

**Research Practices of College of DuPage Students:
From Their Own Perspective
Earned Compensation Project Proposal
2008-2009
Revised 7/3/08**

Project Goal

This project will collect information from College of DuPage students about their research practices and their experiences with research assistance. I will find answers to the following questions through a survey in addition to face-to-face interviews.

- How are C.O.D. students actually going about the process of finding, evaluating, and using information sources for their assigned research projects?
- Do they ask for assistance and at what point?
- In what form do they prefer this assistance: group session in the Library, personal assistance at the reference desk, by email, Instant Messaging, online research guides?
- What are the students' experiences with research assistance?
- How do students put into practice the research skills that we teach them?
- How do they use the resources that we develop to assist them in their research?
- What suggestions do students have for improving the ways by which the Library helps them?

The project will seek a student perspective on research practices. I will ask students to relate their personal experiences with research projects, in their own words. I am interested in what their experiences reveal that the Library could use to improve the ways in which we provide resources, services, equipment, and facilities. I expect to learn about the students' perceptions and attitudes about the research process in general and about the Library specifically and how those perceptions and attitudes affect their ultimate success with their research projects.

This is a pilot project in the sense that I hope that the Library will decide to use the format that I design for future studies of students. As indicated below, I expect the information that I will glean from the students will inform Library decision-making.

Although I have already done extensive reading (see References below), I plan to continue my literature review. In very recent years, there have been a number of libraries who have conducted similar projects as my own although usually on a much grander scale with a large team of librarians and other faculty. The University of Rochester conducted the largest such campus-wide study of students and published a document entitled *Studying Students: The Undergraduate Research Project at the University of Rochester* (2007). An integral piece of the project was a qualitative study of students' research practices. Librarians conducted face-to-face interviews with 15 students.

Project Design

First, I will interview 10 students. These students will have recently completed a research paper or presentation. The interviews will be 15 minutes in length and will be taped and transcribed. I intend to work with faculty for the student sample as well as gain student responses through regular publicity channels. Students will be rewarded for their time.

From the information I gather in the interviews, I will develop an online survey that will be focused on key areas that were revealed in the interviews to be particularly valuable and/or in need of confirmation. Again, I intend to work with faculty for the student sample as well as place the online survey on the Library's web site, Facebook page, etc. Depending on faculty response and interest, I may request the use of class time to have students complete the survey. My goal is to gather 350 responses. Students who complete the survey will have the opportunity to win a prize.

I will analyze the surveys and make generalizations from which I will submit recommendations to the Library Faculty and Administration for changes to collections, resources, services, and facilities. The entire project will be made available in print and online form. I also intend to report out my findings to the Library faculty and administration as well as the Dean of Academic Affairs.

Benefit to the College

The Library has in the past surveyed students and other users of the library through paper and online surveys. However, these surveys have not inquired about research practices specifically nor about their perceptions and attitudes towards the Library's overall program of research assistance. Although we know quite a bit about students through our regular contacts with them in the Library, in our library instruction classes, and online, our knowledge is for the most part anecdotal and, more importantly, has not been collected and used to make decisions about our resources, services, and collections.

As a Library with a strong student-centered philosophy and mission, we need to know more about students' understanding of the research process and what their actual practices and experiences are. This knowledge will help the Library develop interventional and instructional strategies, processes, and programs that will meet the diverse needs of our student populations. My hope is that this project will serve as a model for other units in the College to utilize to collect and analyze information about its students.

References

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Diana Fitzwater
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