HOLY GOOGLE SCHOLAR, BATMAN!

Assessing the Needs of Science & Engineering Graduate Students
Presented by Erin Alcock & Ian Gibson, Science Research Liaison Librarians
Outline

- LI Needs Assessment
- Faculty Focus Groups
- Graduate Survey
- What we did wrong
- Where are we going
2005/2006 LI Needs Assessment

• Quite a low response from science & engineering
• Clearly underserved
• Some faculty response
2005/2006 LI Needs Assessment

• Many Unanswered questions:
  ❖ Amongst Science & Engineering students, who is doing library research and at what level?
  ❖ What are graduate students doing?
Talking to Faculty

• What kinds of research were they expecting of their students?
• Could the students fulfill these expectations independently?
• Where did they feel students were struggling?
• How could we help?
Focus Group Questions

• What kinds of library-related research are your students doing, if any?

• What kinds of information sources do you expect your students to use in their research, and at what level?
  ❖ Do you think your students have the skills to find that information independently?
  ❖ Are you satisfied with the quality of sources that your students are using?
  ❖ What part of the research process do you believe your students struggle with the most?
Lessons from Faculty

• Students were being asked to find and use primary literature.
• Students couldn’t evaluate the quality of what they found.
• Students did plagiarize, though not always on purpose.
• Faculty would like our help! No consensus on the form of that help!
Focus Group Questions

• What format for library instruction would be most useful to you and your students (one-on-one meetings, full/part classroom sessions, lab-time sessions, online tutorials, other)?
  ❖ How would you like us to communicate with you about instruction and other library-related matters?

• Think about your library-related experiences at other universities where you have studied or worked. Were there services there that were particularly useful to you, and that you would like to see here?
Talking to Graduate Students

- Are Graduate Students as confident of their abilities to find relevant literature as their Faculty supervisors think they are?
  - What tools are they using?
  - Where are they turning for help?
Survey Questions

• Mix of questions.

• Brevity.

• Incentives to answer.
What we Expected

• Biology domination.
• Mixed bag experience with LI.
• Library instruction = more confident searchers.
• Their supervisor would be their primary contact for help.
• They taught.
Survey Participants by Department, N=93

- Biology, 18
- Geography, 19
- Engineering, 13
- Math, 1
- Environmental Science, 5
- Chemistry, 5
- Computer Science, 3
- Physics, 7
- Biochemistry, 5
- Aquaculture, 1
- Earth Science, 4
- CABE, 8
- Unknown, 3
The tools they use

Number of Google Scholar Users  Number of Web of Science Users  Number of Scopus Users  Total #
Library Instruction

• 2/3 of respondents had library instruction sometime in the past
• The 1/3 with no library instruction claimed to feel more prepared to do research required for their graduate studies
More curious

• The 1/3 who hadn’t had library instruction also reported to be more satisfied with the information they were finding when searching.
The Biggest Challenge?

• Searching
  ❖ Getting started
  ❖ Finding relevant things
  ❖ Finding obscure things
  ❖ Finding everything

• Using the physical collections

• Stuff we can’t help them with
How do they prefer to seek help?

- 63% ask a colleague / classmate
- 59% come to the research help desk
- 43% ask their professor
What do they want help with?

• Searching

• Document Delivery

• Refworks

• Using the physical collections
What would we do differently?

• Focus Groups:
  ❖ Moderation
  ❖ Recruitment?
What would we do differently?

• **Survey:**
  - Timing was actually great
  - Incentive
  - Asking about teaching
  - Holy Google Batman?
A la Carte Library Instruction
The librarians at the QE2 Library can be as flexible as you need them to be when it comes to building a customized library instruction session.

Name *


Email *

1. Using the Catalogue
   - Catalogue - 10 minutes
   - Finding Items - 10 minutes

2. Searching
   - Developing a Search - 10 minutes
   - Finding an article from a citation - 10-15 minutes
   - Searching a topic - 25 minutes

3. Specific Databases
   - Searching Basics - 20 minutes
   - Searching across databases - 25 minutes
   - Advanced database - 35 minutes
   - Specialized database - 40 minutes

4. Critical Evaluation
   - Popular vs. Scholarly Sources - 10 minutes
   - Evaluating Websites - 10 minutes
More to act on...

- Course syllabus collection project
- Lab group liaison
Thanks

• Questions please.