Assessment of undergraduate research: Student posters across disciplines

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INTRODUCTION
A decade after the Boyer Report, “Reinventing undergraduate education: A blueprint for America’s research universities,” the academy is making strides in institutionalizing formal undergraduate research programs. In taking courses within the Ethnography of the University Initiative (EUI), students engage in ethnographic, multi-disciplinary research about their university. Students ask questions of themselves and their peers about their world, their culture, their viewpoint, as seen through the lens and experiences of a University of Illinois student. Results from semester-long research are presented at a bi-annual student conference as panel or poster presentations. Students move from being consumers of knowledge to creators of knowledge, publishing their work in the institutional repository for future students to build upon.

LIBRARY SUPPORT
Over the past five years, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) has been teaching undergraduate students about the publication and dissemination process through an experiential learning experience—poster development. Each semester, the EUI holds a student conference (mostly undergraduate students) that explores the results of unique ethnographic research. The Library sponsors the poster session by providing easels, poster printing, instruction, editing support, and a poster award.

RUBRIC FOR INSTRUCTION

| Design elements | Layout, colors, font type and size |
| Required elements | Title, author name, course, institutional affiliation |
| Visual literacy | Use of imagery, proper citations – formatting and completeness |
| Data visualization | Infographics, charts, graphs, tag clouds, etc. |
| Archiving | Metadata |
| Lightning talk | Prepared 1-2 minute overview, handouts, tell a story beyond poster |

"It’s interesting that when we started the project, our first inclination was to go to Google … but there was nothing. We essentially had to create what would go eventually onto Google and become the information people find.”

Ethan, freshman

EXAMINING PAST STUDENT POSTERS
Over the past five years, EUI posters have been published in the institutional repository, IDEALS. The EUI Community – Final papers and research posters include N=188 students (Fall 2009-Spring 2012) as of 6/19/2012.

"It [the research] made me think about how people see information a lot differently.”

Katherine, sophomore

EXAMINING CONSUMERS OF KNOWLEDGE

BENEFITS TO TEACHING UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH PROGRAMS
Creating experiential learning experiences on scholarly communication issues e.g. author’s rights, copyright

Engaging students and faculty on in-depth conversations regarding the complete lifecycle of information

Increasing the visibility of teaching librarians in the academy in order to partner with faculty and impact curriculum

Promoting lifelong learning strategies on what it means to be a creator and publisher of new knowledge

ASSESSING LIBRARY INSTRUCTION

Student reflections on poster presentations

Theme 1: Sharing ideas with peers and instructors
Theme 2: Challenged by questions from other disciplines
Theme 3: Working with primary documents
Theme 4: Creating new information

RESOURCES
Ethnography of the University Initiative: http://www.eui.illinois.edu
EUI Student Conference LibGuide: http://uiuc.libguides.com/poster
Examples of posters: http://www.slideshare.net/mhensle1/eui-student-conference-poster-session-fall-2011

References:
* Engaging Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America’s Research Universities. Stony Brook, NY: State University of New York – Stony Brook.

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