skills.

Confidence Percentage Rankings Table – "Confident" + "Very Confident"

Students	Students	Faculty
Understanding the ethics of using information	71	24
Choosing a topic	70	41
Incorporating sources into your paper	67	24
Using scholarly information	67	18
Searching library databases	60	26
Narrowing a broad topic	59	20
Writing a thesis statement	57	17
Properly citing your sources	57	22
Evaluating the authority of a source	53	16

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 2014/15 survey.

Average % of Student and Faculty Confidence Rankings 2014 and 2012

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*, v.25#2, p. 83.) 🐗

This particular post brought to mind the April print issue of *ATG* about the **disappearing stacks**. **Slide away: Manchester School of Art archive under threat**? It asks: "Is a physical archive of images, occupying an entire room, an asset or an irritation for an art school? Are slides — some with plastic frames and typed labels, others in cardboard cases with handwritten descriptions — outdated technology and a waste of space, or historical objects in need of preservation, curation and exploration?"

https://www.a-n.co.uk/news/slide-away-manchester-school-of-art-archive-under-threat

Hey y'all reading many posts about the library is dead, I say, let's quit dissing libraries! **We need to keep instead of change our brand**! We are known as quiet, contemplative places not as coffee shops or computer stores. Are we losing our way?

Along those lines, it was great to learn that **Rita Ricketts'** book *Scholars, Poets, and Radicals: Discovering Forgotten Lives in the Blackwell Collection* published by the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (July 15, 2015) will be out shortly. Congrats to **Rita**!

Hey! Anyone interested in **guest editing an issue of ATG on liaison duties and how they are evolving**? Let me or **Tom Gilson** know please! Thanks!

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Can't help myself I am excited and proud to report that I have been elected to the **UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Visitor**s beginning July 1, 2015 for a four-year term. Thanks to **UNC-CH** for nominating me and especially to **Fred Roper**, faculty member at **USC SILS** and retired faculty member at **UNC-CH** and my long-time mentor. 🐗