

Learning Information Literacy Across the Curriculum: A National Study
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2012-2013 CCCC Research Initiative Final Report
March 2015

The Learning Information Literacy Across the Curriculum (or LILAC) Project is a multiinstitutional study of students' information-seeking behaviors. Subjects report receiving information literacy instruction in high school and college, usually in English courses, including instruction in using library databases, Web-based research strategies, and evaluating Web-based sources. This study attempts to capture what students are actually doing—and thinking—as they search for information, using surveys to question students about what they have been taught and what they think they know, and comparing these results with video captures using a “Research Aloud Protocol” (or RAP).

Our central research questions include:

1. Where and how have students been taught information-seeking skills?
2. What are students carrying away with them from this instruction?
3. How do students actually locate, identify, and evaluate information?
4. Where (and how) can instructors intervene to help students improve their information-seeking skills, if necessary?

After preliminary research, we modified the questionnaire and developed a coding scheme for future research to better enable us to compare results from the questionnaires with RAPs.

We also added additional questions to the study:

5. What differences and/or similarities can we identify in student information-literacy instruction at different institutions?
6. What strengths and weaknesses exist in student information-seeking skills at these different institutions?
7. What conclusions, if any, can we draw from these results?

A revised Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was approved, including instructions for partner institutions to expand the study. At this time, in addition to Georgia Southern University, we have 5 additional “partner” institutions collecting survey data and RAP videos to include in the study, and we continue to seek additional partners.

Abstract of Preliminary Results

The LILAC Project study is ongoing. Preliminary indicate that students generally rank their ability to locate and evaluate information highly. However, when compared to captured videos of students actual research processes and narrations, we see a different picture:

- Students are looking for quick solutions to their “primary” research question: How do I satisfy the requirements of this assignment?
- They do not want books (unless books are required—which is when they WILL go to the library).
- They want articles (even if they don't always understand what an “article” is, and even if they aren't reading more than the first page or two).

However, students are listening to us even if they often struggle to understand how and why academic research can be a complex and sometimes daunting process.

Summary of Procedures

LILAC participants complete a questionnaire about their instruction in information-seeking skills in high school and college and their perceptions of their skills. Students then participate in a 15-minute narrated research session, or RAP, captured using screen capture software, with students explaining what they are doing and why they are making the choices they do as they search for information.

Questionnaires are tabulated to identify trends in students' perceived information literacy knowledge. RAP sessions are coded individually by investigators to track trends in how students conduct research, where they begin their research, and what patterns may exist among participants' research strategies. RAP videos will be posted on a YouTube channel for use by instructors and future researchers. We will also provide aggregated data from the questionnaires for partner institutions as well as for the study as a whole.

Recommendations for Future Studies

In addition to continuing to collect data and RAP videos from a variety of institutions, we see opportunities for future studies, including P-12 studies of student information-seeking behaviors, longitudinal studies, case studies, and studies of international populations. Future studies may also investigate ways we can intervene to better teach important information literacy skills to our students.