

Information Competency across Campus

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The Internet is being used everyday to search for information. In a Pew Internet & American Life report, at the end of 2004 around 70 million Americans would connect to the Internet to search for information (Rainie & Horrigan, 2005). Another report states that 84% of those that connect to the Internet have used search engines (Fallow, 2005). Information literate individuals compose the skills and knowledge to know when information is needed and has the ability to locate, evaluate and effectively use the information (Breivik & Gee, 1989). Information competency consists of the skills needed to become information literate. With the vast amount of information available on the World Wide Web (WWW), university students need to gain the skills to become information competent to search and know that the information being found is also worth having.

This concept has been brought more to our attention by the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce. One of the skills that students need to acquire to be able to compete in today's workforce is information competency skills, to become information literate. "In this media-drenched era of blogs and podcasts, google searches and instant messages, young people need to acquire a new set of literacy skills that allows them to locate information, sort through it quickly and, most important, determine which sources are reliable and which ones aren't" (Wallis, & Steptoe, p. 54, 2006).

This proposal is the first semester of a four-year study. Using the Information Competency Assessment Instrument (ICAI) (Marshall, 2006), students from across the campus (mainly from the athletic program, housing, Gateway students, and Greek Life), a

medium size mid-western university, will be surveyed in a pre – post test to see if information competency skills naturally increase through the semester. The pre-test was completed by 490 students representing 40 different majors from across campus. The post-test is being collected now and should be ready to evaluate by the end of December, 2006 or beginning of January, 2007. The purpose of this study is to see if students increase in their information competency skills through each semester and how the gaining of these skills proceed through each semester. It is hoped to have a select group that will complete the surveys through their education and observe if skills increased each semester, leveled off during some period or decreased. The hypothesis for this proposal is as follows:

H: The students will increase in information competency skills during the course of the semester.

It is hoped that this study will show how we, as educators, are doing in teaching our students to find information and be able to evaluate the relevance and importance of that information for our purpose. These are skills that are going to be important in the workforce. We, as educators, need to help students gain these skills before they leave us.

References

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