

## Evaluating Library Instruction

# SPEC KITS

Supporting Effective Library Management for Over Twenty Years

Committed to assisting research and academic libraries in the continuous improvement of management systems, OLMS has worked since 1970 to gather and disseminate the best practices for library needs. As part of its commitment, OLMS maintains an active publications program best known for its SPEC Kits. Through the OLMS Collaborative Research/Writing Program, librarians work with ARL staff to design SPEC surveys and write publications. Originally established as an information source for ARL member libraries, the SPEC series has grown to serve the needs of the library community worldwide.

## What are SPEC Kits?

Published six times per year, SPEC Kits contain the most valuable, up-to-date information on the latest issues of concern to libraries and librarians today. They are the result of a systematic survey of ARL member libraries on a particular topic related to current practice in the field. Each SPEC Kit contains an executive summary of the survey results (previously printed as the SPEC Flyer); survey questions with tallies and selected comments; the best representative documents from survey participants, such as policies, procedures, handbooks, guidelines, websites, records, brochures, and statements; and a selected reading list—both in print and online sources—containing the most current literature available on the topic for further study.

## Subscribe to SPEC Kits

Subscribers tell us that the information contained in SPEC Kits is valuable to a variety of users, both inside and outside the library. SPEC Kit purchasers use the documentation found in SPEC Kits as a point of departure for research and problem solving because they lend immediate authority to proposals and set standards for designing programs or writing procedure statements. SPEC Kits also function as an important reference tool for library administrators, staff, students, and professionals in allied disciplines who may not have access to this kind of information.

SPEC Kits can be ordered directly from the ARL Publications Distribution Center. To order, call (301) 362-8196, fax (301) 206-9789, email <pubs@arl.org>, or go to <<http://www.arl.org/pubscat/index.html>>.

Information on SPEC Kits and other OLMS products and services can be found on the ARL Web site at <<http://www.arl.org/olms/infosvcs.html>>. The Web site for the SPEC survey program is <<http://www.arl.org/spec/index.html>>. The executive summary or flyer for each kit after December 1993 can be accessed free of charge at the SPEC survey Web site.



# SPEC Kit 279

---

## Evaluating Library Instruction

---

December 2003

---

### **Francine DeFranco**

Interim Director for Collections Services  
University of Connecticut

---

### **Richard Bleiler**

Humanities Bibliographer  
University of Connecticut



Series Editor: Lee Anne George

SPEC Kits are published by the

Association of Research Libraries  
OFFICE OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SERVICES  
21 Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 800  
Washington, D.C. 20036-1118  
(202) 296-2296 Fax (202) 872-0884  
<<http://www.arl.org/olms/infosvcs.html>>  
<[pubs@arl.org](mailto:pubs@arl.org)>

ISSN 0160 3582

ISBN 1-59407-611-1

Copyright © 2003

This compilation is copyrighted by the Association of Research Libraries. ARL grants blanket permission to reproduce and distribute copies of this work for nonprofit, educational, or library purposes, provided that copies are distributed at or below cost and that ARL, the source, and copyright notice are included on each copy. This permission is in addition to rights of reproduction granted under Sections 107, 108, and other provisions of the U.S. Copyright Act.



The paper used in this publication meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (R1997) Permanence of Paper for Publications and Documents in Libraries and Archives.

### SURVEY RESULTS

Executive Summary.....	11
Survey Questions and Responses.....	17
Responding Institutions .....	41

### REPRESENTATIVE DOCUMENTS

#### Descriptions of Library Instruction Programs

Arizona State University Library Instruction .....	46
Boston College Library Instruction Program .....	48
University of British Columbia Instruction Centre.....	50
University of California, San Diego About the Instruction Program .....	51
University of California, Santa Barbara Library Instruction.....	53
University of Chicago Library Instruction. Instructional Services.....	55
University of Connecticut Library Instruction.....	56
University of Iowa Instructional Services. Mission Statement .....	57
Library of Congress Information for Researchers. Using the Library of Congress .....	60
McMaster University Instruction and Tours.....	61

New York Public Library	
<b>Humanities &amp; Social Sciences Library. Celeste Bartos Education Center</b> .....	63
<b>Celeste Bartos Education Center. Class Descriptions</b> .....	64
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	
<b>Classes, Tours &amp; Tutorials. For Students</b> .....	67
<b>Classes, Tours &amp; Tutorials. For Faculty and Instructors</b> .....	68
<b>Classes, Tours &amp; Tutorials. For Visitors and the Community</b> .....	70
University of Pennsylvania	
<b>Workshops, Training, Classes, Tours</b> .....	71
Yale University	
<b>Workshops &amp; Tutorials</b> .....	72

### **Library Instruction Committee Charges**

University of Alabama	
<b>Library Instruction-Gorgas Library</b> .....	74
University of California, San Diego	
<b>Instruction and Outreach Committee</b> .....	76
Cornell University	
<b>About Instructional Working Group. Charge</b> .....	78
Kent State University	
<b>Instructional Services</b> .....	79
University of Massachusetts, Amherst	
<b>About Instructional Services</b> .....	80
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	
<b>MIT Libraries Instruction Committee</b> .....	81
University of Oregon	
<b>All Instruction Forum. Purpose</b> .....	82
Purdue University	
<b>Curriculum Committee</b> .....	83
Rutgers University	
<b>Instructional Services Committee: Charge</b> .....	84
Washington State University	
<b>Library Instruction/Reference Working Group</b> .....	85
Washington University in St. Louis	
<b>Mission and Goals of User Education</b> .....	87
University of Waterloo	
<b>Library Instruction Committee</b> .....	88
Wayne State University	
<b>Information Services</b> .....	89

## Library Instruction Evaluation Forms

University of Alabama	
Library Survey.....	92
Boston College	
Feedback for Library Instruction .....	93
University at Buffalo, SUNY	
Workshop Participant’s Evaluation Form .....	94
University of California, Irvine	
The UC Irvine Libraries Tutorial. Send Us Your Comments.....	95
University of California, San Diego	
Feedback/Class Evaluation Form .....	96
University of California, Santa Barbara	
Library Tutorial: Feedback .....	97
Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information	
Evaluation. Training Session: NRC Virtual Library Introduction .....	98
Evaluation Form. Science Direct Abstracts Database Presentation .....	100
Cornell University	
Library Instruction Evaluation Form .....	101
University of Delaware	
Guide to Library Research. Comments & Feedback Form .....	103
George Washington University	
Faculty Assessment.....	104
Observation Assessment.....	106
Library Instruction Feedback Form.....	108
One Minute Paper/Notecard Worksheet .....	110
University of Minnesota	
How well did we teach you? .....	112
University of Notre Dame	
Library Instruction Evaluation .....	113
Library Instruction. Faculty Evaluation Form.....	114
University of Oregon	
Course Evaluation .....	115
Supplemental Course Evaluation Form .....	116
University of Virginia	
Evaluation Form. Library Instruction Session.....	117
Faculty Evaluation Form .....	118
Evaluation Form. Library Short Course .....	119
Survey on First Year Library Instruction .....	120
Virginia Tech	
Instruction & Reference Department. University Libraries. Virginia Tech. Assessment Tools .....	121

Teacher-Centered Assessment Tools .....	122
Student-Centered Assessment Tools .....	123
University of Wisconsin-Madison	
Library & Information Literacy Instruction. Workshop Evaluation Form .....	125

## **SELECTED RESOURCES**

<b>Books and Journal Articles</b> .....	129
<b>Web Sites</b> .....	131



---

## **SURVEY RESULTS**



---

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

### Introduction

Libraries and librarians have been involved in the teaching process since the 19th century when Melvil Dewey introduced the concept of librarians as educators, stating that, “The time is when a library is a school and the librarian is in the highest sense a teacher.”<sup>1</sup> Over time, library instruction has evolved to support changes in information formats, student differences, programmatic changes, and library services. Libraries have seized opportunities, whenever possible, to introduce students and faculty in a meaningful way to print, nonprint, electronic, and online resources and to services that support academic and research pursuits. Indeed, from the 1980s, library instruction services have expanded from general lectures to course-specific or discipline-specific presentations that integrate print and electronic resources into the instruction session. Today’s sessions, frequently presented in electronic classrooms, encourage interactive participation and hands-on experience with a wide variety of resources.

Evaluation or assessment is part of the instruction process. Each semester, universities typically provide students with an opportunity to submit course evaluations. The results are then shared with faculty members. But what about evaluation of library courses? How effective are library instruction sessions? How do librarians know whether students are learning what they are taught? Do library instructors routinely seek

feedback regarding the content and effectiveness of the sessions conducted? If so, what is done with the feedback from faculty and/or students?

In an age of accountability, libraries have become more interested in gathering data that validate the use of scarce resources and demonstrate support of the university mission and educational outcomes. For libraries seeking to enhance or develop effective evaluation strategies, it is enormously helpful to identify whether libraries evaluate library instruction, how assessment is conducted, and what is done with the information gathered. This SPEC Kit seeks to provide quantitative and qualitative answers to these questions with survey results, comments, and supporting documentation. It is the authors’ hope that this information will assist, encourage, and inspire libraries in instruction and assessments efforts.

The survey was posted in August 2003. By the September deadline, 67 of the 124 ARL member libraries (54%) responded to the survey. Of these respondents, all stated that they provide users with library instruction that included tours, class sessions, online tutorials, and other types of presentations.

### Library Instruction Program Characteristics

#### *Types of Instruction*

Survey respondents were asked to indicate which of 11 categories of library instruction they conduct. Responses show that instruction programs offer

a wide variety of options. Nine respondents (13%) checked all categories. Two-thirds (45 or 67%) checked between seven and ten types of instruction. Thirteen (19%) checked between three and six categories. Several of these on the low end explained either that their offerings overlapped the survey's categories or that they didn't count some types of sessions separately. In addition, respondents identified a long list of other types of instruction that they offer.

Almost all respondents conduct undergraduate course-specific instruction sessions and guided, in-library tours (90% to 91%). A second tier of common offerings includes research consultations (88%), introductory instruction (84%), and graduate course-specific instruction (84%). Roughly three-fourths of respondents offer orientation tours, online tutorials, and specific product instruction (70% to 78%). Fewer than half offer self-guided or Web-based tours or for-credit library courses (39% to 46%). Other types of instruction include Web-based video instruction; sessions for the local community, such as middle- and high-school students and teachers, students from other local colleges, and book-collecting clubs; presentations in collaboration with a public library; credit courses in research methods for both undergraduate and graduate students; presentations at faculty / departmental meetings, residence halls, and library friends meetings; and sessions for students with disabilities, staff from across the university, and continuing education students.

#### *Number and Duration of Sessions*

Not all respondents could provide data on the number of sessions for each type of instruction. For those who could, the numbers covered a wide range. Some respondents cautioned that the numbers they provided probably underestimate their programs' impact. Using the mean number of sessions as a measure of impact, it appears that research consultations and online tutorials reach the largest number of library users. A distant third is self-guided tours. This is followed by Web-based tours and undergraduate course-specific instruction sessions. Product-specific instruction reaches the

fewest number of users.

The duration of instruction sessions is as variable as the number of sessions offered. Tours tend to last about 45 minutes. Classroom sessions and research consultations are about 60 minutes, with graduate classes running a bit longer. Few respondents knew how long it took to complete online tutorials or Web-based tours, but estimated between 15 and 30 minutes.

#### *Participants*

Some surprises emerged in the categories of library users who typically participate in the various instruction sessions. While it is not surprising that undergraduate students participate in undergraduate course-specific instruction (96% of respondents) and graduate students participate in graduate course-specific instruction sessions (90%), it is somewhat surprising how dramatically the participants diverged in the other categories of instruction. Undergraduates are most likely to participate in introductory instruction sessions (84%), take guided in-library tours, and have research consultations (79% each). Although 60% of the respondents reported that undergraduates used online tutorials and 51% that they received specific product instruction, far fewer report that they took a Web-based tour or a for-credit library course (34% in both cases).

Fifty-seven of the respondents (85%) reported that graduate students participate in research consultations, though far fewer (44 or 66%) that they took guided in-library tours. At 42 of the responding libraries (63%), graduate students received specific product instruction; at 41 (61%) they took orientation tours. Only 38 of the respondents (57%) stated that graduate students typically attend an introductory instruction session. At 23 institutions (34%), graduate students used online tutorials and at 21 (31%) they took the self-guided, in-library tour. Only 18 of the respondents (27%) reported that graduate students took a Web-based tour.

Faculty and affiliated researchers likewise share few similarities in their instructional needs. Research consultations are the dominant mode

of library instruction for both, accounting for 79% of the faculty's and 52% of the affiliated researcher's instruction requirements. After this, the participation of these two groups diverges. After research consultations, faculty are most likely to participate in specific product instruction (43 respondents or 64%), a guided in-library tour (43%), or an orientation tour (37%). A number of respondents report that faculty attend introductory instruction sessions (33%), graduate course-specific instruction sessions (28%), and undergraduate course-specific instruction sessions (25%). In these cases, they are probably observers of their students rather than participants. A smaller number of respondents report that faculty also learn about the library through a self-guided in-library tour (24%), a Web-based tour (21%), or an online tutorial (19%).

Affiliated researchers take advantage of library instruction at only about half of the responding institutions. When they do, they seem to prefer guided in-library tours (28 respondents or 42%), specific product instruction (34%), introductory instruction sessions (31%), and orientation tours (28%). At a smaller number of responding institutions they have taken advantage of self-guided in-library tours (21%), Web-based tours (16%), and online tutorials (15%). At a few institutions they have joined graduate (7%) and undergraduate course-specific instruction (3%).

At about a third of the responding libraries members of the community participate in library instruction. This group is most likely to join a guided in-library tour (23 respondents or 34%) or ask for a research consultation (30%). Next, they seem to favor specific product instruction, introductory sessions, self-guided tours, and orientation tours (22% to 24%). They are less likely to take Web-based tours or online tutorials (16% to 18%).

#### *Location*

Almost all of the reporting libraries conduct instruction sessions in an electronic (interactive) library classroom (61 or 91%); fifty-one (76%) use an electronic lecture room elsewhere on campus. When

an interactive facility is not available, sessions are held in a campus lecture hall (82%) or library lecture classroom (78%). Far fewer library instruction classes take place in a computer lab (40% to 60%). A mere ten respondents (15%) report that library instruction classes are conducted in a residence hall lab. Other places sessions are conducted include Special Collections, librarians' offices, and academic department meeting rooms. Several respondents mentioned possessing wireless units that they can use anywhere.

#### *Instructors*

Librarians are the predominant category of instructor at the 66 reporting institutions. The number of librarians at each institution who give instruction ranges from 6 to 140, with an average of almost 27 per institution. They appear to be heavily involved in all types of instruction with course-specific sessions and research consultations leading the list. On average, librarians lead over 500 different sessions at each library.

Support staff participate in library instruction at 36 of the institutions (55%), though in smaller numbers. The maximum number at any one library was 30, with a mean of 7.4. They are most likely to lead tours and introductory sessions, though across all respondents they have a role in every type of instruction session. On average, they lead about 60 sessions at each library.

At 31 of the reporting institutions (47%), department heads participate in instruction. As do other librarians, they most often conduct course-specific sessions and research consultations, though they lead tours and introductory sessions at about a third of the libraries. Department heads are responsible for 53 sessions at each library, on average.

Although eight institutions (12%) reported that faculty were participants in library instruction, some respondents interpreted this to mean library faculty. On average, ten faculty conduct 87 sessions at each library. These are mostly course-specific instruction sessions.

Vendors led instruction sessions at eight

institutions. Not surprisingly, these were almost exclusively specific product sessions. One institution each reported using a vendor for course-specific instruction and for research consultation. The maximum number of vendors involved at any one institution was five. These instructors taught between 2 and 75 sessions at each library, with a mean of about 13.

A small number of respondents indicated that they either didn't record the status of instructors or couldn't match the type of class with the type of instructor. These respondents submitted aggregate figures for numbers of instructors and number of sessions.

In addition to the staff categories mentioned above, some libraries use local library school students, student staff, and volunteers as tour leaders and instructors. Other assistance came from Student Ambassadors from the admissions office and staff in an online writing lab.

#### *Content Development*

Sixty respondents (94%) indicated that the content of library instruction sessions was developed in conjunction with faculty or other staff in the institution outside of the library. Descriptions of these collaborations indicate that there is considerable contact by phone, e-mail, and in-person between librarians and academic faculty to set goals for the sessions and develop content, library-related assignments, and evaluation instruments.

#### **Assessment of Library Instruction**

Barely two-thirds the responding libraries (42 or 63%) formally assess the effectiveness of the library instruction program. At the majority of these libraries, assessment of library instruction is voluntary and anonymous for both the participants and faculty. Examples of the few cases in which evaluations are not voluntary (or anonymous) for session participants include for-credit library courses, courses where assessment is part of the grade, a library component of a freshman writing class, and when participants have a specific question that requires follow up from the instructor. Several

respondents pointed out that faculty often evaluate instruction sessions in-person or by e-mail. One respondent explained that evaluations are for the personal use of the instructing librarian and are not shared with others.

For formal feedback, paper forms remain very much the norm. Mostly, such forms are used for course-specific sessions, introductory instruction sessions, specific product instruction, and for-credit library courses. Very few libraries use paper forms for tours, research consultations, or online instruction. As expected, online forms are most often used for online instruction, though a significant number of respondents report using online evaluations for undergraduate and graduate course-specific sessions.

Informal feedback is the norm for tours and research consultations and is received almost as often as formal feedback for classroom-based instruction sessions. About a third of the respondents do no evaluation of in-library tours. Questions about the effectiveness of library instruction were included in campus-wide user satisfaction surveys at only 16 (38%) of the responding libraries. Survey responses indicate that there are a wide variety of techniques used to evaluate instruction programs and that individual libraries rely on many different ones. When asked to rate the most effective techniques for each type of session, replies mirrored the responses above.

In the majority of cases (36 or 86%), assessments are conducted immediately after the tour or class session. In slightly fewer than half of the cases (45%), the evaluation is conducted within the semester (or quarter) after the session or after the class assignment is completed. Slightly more than a third (15 or 36%) of the assessments are done within a month after the session. Thirteen respondents (31%) conduct assessments immediately before class. Only 11 (26%) poll the class twice, immediately after class and again after the class assignment is completed.

In almost all cases (40 or 93%), the evaluation instrument is designed for the session participants to assess the content of the instruction session.

In 86%, the session participants assess their own learning and in 79% they assess the instructors' presentation skills. In slightly more than two thirds of the instruments (29 or 67%), faculty assess the content of the instruction session; in 60%, faculty assess student learning as related to the instruction session. In about half (22 or 51%), faculty assess the instructor's presentation skills.

An overwhelming number of respondents (38 or 88%) indicated that assessment instruments for library instruction are developed by instruction librarians. Librarians at five of these institutions received assistance from support staff; at four from faculty; and at three from an outside agency. Librarians also work with a variety of other partners including the Process Improvement Specialist, a user education committee, a committee of instruction librarians, Management Information Services, and the university. One respondent described a grant project collaboration among librarians, the graduate school, and library administration to study the impact of digital images on learning.

There were only five reported cases where a librarian was not involved in developing the assessment instrument. In one, the library assessment coordinator developed the evaluation instrument; in another this was done by an outside agency. In two cases, a subcommittee of instruction librarians or a library instruction committee had the responsibility. One respondent explained that the head of reference and reference staff developed the assessment instrument for their freshman writing class.

### **Uses of Library Instruction Assessment**

There is almost total correlation between who develops the assessment instruments and who compiles and analyzes the feedback on library instruction. The individual, collaborative group, committee, or agency that develops the instrument almost always has a primary role in reviewing the feedback. Support staff play a larger role at this stage—probably in compiling data—and library directors also get involved—most likely in analyzing the impact of the results on the

program. At one institution, librarians turn to the university computing center to process formal course evaluation forms; at another, the Information Literacy Round Table also interprets feedback.

All but one of the responding libraries uses the feedback on library instruction for program improvements. At the other one, individual instructors use feedback to determine their own effectiveness. The majority of respondents also use feedback for program reviews, marketing purposes, and staff training. Fewer than half (18 or 44%) use feedback for staff evaluation or to determine user satisfaction. A quarter use feedback for staff allocations and tenure and promotion reviews. Only nine respondents (20%) use feedback for budget considerations.

Despite all of the indications that library instruction programs are being measured and that the data are being used in a variety of ways, 33 respondents (57%) indicated that the current assessment tool was not able to provide adequate information about the success of the instruction program in the previous year. Respondents' comments revealed some common themes. Several lamented that they did not have a good method for assessing the impact of library instruction on student learning. Several others recognized that they needed a more formal and/or comprehensive assessment approach. Still others lacked the level of detail that they needed to answer questions about the program.

### **Conclusions**

A number of conclusions may be drawn from the data reported by the ARL member libraries. First and most positive is that librarians have apparently integrated themselves and their library instruction curricula into the learning community at large. This integration has led to librarians teaching in settings that have traditionally been considered the purview of instructors and teaching faculty: lecture halls, academic electronic classrooms, academic computer labs, and computer center labs. This apparently successful integration bodes well for those concerned that libraries and librarians might

have become too isolated. The fact that questions about the effectiveness of library instruction are not included in campus-wide user satisfaction surveys at the majority of responding institutions indicates there may be room to reach a greater number of evaluators, though.

Perhaps because of their increasing integration into the learning community, librarians are increasingly aware of and working to improve their performances. Consistent assessment of library instruction is not undertaken lightly. Ninety-eight percent of all respondents who assessed library instruction used the feedback for program improvement and 86% used it for program review. Such numbers represent a serious commitment to assessment on the part of the library.

Increasing evidence of library commitment to the instruction process is evident in the survey responses that librarians are permitting their classes to be assessed by nonlibrarians. A cautionary note, however, must be sounded: although assessment by nonlibrarians may likely lead to better performances by librarians, it also carries the potential for risks, particularly since a quarter of the respondents indicated that such assessments are used for tenure and promotion review. One respondent indicated that results were reported to the university provost and dean and for informing the strategic planning process. Assessment should ideally be a two-way street. Respondents indicated considerable collaboration between librarians and faculty in developing instruction sessions and both parties should be evaluated on the effectiveness of that working relationship. Unless librarians can assess the performance of faculty, with such assessments given the same weight and importance as that given to the faculty's assessment of librarians, long-lasting and genuine improvements in library information literacy may not be possible.

Moreover, although one should draw some positive conclusions from the data presented herein, additional questions can be raised. First, this study has assessed evaluation of library instruction. It has not addressed the methods by which the librarians successfully integrated themselves into the instructional curricula, nor has it assessed the methods by which successful collaborations were established between the librarians and teaching faculty. There is thus a need for a study of the ways in which the different groups succeeded in collaborating to promote university objectives regarding information literacy. We believe there is likely to be a strong correlation between group collaboration to establish the instructional content and the learning outcomes.

Finally and quite surprisingly, with all of the improvements and apparent successes documented above, there was significant dissatisfaction among respondents with the measures by which assessments are conducted. A significant majority of respondents indicated that their current assessment tools were not able to provide information about the success of the instruction program. Numerous respondents indicated that they did not have a means for documenting the long-term impacts—if any—on student achievement and student learning. Respondents indicated too that different methods and styles of instruction led to different assessments, with several mentioning the problems of assessing and comparing online tests, workbook log assessments, and hands-on vs. lecture presentations. All agree that consistency and standardization needed to be established. These are definitely subjects worthy of additional study.

<sup>1</sup> Dewey, Melvil. "The Profession." *American Library Journal* 1 (September 1876): 5.