

# Ask Them—They'll Tell You! Eliciting Student Perspectives to Improve Services

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## **Introduction**

Most people avoid doing qualitative research because they think it is not scientifically rigorous and requires time and lots of money. In fact, there is a lot one can do with little overhead that reaps immediate benefits for improving services and gaining unexpected valuable insights. This study uses a web redesign and assessment project to showcase some simple ways to get useful information from students.

Library web pages provide the main access point to many of the library's services and resources, which also continue to change and accrue. Does the web site really serve students research needs today? Where do you focus energy on needed improvements? How do you integrate new services? What resources do you need to do it? In this session, discover how to use quick and inexpensive methods to grab student feedback in order to help revise and assess web pages and other services. Learn how to identify common issues for focused improvements. Gain insight on research deficiencies perhaps better addressed through teaching and other services. The researcher presents findings on several methods used to gain students perspectives before a major web page redesign and after "improvements" some months later.

## ***Impetus to Redesign the Pages***

Linfield College Libraries launched its first Web 1.0 style website in 1998. Over the next 10 years, the reference and systems librarian maintained and modified the site, with staff and student input, incremen-

tally accommodating new resources, campus web site branding demands, and students' changing needs. In Fall 2008, the resource-sharing consortium to which the Libraries belonged switched from Innovative Interfaces INNReach system to WorldCat's NRE and its resulting public interface. In Spring 2008, Linfield decided to migrate to WorldCat Local (WCL), an interface that would better integrate with the consortial catalog, but would also provide significantly different access via the local web pages to books and articles. Along with several other resource changes, it was clear that, rather than incremental web site change, a bolder redesign was in order.

The main goals included providing a web site that was more research-friendly for students, better integrated with the campus web site, and a good canvas for showcasing the planned WorldCat Local catalog search box. The researcher thought that gathering student input would be a good way to jumpstart the project: it might provide novel ways of envisioning new pages as well as reveal areas of current confusion. Student viewpoints might also provide staff with a practical focus for improving the web site, given the myriad modifications possible. In addition, user perspectives might help staff carry out better-informed discussions about just what students really need and want.

## **Redesign Methods**

In the past, the researcher had conducted web usability studies with students as a primary source of perspective in helping to modify navigational fea-

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tures of the web site.<sup>1</sup> But with a complete redesign, something more was required. Inspired by a University of Rochester study and a Clark College web usability course,<sup>2,3</sup> the researcher created a multipart plan for eliciting input from students. The basic plan included:

- Student focus group project to create ideal library web page
- Student focus group project to redesign current page
- Web usability testing with individuals to highlight positives and challenges of current website

The main objective was to gather student-centered attitudes and strategies within the context of their own experiences.

After obtaining Institutional Research Board approval for the project, the researcher recruited volunteers from a previously conducted survey where students, willing to participate in further research, provided contact information. She sorted respondents into the three projects based on their preference to be part of a focus group or web usability study as well as their availability during a busy Fall term. Participants received \$15 for their time. Before each session students completed a questionnaire requesting information about college status and general Internet use. Both focus groups were audio-recorded. A student library worker assisted in the groups and usability tests by observing and writing notes.

### ***Imagining a New Web Page***

Five students (one male, 4 female) gathered for the first 1.5 hour workshop to envision an ideal library web page. The first 20 minutes involved a typical focus group session where the researcher asked participants questions about how the library web pages and the Internet currently fit into their research and student lives. [see Appendix 1 for questions]. In the next half hour students brainstormed about what they would like to see on a totally new library home page, while the researcher recorded their answers on the whiteboard. Finally the researcher asked participants to design an ideal library webpage. Then the students divided into two groups and, using pens, sticky notes, and butcher paper, developed from scratch a web page mockup using ideas they had just generated together. They shared their creations as part of the wrap-up.

### ***Fixing the Current Web Page***

Four female students envisioned together what would make the current web pages work better. After a 20-minute focused discussion with questions similar to those in the first group, they gathered in the instruction classroom where they could view the library website on an electronic whiteboard. The researcher guided students in brainstorming what links on the current web pages they would keep, delete, add or modify. Individually they crossed out, circled or used sticky notes on printouts of the web site to indicate their choices. Together they then mocked-up a new web page using these ideas. (See Appendix A: Guiding Questions for Group Discussions)

### ***Web Usability Testing***

The researcher held three individual (1 male, 2 female) usability sessions, in each case easing student discomfort by emphasizing she was testing the web pages, not their own research skills. The three volunteers (one male, two female) answered 16 questions using the current library web pages while the researcher and student assistant noted navigation paths and strategies. (See Appendix for questions) Afterward, the researcher debriefed students about the choices they had made and asked them how they might improve on the current pages.

The researcher tried to transcribe recorded sessions and integrate her own observations and assistant's notes as soon as possible after each session. With sessions completed and data gathered, the researcher began to analyze and categorize data, focusing on what she refers to as "flash points," recurring issues often central to group discussions, but also expressed by individuals in other settings.

### ***Student Profile***

Five seniors, 3 juniors, and 4 sophomores participated, mostly female (10 of 12). They claimed majors in business, exercise science, elementary education, Spanish, chemistry, anthropology, sociology, French, and political science. Most students said they did not use the library web pages regularly (7—once a month; 1—rarely; 3—weekly), despite the fact that the group averaged a high GPA (3.5).

### ***Challenges with Sessions***

Holding sessions during a busy term can take a toll on participant and researcher/assistant availability as

well as energy. Yet this is also the best time to recruit participants actively engaged in academic experiences that can freshly inform their attitudes and strategies.

It also took a lot of focused effort to arrange and conduct sessions and then to review data in a timely manner. But this attentiveness paid off when the poor quality of the redesign group audio recording prevented transcription; the assistant's notes, physical artifacts, and recollections from the recently completed session allowed the researcher to retain and record the main points.

### **Observations and Findings During Redesign**

#### *Participation:*

Students responded enthusiastically to being part of the process of improving the web pages. They clearly felt their feedback was appreciated and would be considered in the final product. Although paid for their time, many expressed willingness to participate for free. Obviously the impressions of a dozen self-selected students cannot alone create the basis for an effective web page. But some commonly held perspectives did provide a good starting point for improvement.

#### *Concrete Suggestions*

The participants offered specific ideas for improving the pages. Most wanted the pages to “look and feel” more up-to-date, including new colors, fonts, buttons, icons, drop-down menus, and navigational features found on other pages they visited regularly. Many also wanted less text, less white space, more pictures, and wording that made more sense to them. Most of them wanted library hours displayed on, not just linked from, the main library page. They suggested links to BlackBoard, major department web pages, and other campus tools they used regularly. They desired both point-of-use assistance and random research tips.

#### *Insights Gained about Internet Habits and Research Experiences*

Students in this study also revealed common practices and expectations that might be useful for better understanding research behavior generally. For instance, students customized their own “default” web pages to fit their everyday lives. Their entry to the Internet might be Yahoo, Google, Facebook or even the Current Students page, tricked out with links to their favorite sites. It was home base, a starting point. One student captured this sentiment well. “I like [Google] because it is

a neutral start. I can use it as a distraction when I turn on the computer and the Internet—it allows me to go in any number of directions without being in a sense biased...and you can customize [it] with add-ons.”

These students didn't really want the library site as their home page; in fact, they consciously separated academic and non-academic activities. Working from “home” allowed them to choose the optimal time to engage in academic work. Some comments along these lines include:

- “You have Facebook and then your academic research separate.”
- “I would rather have a simpler library page, distinct from my home page [which is for] social use and planning.”
- “Facebook is good for procrastinating, a social buffer time before starting homework.”
- “Does it hinder me [to go to FB first] yes it does...but if I went to the library web site first, I wouldn't get straight to work anyway.”

A recent University of Washington study seems to support the notion that students compartmentalize academic and personal research activity. The report finds that students both seek and evaluate information for their everyday lives differently than they do for course-related work.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, these students also expected library pages to work as well and logically as their other web experiences, with all the links they needed showing, just-in-time assistance on a variety of levels, and adjustable enough to fit their purpose at any given time. One student wanted “drag and drop” features “... so you could customize [the library pages] and you could have which links you used most often. I would probably use that. Because sometimes the user interface, if it's a certain layout, is difficult for my mind.” In other words, they wanted library pages to be familiar and relevant to individual, changing research needs.

The notion that students prefer efficient, tried and true methods to get academic work done is not new.<sup>5</sup> The University of Washington research further suggests that undergraduates do cling to narrow and familiar strategies for finding information, even those they learned in high school.<sup>6</sup>

### **Next Steps: More Input Toward Web Page Redesign *Spring and Summer 2009***

The researcher discussed these findings with library staff, using selected college library pages to illustrate

some of the more concrete potential new features. In addition, she asked the library student reference assistants in a focused group about their preferences in the current web site and recommendations. Evaluating all the input, she categorized and prioritized changes that might most readily be made to the web site. In Summer 2009, she and the campus web master mocked up a modified library web site that included many new features but that also integrated well with the College web pages. Staff and library students tested the pages before the Fall 2009 launch. (See Appendix C: Focus for Changes and Enhancements).

In the end, the web page “redesign” was fairly modest. The colors and fonts, mirroring the Campus web site, changed the “look and feel” significantly. But most links and navigation remained intact so that students and faculty familiar with the pages would not “lose their way.” New features, such as visible library hours, some wording changes, extra online assistance, pictures and dropdown database menus, represented minor additions or rearrangements of space. Nevertheless comments from individual students expressed a general thumbs up.

### **On-the-fly Assessment and Instruction Opportunities**

In Fall 2009 the researcher began informally evaluating the redesign as part of her library instruction sessions. Having discovered that web usability study participants often marveled at how much they learned about library resources during the web site testing, she decided to run modified tests in the freshmen inquiry seminar library sessions. As students dribbled in before class, she distributed a worksheet of questions used in previous web usability studies, but briefer and modified for content related to the particular class. As in the usability testing, she reminded students that she was testing the web pages, not their skills, encouraging them to see how much they could do on their own. Then she spent the first few minutes of class soliciting feedback on how they had answered some of the questions.

This exercise served both research and instructional objectives. The assignment focused student attention on library resources during the usually unproductive moments before class and served as a self-tour of the web site. The undergraduates exposed strengths and weaknesses in the navigation, while also pointing out multiple paths to answering

the same question. Class discussion emphasized less obvious web site features and offered a natural transition to the main content of the library instruction session, including difficult concepts such as finding articles. In the end, students felt good to have participated in helping to improve the library web site and the instructor gathered valuable data both for fine-tuning the web site and addressing the freshmen instructional needs. (See Appendix B: Usability Questions Modified for Use in Freshmen Inquiry Seminars).

### **Spring 2010 Assessment: Student-wide survey**

The researcher wanted to assess usage and opinions about the newly redesigned pages using a methodology that allowed larger numbers of students to participate. In Spring 2010 she launched a college-wide survey for its 2200 students, including an incentive to win a cup of coffee from the local Starbucks. Nearly 500 students responded, although only a core of about 400 answered most of questions.

The centerpiece of the survey featured several open-ended questions that allowed students to qualify what they liked or did not like about the current library web pages. In addition, several multiple-choice questions served to quantify more objective data such as class rank, gender, campus affiliation, etc. The researcher charted measurable answers and categorized responses from 3 of the open-ended questions. Other data awaits analysis. (See Appendix D: Questions Asked in Web Page Survey).

### **Findings**

#### ***Participant Profile***

Most respondents were female (79%) and attended the residential campus (75%). Respondents from all classes answered the survey, though juniors and seniors (59%) tipped the scales. Likewise students represented majors across the board, with social sciences and nursing taking the largest share.

#### ***Usage***

Respondents used the web pages in a variety of ways. Some examples include:

- 73% used WorldCat Local Search box;
- 63% tried library databases;
- 61% checked Course Reserves;
- 46% used library class pages;
- 40% checked library hours

About 50% of the participants said they visited the website frequently (daily or weekly) while 42% noted only occasional use (once a month). Eight percent admitted using the website rarely or never. A few comments suggest that some students visit the pages only when they have specific projects:

- “The last few classes I’ve had haven’t involved papers so as of late I haven’t needed it [the library web site].”
- “[use] when I need a resource.”
- ”I visit it when I have a report that is coming up and I need to find research materials. When I have research I usually visit the Library web page more than once a day for a few days until I finish getting my needed materials.”

(See Appendix E: Survey Data for more detail)

### **Answers to Open-ended Questions**

#### 1. In what ways do you like the library pages?

The good news is that many of the 352 responses to this question approved the redesign, some even crediting specific new features. Participants said the web site was well organized, easy to use, “attractive and inviting,” and had lots of accessible resources. A few typical comments include:

- “I like the drop downs that quickly access many difference resources. I also like the searching options right on the front page.”
- “access to numerous articles to help with assignments”
- “Its layout is nice and easy to navigate”
- “Easy to use, all of the resources are right at your fingertips.”
- “I like the hours being right on the homepage and not having to search for them.”

#### 2. In what ways do you dislike the library pages?

Sixty-nine of the 323 respondents to this question (21%) stated they had no complaints or actually liked the pages. A couple dozen more (7%) admitted not knowing enough about it to answer. Many of the remaining responses contradicted opinions shared for *liking* the pages: not user friendly, jumbled, and harder to navigate than before. Some examples here included:

- “There are a lot of things that I do not use. They might be useful for some people, but to me it’s just clutter.”
- “It’s hard to access the databases successfully

(without help and specific guided instructions).”

- “I don’t like how there isn’t one big database for all the articles, and how sometimes you have to search multiple locations to find an article you’re looking for. “
- “sometimes its hard to find what you need, there is so much.”
- “I got really used to the old style, so it can be really frustrating when I can’t find something that I once knew the location of.”

Comments from these two questions provided support both for the success of the redesign and the necessity to continue work on it. Some comments, however, revealed deeper issues not easily addressed by the web site itself. These became clearer when reviewing the specific recommendations for improving the pages.

#### 3. Do you have suggestions/recommendations for improving the web pages?

Some of the 227 responses to this question helped to clarify problems easily fixed on the spot, such as confusing wording or font size. Others pinpointed areas needing more design work. Many suggestions exposed deficiencies, however, that the web site itself cannot remedy or that might be better addressed via teaching or other services. Several common themes or flash points emerged and are presented below, illustrated with quotes from the survey:

### ***They Didn’t See it: More Design Work Might Improve***

Although the redesign purported to improve online research aids and assistance, many students apparently did not see them, perhaps revealing language or design flaws:

- “It could have a tutorial on it explaining how to use it to do different things and where to find certain information in it; INQS classes or Colloquium classes could take the tutorial together, or something. Things such as how to order books from other libraries, find other articles, how online reserve works, etc”.
- “I always see signs for being able to IM the librarian when I am at the library, but I have never been able to find how to do that.”

### ***Get the Word out***

The survey itself “advertised” the site, encouraging

students to learn more about the library in the process. Many suggested linking the library page more visibly from the Campus home page. Others observed the library needed better promotion:

- “I think all the resources are forgotten by the student population, so I'd think you might want to get the word out more, but I don't know how you might do that.”
- “I did not know there was a libraries web page, but now I will check it out”
- “I'm a new student and did not know that this service was available to me.”

### ***Issues that May be Addressed Better by Teaching***

Many students in the survey asked for better formal guidance:

- “I would suggest that how to navigate [the] Web pages be taught to every incoming and new student here at Linfield. I learned how in one of my classes, but I know that one of my roommates has never used the search engines and doesn't know her way around the website.”
- “No, the website is very easy to use, but I think students should be taught how to use it and where to find things on the web page “
- “Distinguish the databases, and make the information about each article (or whatever you found while researching) clearer.”
- “I like when we have "library information sessions" if we'll be using the library a lot for class. It helps me learn how to use the website in ways I didn't know I could considering it's not the first resource I go to for help.”
- “think just the education on how to use it freshman year would make it a lot easier”

Students often expect library pages to address complex research issues.

- “highlight main points maybe what is researched more often could be made more obvious to students”
- “Have all the different possible links and databases on one page”
- “Having a step by step online program to help students figure out where to find what they're looking for. “
- “It would be helpful to have an info box on the home page about which databases are the

best to use based on what you're looking for. I know students are taught this, but after a while it's easy to forget when to use Jstor and when to use EbscoHost.”

- “[I] needed to find articles on a specific subject. All that and/or stuff just makes it confusing. Why can't it just be set up like a google site?”
- “I think if we could devise a dual system that allowed the broad search now possible with key word searching along with a more "specific items" friendly avenue, the student could select the most appropriate method for his current purpose”

Students frequently do not realize that search and display features in catalog and databases beyond local control.

- “ Make limiting search items easier to find.”
- “Make the language more precise for requesting/checking out services. (if I am looking for journal 6 from Jan 2006, say that it is there or it isn't, not that there are copies from when to when; it's misleading).”
- “Easier navigation, maybe by giving more refinement options in searches.”
- “Need to use more filter to narrow the result”
- “Lessen the amount of steps needed to find articles on a specific subject.... Why can't it just be set up like a google site?”
- “Make it easier to locate the full text, and have links be more effective, rather than a link to another page with no information.”
- “Distinguish the databases, and make the information about each article (or whatever you found while researching) clearer.”
- “Don't have so many dead-ends. When doing research, I find myself typing in one search title and get nothing then I type it in again with a slight difference and the search comes up with many things.”

### **Discussion**

Although many more females than males participated in the survey, the students otherwise represented a fair slice of the college across majors, class standing, and campuses as well as frequent and infrequent web site users. With 400 responses to most questions, the survey provided more than enough data, comments, and viewpoints to begin assessing the effectiveness of

the new web pages. Many of the respondents said they liked the web pages and deemed them easy to use. Others still found the pages cluttered and confusing and difficult to navigate. Obviously improvement is an ongoing commitment. Nevertheless the redesign had enhanced student access and use of the web pages and the survey helped underlined specific areas requiring attention. Participants contributed practical ideas that could be implemented immediately. In addition, the whole process managed to bring positive attention to the library, advertising its services to those who knew little about them and encouraging others to be part of making it better.

The survey data also surfaced persistent issues less easily fixed. Undergraduates still have trouble getting to the full text of articles. They expect the library pages can facilitate this, but the complexities of the library search mechanisms can discourage simple successes. This is a perennial problem reiterated by a recent study suggesting students find Google Scholar more effective than library web page options.<sup>7</sup> Students feel justifiably perplexed that their college library cannot present seamless connections with comprehensible language across online resources.

College students also continue to struggle with finding research by topic. They often seem ill-equipped to filter and modify results effectively using library search engines even though they may do this every day using the Internet for their own inquiries. Academic research likely presents different challenges, not the least of which is unfamiliarity with the content being explored. Moreover, grades increase the stakes for students, adding to their panic to get that term paper “right.” The University of Washington study similarly discovered that students “feared” committing to a topic because it might “fail” to deliver what they needed, deeming course-related research “...more akin to gambling...” With fear and loathing, too much information and too many ways to get it, many students can be daunted by the process.

Understanding these views, however, is valuable for improving student research encounters across library services. Librarians can tailor reference and instruction to meet students more effectively at their point of need. They can also communicate better with course faculty about research issues and related anxiety. Educators can admit that academic research is complex, especially for novices, and try to emphasize strategies for getting around the minefields. Finally,

staff can continue to improve the library web page experience generally, cognizant of the expectations, but also sensitized to asking students regularly for input.

### **Ongoing Assessment and Fine-tuning**

A new campus branding campaign resulted in some major changes to the college web site, which actually provided an exceptional opportunity to upgrade the library web site further and less conspicuously. Along with adjusting fonts, colors, and some design features required campus-wide, the researcher and webmaster colluded to fine-tune functionality, informed in part by survey comments, experiences with students in the classroom, and informal discussions with students, including library workers.

This past fall the researcher as instructor again included usability tests disguised now as library web page self-tours to help gauge functionality of the new changes. This strategy continues not only to help identify common problems with navigation, but also points out to students features of the pages they might not see themselves and provide valuable transitions into course-integrated library sessions.

In addition, the librarians regularly discuss how the web pages and catalog and database searching work for student research needs. These conversations sensitize everyone to newly emerging challenges and the value of gaining student perspectives to meet them, all of which help improve both teaching and the web site.

### **Recommendations for Gathering Student Input**

#### ***Keep it Local***

Although results may have general application, what matters is how it works at home. Identify common issues in order to focus initial effort on service upgrades and get buy-in from staff and students.

#### ***Keep it Simple***

Reduce scale and scope of research processes in order to move forward quickly and inexpensively with improvements.

- Gather available students—try for diverse population outside the library, but settle for who wants to participate. Much can be learned with any collection of students.
- Provide simple incentives to increase participation. Students don’t need much; incentives tell them the time they spend is important.

- Set clear parameters on time it will take. Students like to participate if the project will not take too much of their time and energy.
- Set calendar and trajectory of methods and stick to it whether or not ideal goals for data have been obtained. The main goal is to get student input.

### ***Use Student-centered Approaches***

- Use open-ended questions to encourage students to describe or draw or relate their own “tale.”
- Assume nothing about student research habits. Listen or observe from an objective perspective.
- Remove professional “filters.” Keep conversations focused on discovering what students think; avoid offering opinions, correcting misconceptions, or “teaching.” Avoid mentioning the library or librarians or using jargon.

### ***Use Multiple Methods***

Gather data from different perspectives and participants.

- Focus groups: allow students to offer ideas among peers; often highlight their most pressing issues; identify current search trends, attitudes toward research, and how library research fits into everyday lives.
- Design and Redesign workshops: highlight preferences and attitudes toward using web pages; allow students to feel they are contributing to a valuable process; provide buy-in for using pages; offer novel perspectives beyond institutional “wisdom.”
- Web usability studies: pinpoint navigational barriers or flaws; identify language confusion; reveal areas to focus library instruction; “advertise” the pages
- Informal polling of library student workers: confirms common issues gathered elsewhere; provides quick check on student perspectives
- Open-ended surveys: provide perspectives in context; identify current search trends; highlight areas to focus library instruction
- Exercises during class sessions: pinpoint navigational barriers and language confusion; introduces resources; transition for instruction “advertises” web site.

### ***Logistics***

- Record activities in multiple ways both to enrich data and prevent loss in case one method fails;
- Employ assistant to allow researcher to concentrate on activity and to provide an extra set of eyes

### ***Analyze Briefly at First, Share with Colleagues, Then go Back for More***

- Zero in on issues expressed often. Each method can provide more data than one can reasonably absorb in a short time.
- Share commonalities with staff to create a starting point for discussions of improvements.
- Consult data again when have more time or need a new angle or ideas.

### ***Check in with Students Often***

Technology changes, but many activities stay the same

- Plug in modifications to services and ask how they work
- Continue assessment, targeting different features.

### ***Conclusion***

Asking for student feedback before redesigning a library web page and afterward for follow-up assessment accomplished many goals. The data provided a focal point for discussion on needed modifications both before and after rebuilding the site. Student perspectives also offered unexpected insights on issues that warranted further attention and gave staff a direction for continuing to improve teaching and other services. The process provided students a stake in outcomes and raised awareness of services campus-wide.

The researcher simplified qualitative research methods to gather and analyze data quickly and inexpensively so the results could be implemented immediately. She used multiple methods to collect data from different angles and user populations. Ultimately, this project has helped staff to become more regularly engaged in assessing services and keeping them relevant and fresh.



## Appendix A

### Guiding Questions for Group Discussions

#### New design

- How does the library fit into your use of the Web?
- How do you use the library web site?
- How can Web services help you do your academic work?
- What is your preferred default homepage?
- What sites do you visit first thing every day? What sites do you visit sometime each day?
- Where do you go first to find information for an assignment? Where else?
  
- **Brainstorm:** What would you like to see on the Library homepage?
- Exercise: Design the ideal library homepage from scratch without looking at our current webpage.
- Using the ideas we just discussed and any more ideas you have, design a new library web site. Include everything you would want to help you do your schoolwork and everything that would make your life as a student better.

**Redesign** What is your preferred default homepage? (look at a facebook page?) How would you design your ideal default page (would it be Facebook?)

- **Brainstorm:** Look at the posterboard mock-ups of our current homepages (use real page in instruction room?)
  - ◇ Cross off things you do not want
  - ◇ Circle features you want to keep
  - ◇ Use sticky notes to add new things
- Draw a new Linfield Libraries homepage on a blank piece of paper using the mock-ups.

## Appendix B

### Web Usability Questions (sample)

1. Has Professor Richardson put anything on reserve? If so, list something here.
2. Where can you find out what hours the Linfield Libraries are open?
3. Who is the head of the Library?
4. Does Linfield have the book *Arabian Jazz*? What is the call number? Is it checked out?
5. Who can you contact for research assistance or to ask a question?
6. Does Linfield have any books about whales? If so, jot a title here. Is it available?
7. Does Linfield or Summit have the book *Careless in Red* by Elizabeth George? If not, where else can you look to see who else might have it?
8. Does Linfield have the book *Russian Women in Politics and Society* by Wilma Rule and Norma C. Noonan? Does another Summit library have it?
9. Does Linfield have the periodical *World Archaeology*? If so, can you get to the articles online?
10. Find an academic article on global warming. Write down article title and journal name. Where did you find the article?
11. What databases does Linfield have available for Psychology students?
12. Find an article from the *New York Times* on wind farming. How did you find it?
13. Does Linfield or Summit own the video *Being There*? If not, where else could you look?
14. Do we have any online encyclopedias on Russian history? Find an art encyclopedia online. Name it here
15. What is the next event that will be held in Nicholson library?
16. Does Linfield own a copy of *Time* from 1945? If so, can you read it in paper or on microfilm?

## Usability Questions Modified for Use in Freshmen Inquiry Seminar Classes

Take a few minutes to answer these questions using the Linfield Libraries web page <http://www.linfield.edu/linfield-libraries.html>. Be prepared to tell the class what you found and how you found it.

1. Does Professor Kernberger have any materials on reserve for any classes?
2. What hours is the Nicholson library generally open on Sundays?
3. Who is the Library Director at Linfield College?
4. Who can you contact for research assistance or to answer a question?
5. Find the library web page created especially for this INQS class.
6. Does Linfield have any online encyclopedias on Russian History? Name one here.
7. Does Linfield have the book *Arabian Jazz*? How about books on wombats? Where did you look to find out?
8. What databases does Linfield have available for Psychology majors? How about English majors?
9. Can you find an academic article about vampires in the Victorian Era?

## Appendix C Focus for Changes and Enhancements

Intended enhancements based on inputs from staff and students

1. Simplicity and interest—provide reason to come to web page.
  - Less content on pages to highlight “main events”
  - Enhance with pictures—more fun, draw interest.
  - Colors and templating of Linfield College main pages
2. Navigation
  - More icons, buttons—more attractive, understandable
  - Dropdown menus for database and encyclopedia selections—in order to compact lists, but allowing patrons to see a lot at once if desired without “committing to” clicking through.
3. Findability: Important to students to have stuff up front
  - Hours listed out—clear list so don't have to find Hours link
  - Course Reserves, Maps, Staff links to find more easily
  - Events pushed and updated to remind patrons
  - New acquisitions randomly displayed with book covers to show what is in the collection and provide serendipitous discovery
  - On site, in context help as possible (see below)
4. Customizable options
  - Maybe a calendar
  - Organizer for assignments
  - Widgets to allow personalizing one's own starting web page
5. Helps
  - Research tips and resource suggestions pushed out randomly on a rotating basis to stimulate ideas (Tip of the day or Did you know?)
  - More in depth descriptions (more info) attached to all
  - Short tutorials: print, and short film demos
  - More in context help
6. Content—Resources
  - Library catalog search box on page—WorldCat Local
  - Article databases in dropdown list format
  - Encyclopedias in dropdown list format
7. Old pathways remaining for those who do not want change
  - WildCat & Summit links
  - Most of the same links, just moved or refeatured.

## Appendix D

### Questions Asked in Web Page Survey

#### I. Linfield Libraries web page use

- A. How often do you visit the Linfield Libraries web page?
- Daily
  - Weekly
  - Occasionally
  - Never
  - Other
- B. How do you access Linfield Libraries webpage—check all that apply
- Computers in the library
  - Personal computer
  - Mobile device
  - Other
- C. In what ways do you use the Linfield Libraries page? Check all that apply
- Put keywords in search box (Linfield WorldCat)
  - Check library hours
  - Use library databases from dropdown
  - Use Encyclopedias from dropdown
  - Check class pages
  - Check course reserves
  - Look at What's New @ Linfield Libraries
  - Check library events schedule
  - Check Research tips or tutorials
  - Other (please specify)
- D. In what ways do you like and/or dislike the Linfield Libraries web page? (Please be specific)

#### II. Linfield WorldCat (main search box area on Libraries page)

- A. How often do you use Linfield WorldCat?
- Daily
  - Weekly
  - Occasionally
  - Never
- B. What do you search for on Linfield WorldCat?
- Books
  - Articles
  - DVD/CDs
  - Other
- C. In what ways do you like and/or dislike Linfield WorldCat? (Please be specific)
- D. Do you have suggestions to improve Linfield WorldCat? (Please be specific)

E. Do you use WildCat Classic?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

VI. How often do you visit the physical library building?

A. Nicholson library (McMinnville Campus):

- Daily
- Weekly
- Occasionally
- Never

B. PDX Campus library:

- Daily
- Weekly
- Occasionally

C. Why do you visit the library? Name some activities.

Would you like to be part of a Linfield Libraries web page evaluation study? You provide one hour of your time and receive small incentive for participation. Please provide name and email.

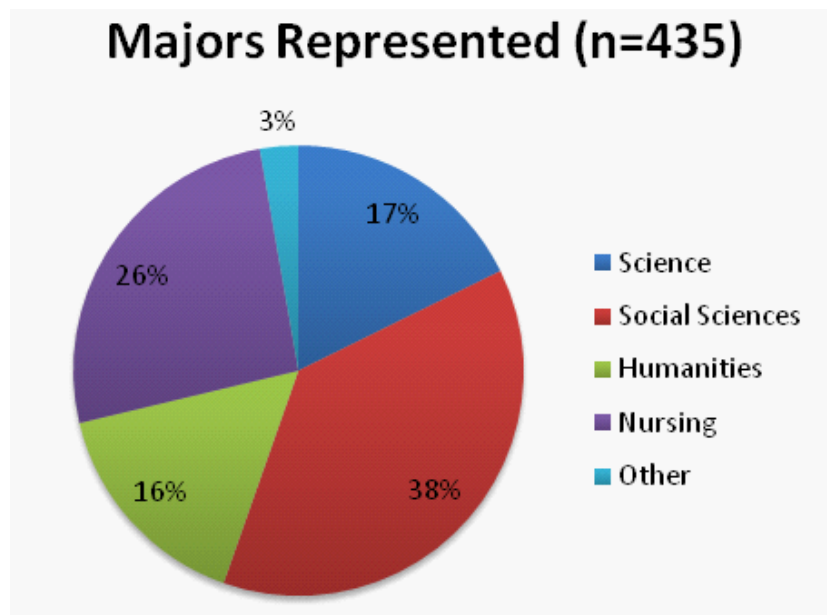
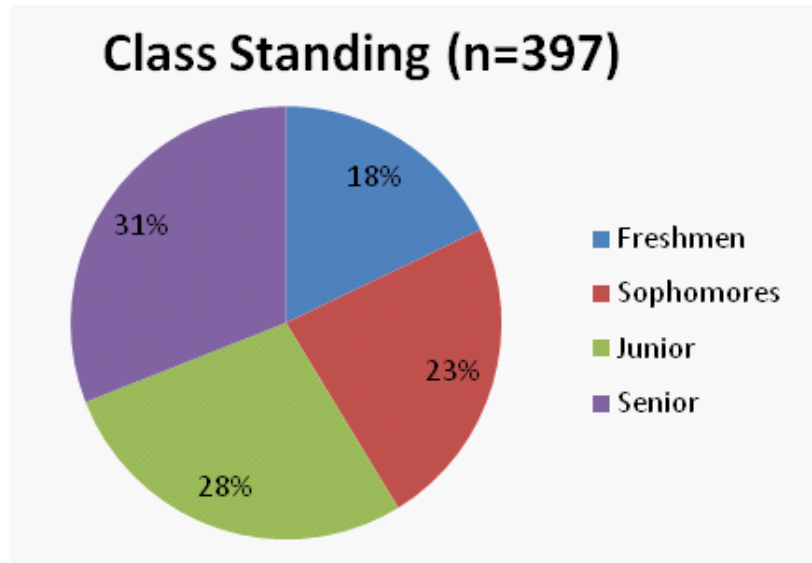
Who are you?

- Year at Linfield
- Campus: McMinnville Portland DCE
- Male Female
- Major:

## Appendix E: Survey Data

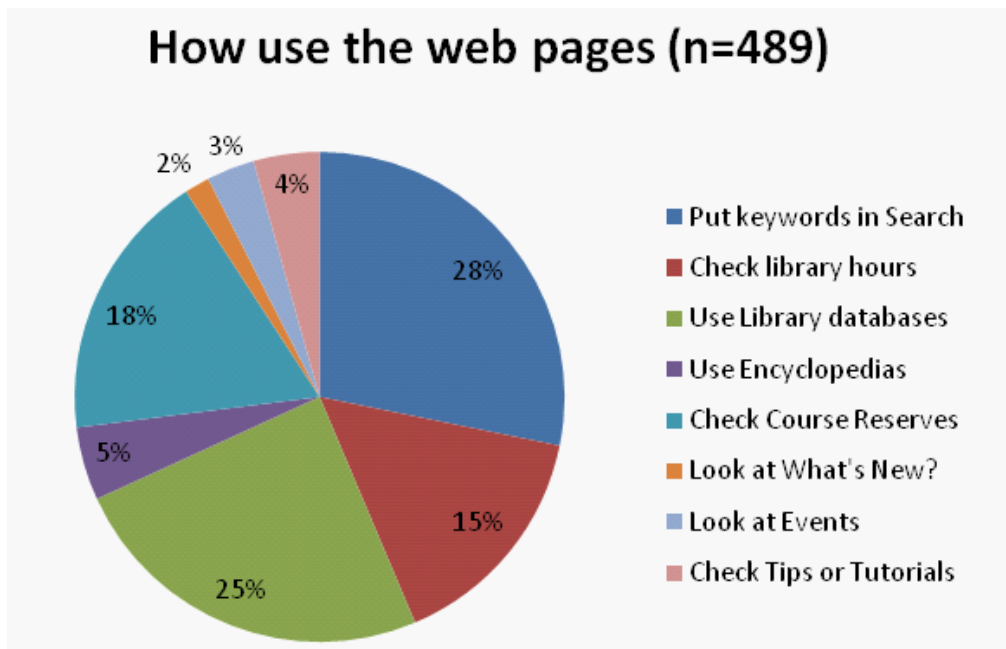
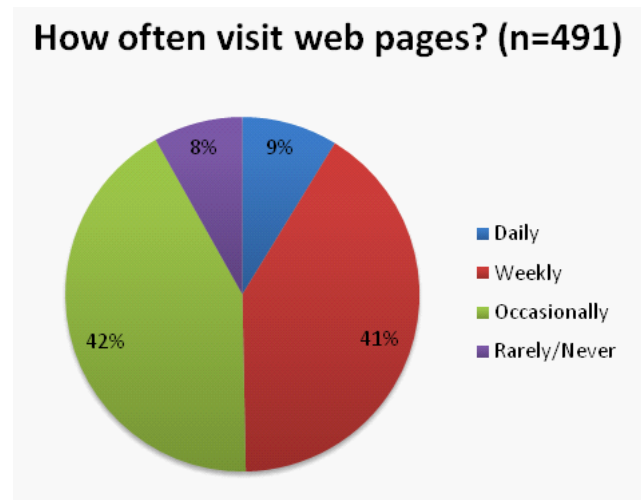
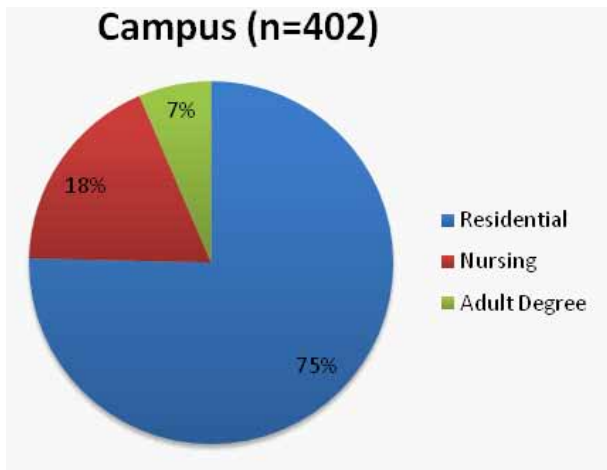
**Participants Profile: Gender: N = 402**

- Male: 21.4%
- Female: 78.6%



Includes multiple majors

## Appendix E: Survey Data



## Notes

1. Valentine, Barbara, and Sarah Nolan, "Putting Students in the Driver's Seat: Web Usability Testing on a Shoestring," *Public Services Quarterly*, 1 (2002): 43–66.
2. McCleneghan, Jane and Katie Clark, "Dream Catcher: Capturing Student-Inspired Ideas for the Libraries' Web Site," in Foster, Nancy Fried, and Susan Gibbons *Studying students: the Undergraduate Research Project at the University of Rochester*. (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2007), 30–39.
3. Hughes, Robert and Kitty Mackey, "Extreme Makeover—Website Edition." Conference presentation *Online Northwest 2008*, Corvallis OR, available online at <http://www.clark.edu/Library/Faculty/onlinenw2008.html> [accessed 30 November 2010].
4. Head, Alison J., and Michael B. Eisenberg, "Truth be Told: How College Students Evaluate and use Information in the Digital Age." *Project Information Literacy Progress Report* (November 1, 2010), 7–13, available online at [http://projectinfolit.org/pdfs/PIL\\_Fall2010\\_Survey\\_FullReport1.pdf](http://projectinfolit.org/pdfs/PIL_Fall2010_Survey_FullReport1.pdf) [accessed 8 January 2011]
5. Valentine, Barbara.. "The Legitimate Effort in Research Papers: Student Commitment versus Faculty Expectations." *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 27, no. 2(2001):107–115.
6. Head, "Truth be Told," 35–37.
7. Dixon, Lydia and others, "Finding Articles and Journals via Google Scholar, Journal Portals, and Link Resolvers: Usability Study Results." *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (2010): 170–181.
8. Head, "Truth be Told, 31–32.