

Assessment Report, Tredway Library: 2011-2013 Executive Summary

This report describes the implementation and findings of the Tredway Library's 2011-2013 assessment projects: 1) performance-based assessments of information literacy skills from the LSFY matrix, and 2) self-assessments of first-year students' learning in Special Collections. The report concludes with implications for librarian pedagogy and first-year student learning outcomes. Key findings, changes to the library instruction program, and recommendations are outlined in the executive summary.

Key findings

- Students learned basic search mechanics quickly. These include navigating Library of Congress classification, locating on-topic articles in databases, employing database limiters (e.g., specifying peer-reviewed articles only), and, by the end of the year, independently deciphering new or unfamiliar databases.
- Students were most likely to have difficulty with the following:
 - Parsing abstract topics into language (e.g. keywords) that makes them researchable
 - Analyzing sources *beyond the database record* to determine source type (e.g. popular vs. scholarly or research articles vs. review articles) and/or suitability to the research topic
 - Selecting the best source(s) from among a variety of on-topic options
 - Articulating how research shapes or informs the development of topics and research questions
- Students displayed an understanding of the types of materials (archives/manuscripts, books, photographs) found in Special Collections and the topics covered there (Augustana history, Mississippi River Valley), as well as why it is important and appropriate to use them.

Changes to the library instruction program

- Reference librarians are developing and refining in-class activities that focus on the areas in which students need the most practice.
- Reference librarians are experimenting with blended learning tutorials that could teach search mechanics outside of class, leaving more in-class time to devote to difficult concepts.

- The [revised LSFY skills matrix](#) has new information literacy outcomes. These outcomes:
 - reflect findings from the assessment project about the skills students need to develop in order to write successful research papers by the end of the first year.
 - encompass the work of Special Collections, recognizing their role in teaching information literacy to first-year students.

Key recommendation

- Generally speaking, students learned search mechanics most easily and were most likely to have difficulty with higher-level skills. Thus, *the results of our assessment project support decreasing the emphasis on search in LSFY library visits and increasing the emphasis on evaluative and analytical skills related to research as a process*. Such skills include developing topics and research questions, evaluating sources, and articulating sources' role in the research project.