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## Introduction

- Within the context of the Master of Social Work (MSW) program at the University of Southern California (USC), this study seeks to understand the library needs, preferences, and perceptions of students enrolled in both on-campus and online iterations of a single graduate program
- Over 3,000 students are enrolled in the MSW at USC. Two-thirds of these students are enrolled in the online program, while the rest are enrolled in the on-campus program. Two embedded librarians work with these students. At the time of this study, the on-campus program was divided into four academic centers located in Southern California.
- While the literature regarding needs assessments for online programs is vast, there is a dearth in the literature about the needs of both on-campus and distance student populations within a single program academic program. This study seeks to fill this gap.

## Literature Review

- Needs assessments frame goals of program and outreach scalability and sustainability, in addition to understanding the information literacy needs of a specific population of students (Bussell, Hagman, & Guder, 2015).
- Social work graduate students face many of the same challenges experienced by students in other master's degree programs; however, they also encounter the unique challenges found in clinical programs (Conn, 2010). Often these students are considered "nontraditional" and need additional information literacy instruction to succeed in their programs (Ballard, 2005). Social work is also interdisciplinary by nature (Ballard, 2005; Candy, 2000, and students must quickly develop search strategies for a diverse array of resources from the social sciences, "hard" sciences, and (increasingly) the medical field.
- While needs assessments for traditional on-campus and online programs have been heavily studied as separate entities, very little has been written regarding increasingly popular online or on-campus versions of a single program. Our understanding of needs assessments in mixed programs is informed by studies of traditional on-campus programs, while instructors have had to either use assessments intended for traditional classes or create their own.

## Methodology

- All students enrolled in the MSW program at USC received a unique link to the needs assessment survey (developed using Qualtrics) via their university email addresses using both the on-campus and VAC student listservs in September 2015.
- The needs assessment was based on the model used by Bussell, Hagman, & Guder (2015), though without focus groups or interviews and adapted for relevance to this student population.
- The survey was comprised of a mix of twenty-nine statements and questions divided into the following topical areas: confidence in existing research skills, preferred methods of learning new library-related tasks and skills, perceptions of the library and librarians, and demographics.
- The survey featured a combination of Likert scale, multiple choice, yes/no, and open-ended questions.
- Open-ended responses were coded to identify relevant themes and patterns

**Table 1. Learning Preferences.** If you found yourself in a situation where you needed to learn a new skill in order to successfully complete a research project, how would you prefer to learn that skill? Please check all relevant boxes.

	Interactive tutorials	Online workshops	Video	Website	In-person workshop	Course-integrated instruction
University Park Campus	26%	26%	52%	56%	50%	39%
Skirball Academic Center	37%	27%	57%	50%	53%	37%
Orange County Academic Center	50%	0	50%	100%	0	0
San Diego Academic Center	43%	21%	64%	64%	64%	64%
Virtual Academic Center (Distance)	41%	42%	58%	55%	19%	18%

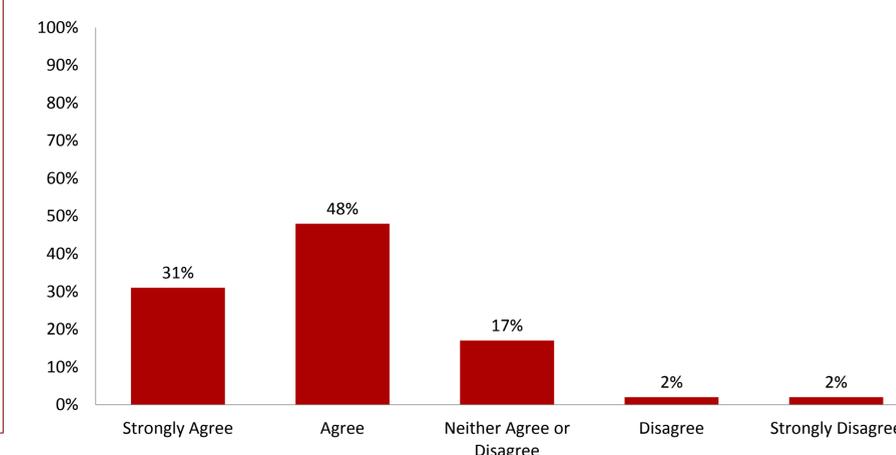
## Results

**Sixty-one per cent** of respondents were on-campus students and **39 per cent** of respondents were distance students.

**Fifty percent** of students indicated that they felt well informed about library programs and services available, while **48 percent** indicated that they had access to the information sources they needed through the library.

This assessment indicated that students **prefer asynchronous tutorials and videos** over in-person workshops and course-integrated instruction (see Table 1); librarians are able to **answer student questions** (see Chart 1); and students need more information on **research skills, citation managers, and learning how to navigate** online library resources (see Open-Ended Responses-Student Needs).

**Chart 1. Library Perceptions.** University of Southern California librarians are able to answer my questions.



## Open-Ended Responses – Student Needs

### Is there anything else you would like to let us know about learning research skills?

"I'd recommend a research seminar of a symposium at the start of the year for incoming students, where new students must attend and continuing students may attend." **Research Skills**

"I have attended workshops and I still can't seem to access full sites of many of the search engines utilized by the library." **Search**

"I would love more tutorials on citation management." **Citation Management**

"Finding articles to incorporate into our research papers sometimes takes hours and hours, because the research articles we do find are irrelevant to our topic or paper." **Research Skills – Knowing Where to Look**

"Sometimes I know what article or journal I want to search but even if I enter the journal name or the author or title it still doesn't find what I need." **Research Skills – Knowing Where to Look**

"We need more writing coaches." **Learning Support**

"For me, it's more about navigating through the data once I've gotten the information in my hands. Having some guidelines for assessing data would be very helpful." **Research Skills – Assessing Data**

## Contact

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## References

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