

Transforming the ESL Experience: Assessing First-year International Students in the Instruction Classroom

Susan Avery, Instructional Services Librarian, Undergraduate Library (Team Leader)
 Kirsten Feist, Instructional Services Specialist, Undergraduate Library
 Jin Kim, Lecturer and Curriculum Coordinator, ESL Writing Program
 Susan Faivre, Assistant Director and Coordinator, ESL Writing Program
 Jen-Chien Yu, Library Assessment Coordinator, University Library
 Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe, Coordinator for Information Literacy Services and Instruction, University Library



Research Question

What are the most effective methods to introduce first-year international students to the academic library and what strategies will support their engagement and success in the research process?

Study Design

Two assignments in first-year ESL (English as a Second Language) courses were assessed:

- 1) Concept Maps
- 2) Annotated Bibliographies

All students participated in a library instruction session during their scheduled class time and librarians provided feedback to students through their course management system.

Participants

Sixty-nine students from four sections of ESL 112 and four sections of ESL 115 participated in this study. ESL 112 and 115 courses fulfill the University's Composition 1 requirement for international students.

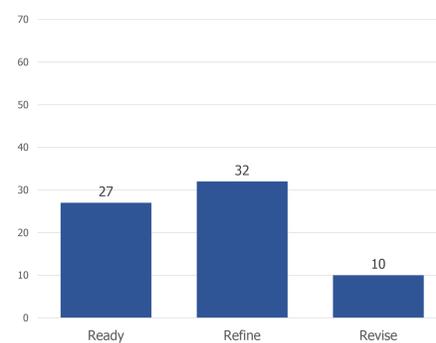
Acknowledgement

This project is part of the program "Assessment in Action: Academic Libraries and Student Success" which is undertaken by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in partnership with the Association for Institutional Research and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. The program, a cornerstone of ACRL's Value of Academic Libraries initiative, is made possible by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Concept Map Results

Concept Maps were assigned by classroom instructors and completed by each student prior to library instruction in order to prepare them for database searching. Upon completion each student deposited their Concept Map into a forum in their course management system. The librarians evaluated both the topic statements and keywords using a rubric. The criteria for each are reflected below.

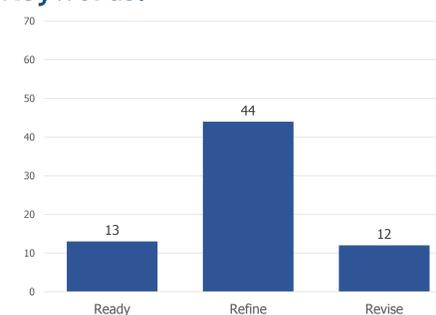
Topic Statement:



Criteria

- Ready:** Fully developed. Topic statement is present and (mostly) ready to go.
Refine: In progress. Topic statement is present but requires a bit of focus and/or refinement.
Revise: Not developed or absent. Topic statement is either a) present but too loosely defined (e.g. "skin cancer") or b) not present.

Keywords:



Criteria

- Ready:** Database ready. All main concepts with clear relationship to topic identified and relevant alternative keywords provided for each concept as appropriate.
Refine: Almost database ready. All, or some, main concepts with clear relationship to topic identified and some relevant alternative keywords present, though refinement is necessary for a successful database search.
Revise: Not database ready. Main concepts with clear relationship to topic not identified and/or alternative terminology missing or irrelevant.

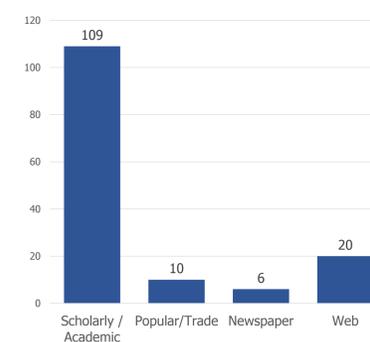
Conclusions

- 1) **Language is a major obstacle** for international students as they complete the Concept Map, particularly the identification of keywords and alternatives.
- 2) **Understanding the assignment** most likely challenged a number of students who did not complete the Concept Map in its entirety.
- 3) **Evaluation criteria** was not carefully applied to all Annotated Bibliography sources in terms of content, date, and relationship to student topics.

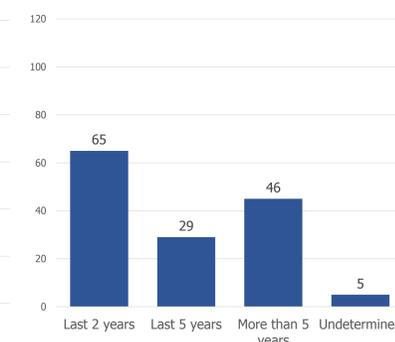
Annotated Bibliography Results

Following library instruction, students completed an Annotated Bibliography of five sources, of which three were required to be scholarly. The librarians assessed each source to determine article type, date, length, and source origin (database or web). In addition, they assessed the "Reliability Statement" of each Annotated Bibliography in order to better understand the criteria first-year international students used to determine if their sources were reliable.

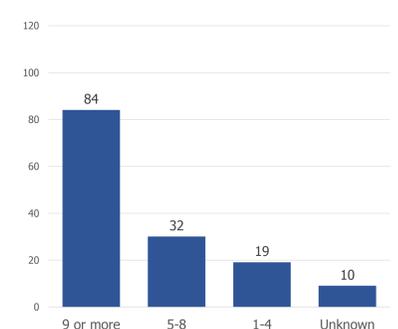
Article Type



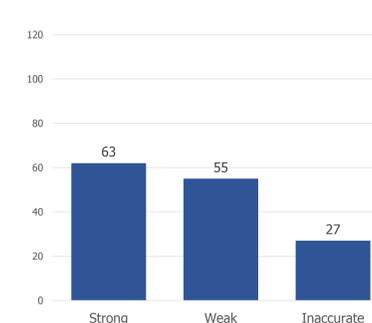
Article Date



Article Length



Reliability Statement:



Criteria

- Strong:** Identified two or more evaluative criteria. For example: information about author credentials, journal focus/coverage, citations, or article content.
Weak: Identified only one of the above criteria examples.
Inaccurate: Information based on circumstantial, irrelevant, or incorrect information (the article title, the organization name, etc.).

Next Steps

- 1) **Integrate a video** explaining how to complete a Concept Map into the ESL classroom when Concept Map is assigned.
- 2) **Focus on evaluation** more during library instruction and create supporting materials to help students apply evaluative criteria to their sources.
- 3) **Provide instructions and information** in multiple formats to address the varied learning needs of international students.