Addressing Information Management Competency Attainment through Consultations: An Effective and Sustainable Strategy?

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Addressing Information Management Competency Attainment through Consultations: An Effective and Sustainable Strategy?

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Objectives: To study the application of local information management competencies in the context of a research methods class in the university's behavioral sciences program. We sought to measure competencies, address them through targeted individualized consultative instructional sessions, and evaluate improvement of skills as well as the sustainability of this level of concentrated individualized service.

Methods: This is a collaboration of a librarian seeking to address student information management competencies and an instructor teaching a graduate course in research methods. Study participants were twenty-five students taking the course during Fall 2011. Using competencies previously developed by the library, the authors developed a sixteen-item questionnaire inquiring about the students' prior experience, their self-ratings of eighteen skills, and a knowledge test. This was pretested with twenty first-year students and modified accordingly. Students were required to complete the questionnaire and have at least one librarian consultation. The student responses and identified needs were then used to guide the consultation. Information was collected about: consultation content, duration, and number per student. A similar questionnaire will be completed at the end of the course, along with student grades and demonstration of the competencies through coursework.

Results: Students in the research methods class were required to submit a pre- and post-survey. The post-survey utilized a post-test retrospective pre-test methodology that asked them to self-assess their current competencies and where they believe they were at the beginning of the semester. Using this methodology, students indicated an improvement across every competency indicator. In addition, the students were asked to indicate how helpful it was to have the availability of the librarian and the information management consultation, and in every area, the students indicated that it was "very helpful" to at least "a little helpful" to have the librarian involved in the curriculum of this course.

Conclusions: The librarian will continue to provide individual information management consultations with students in the research methods class. While it takes a considerable amount of time and scheduling can be difficult, this type of activity with the students is directly in line with the library’s strategic initiative to improve information management competencies in the populations we serve.

The knowledge assessment tool and questions needs further refinement and coordination with the consultation sessions.

Correlation between consultations and the quality of the end-product is difficult to determine.