

## **Assessing Student Information Literacy Levels using the Banner Survey Tool and the Luminis Portal at Lehigh University**

**POSTER SESSION – EDUCAUSE MID-ATLANTIC CONFERENCE – JANUARY 2007**

Copyright: Roseann Bowerman, 2007. This work is the intellectual property of the author. Permission is granted for this material to be shared for non-commercial, educational purposes, provided that this copyright statement appears on the reproduced materials and notice is given that the copying is by permission of the author. To disseminate otherwise or to republish requires written permission from the author.

In response to faculty concerns about student research skills and in order to address the new Middle States Commission on Higher Education's standards and guidelines for information literacy, a working group examined expectations for base-line Lehigh University student information competencies. The expectation is that all students will be able to effectively find, evaluate, apply, integrate, and ethically use information by graduation. In order to develop programming that would effectively transmit these skills to our students but which would also fit into the curricular programs at Lehigh, the working group felt that it would be necessary to provide a multi-pronged approach to general education and major-specific information mastery goals.

As a first step toward a campus-wide information literacy program at Lehigh, the “information literacy librarians” needed to understand the perceptions and skills with which Lehigh students arrive. By learning those information literacy competency areas that students had already mastered as well as those in which they needed further education, the working group could focus its energies and attend to the most critical information skill deficiencies. The working group decided that administering a web-based Research Skills Assessment to incoming students would be the best method to learn more about these information skill strengths and weaknesses.

Prior to developing the assessment questions, a number of information literacy assessments created by other institutions were reviewed. In one aspect or another, those assessments did not prove to be good models for adoption. The working group decided to write its own assessment: short, free of library jargon, focused on skills one might expect a beginning college student to possess or develop in their first two years of college, and useful in the information literacy tutorial planning process. The questions were designed to examine student skills in five areas that map to the Middle States information literacy competencies:

- Defining Research Needs
- Accessing Information
- Locating Relevant Information
- Critically Evaluating Information
- Employing Ethical Principles

The Assessment has been reviewed and revised periodically to adapt to changes in the information environments of libraries and the Internet. The Information Literacy Working Group, which had originally been comprised of only librarians, expanded to include an

instructional technology consultant to assist with the technical aspects of the survey tool and the portal platform.

Built using SunGuard SCT's Banner Survey Tool in June 2004, the Assessment is administered through SCT's Luminis Portal platform to incoming first-year undergraduates. A special area in the Lehigh University Luminis Portal had previously been developed for incoming first-year undergraduates ("The First-Year Student Portal"). All incoming students rapidly become users of the Lehigh Portal **before** they arrive on campus. They use it to register for classes, to sign up for housing, and to complete some pre-arrival placement testing. The Assessment's presence in the pre-arrival task checklist, coupled with the ability to send out last-minute reminder messages about the need to complete it, have been invaluable in assuring that the educational programming being created by the working group will meet the information mastery skill development needs of Lehigh's undergraduate students.

The working group decided to use Banner's survey component to create and administer the assessment rather than the Blackboard Survey Manager or Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey did not provide the same level of access control as Banner or Blackboard. Additionally, the students' lack of familiarity with Blackboard coupled with their frequent visits to the First Year Student Portal makes Banner Survey the best tool for administering the Assessment prior to the arrival of first-year students on campus.

There were two key issues with the Banner Survey tool that needed to be addressed by the instructional technology consultant. First, Banner Survey sets a sixty-character limit on answer choices and some of the Assessment's answers contained bibliographic information exceeding this limit. Since Banner Survey allows answers to be formatted as URL's, the instructional technologist was able to create images of the answers and load them onto a website from which they are seamlessly pulled into the Assessment. The other concern that needed to be addressed was that initial survey configuration and survey data export requires the assistance of an enterprise database consultant to load student registration information into the survey and retrieve survey data once the Assessment is complete.

The Research Skills Assessment has been conducted from June through the beginning of the fall semester for the last three years and continues to be conducted each summer. It has a three-year average student completion rate of almost 70% (generally around 800 students each year). This high response rate has helped to attract a good deal of faculty interest in the assessment results. A website was created and is dedicated to the information literacy initiative. The faculty portion offers tools for faculty, reports on the assessment and describes information literacy instruction sessions librarians have developed for first-year seminars. For the student portion of the website, the instructional guides and materials focus on those topics the assessment identified as most problematic. As time goes on, additional resources will be developed to address other concerns, promoting new information products and focusing on discipline specific information needs. To learn more about the Assessment and Lehigh University's information literacy program go to <http://www.lehigh.edu/library/infolit/faculty/>.

Roseann Bowerman, Social Sciences Librarian, rb04@lehigh.edu, 610-758-3053  
W. Judd Hark, Instructional Technology Consultant, wjh204@lehigh.edu, 610-758-3984