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What They Think They Know: A Self-Assessment by New Health Science Center Students

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Research Tools
The students were much less confident about their understanding of the selected research tools. Only MEDLINE and PubMed were reportedly understood "Mostly" or "Completely" by more than 50% of the respondents. The tools least understood by this group are CINAHL, Web of Science, and the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).

Below is a list of tools used in secondary research. First, indicate how well you understand each one: what it is, what it does, and when you would want to use it.

Secondly, indicate how much experience you have using the same research tools.

Information Technologies
Students were asked about the level of experience they have with selected information technologies. These technologies are either currently in use at Lewis Library or being investigated for possible use in the future. The respondents reported large differences in their experience levels. They have the most experience using Acrobad Reader and flash drives, with more than 80% reporting either a "Moderate Amount" or "A Lot." But most reported having little or no experience using Link Resolvers, flush-ups, RSS, and Search Alerts. Since no definitions or examples were provided, however, some students may have used one or more of these technologies without realizing it.

Please choose the one answer that best describes how much experience you have using these information technologies.

Demographic Analysis
The survey included questions about age group, gender, and degree program. Students were also asked whether English is their first, or primary, language and whether they received most or all of their previous education in the United States. The aggregate data were then analyzed by these demographic groupings. The results are presented in tables below.

For each of the four questions about library terms, research tools, or information technologies, a two-way ANOVA test was conducted, assuming equal variances. In all four cases, the tests showed no significant differences in the variables tested.

The age groups were also compared, using one-way ANOVA tests. Again, responses for each question were analyzed separately, using the mean for each group. Due to small sample sizes, the 30-34 age group was combined with 35-39, and 40-44 was combined with 45-49. For the library terms question, the test showed a significant difference in responses, F(3,80)=2.81, p<.05. Tests for the other questions showed no statistical significance.

The numbers of responses from students whose primary language is not English or who were previously educated outside of the United States are deemed too small for statistical analysis.

Understanding of Terms
Understanding of the selected research tools is fairly low, but public health students scored themselves higher than the other groups. Not surprisingly, the responses for experience with research tools were very similar to those for understanding.

Overall, the new students reported more experience with the selected information technologies than with the research tools. But their experiences vary widely, and some of the technologies are still unfamiliar to most of this group.

Each of these areas – terminology, research tools, and information technologies – presents opportunities for education and promotion. The survey served to reveal the strengths and weaknesses in the understanding and experiences of new students. With this knowledge, library services and support can be appropriately focused on the weaker areas.

REFERENCE

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