

# ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS OR ASSESSMENT OF INSTRUCTION PROGRAMS?

The Public Services Division of MSU Libraries endeavored to incorporate a method of assessing library instruction.

In the Fall of 2007 three pilots were conducted. The first was a Needs Assessment to observe students information seeking behavior. The second was in the form of an online module developed to enhance library instruction.

The last pilot used an Audience Response System or 'clickers' as a tool to gather data that would assist in assessing not only students, but the instructor as well.

## Student Needs Assessment

### Background

In the Fall of 2007 MSU Libraries conducted a student needs assessment pilot. The data gathered was used to assess search capabilities of Tier 1 Writing students prior to receiving library instruction.

### A Lesson in Active Learning

Beginning each session with a keyword brainstorming activity on a specific topic students were asked to contribute related terms, words, and subjects using a white board.

Dividing the class into groups of 4-5 students, each group is instructed to find a particular type of information such as a scholarly article, book, background information and a website on the topic previously discussed.

The students were given about 5 minutes to search working with their group.

## Information Literacy Modules

### Background

Prior to the needs assessment pilot the Library Instruction Team at MSU Libraries were in the early stages of developing four information literacy modules. The modules would be accessed online through MSU's course management software ANGEL.



Searching With A Purpose  
Finding Your Topic

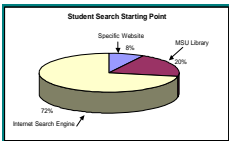
The modules were created using software called Camtasia Studio, which allows you to record software applications, web pages, PowerPoint presentations and other things that are normally viewed on a computer screen.

At the end of each video segment are two or three questions relating to the information presented in the module. The student responses are used to assess their information literacy skills.

Collectively the LI Team decided to pilot the 'Popular vs. Scholarly' first, which debuted Fall of 2007.

By the end of Fall semester 2007 both pilots were complete. After analyzing the data from the Student Needs Assessment pilot the LI Team felt that it was imperative to get the other modules up and running before the end of the academic year.

Knowing where students were in their search capabilities was essential and directed the development of other assessment methods.



### Data Recorded

- Where the group began their search
- What type of search the group performed
- Whether or not the source was authoritative
- Whether or not the source was available

### Information about Students

- Students were all enrolled in Tier 1 Writing courses
- Majority of students were freshman
- Data gathered for a total of 10 classes
- Approximately 25 students in each class
- Approximate number of students involved 250
- Number of groups surveyed – 50 (this is the number of responses which the percentages were derived)

information assess needs  
library instruction  
quality assessment  
estimate literacy  
implement evaluate  
ability

## Next Step Implementation

Working in collaboration with the Director of Tier 1 Writing within Michigan State University's Department of Writing, Rhetoric and Culture, the Library Instruction Team devised a plan to introduce the Information Literacy Modules through writing courses with the help of Tier 1 course instructors.

The course instructors agreed to require that all students complete the four modules as well as bring students into the library for instruction.

## Clickers

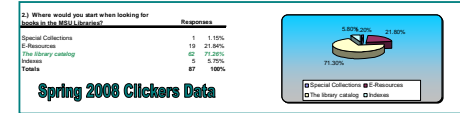
### Background

During the summer of 2007 a proposal was submitted to the Associate Director of the Public Services Division, which recommended the library to purchase an audience response system to assist with assessment initiatives.

The proposal was not accepted until Fall 2007, and the equipment was not received until late October 2007. The initial Clickers pilot was conducted using Virtual Keypads to elicit feedback from students.



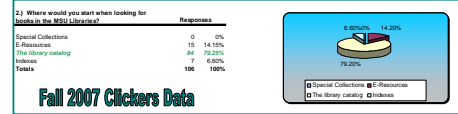
The virtual keypad, pictured above, is installed on the instruction terminal and viewed on the computer monitor.



The data collected from the continuance of the Clickers pilot in the Spring of 2008 was consistent with the data collected the semester before in 2007. Some student feedback still suggested a lack of understanding that books cannot be found using electronic resources or periodical indexes.

The good news is that analysis of the data from the pilot show that most students comprehend the information presented in the introductory library orientation and instruction session. With over 70% of each group responding correctly to all polling questions.

A closer look at the data also implies that the method used to present information or the manner in which the questions are phrased may cause ambiguity in feedback. Such implications show the need to assess both students and the instruction program.



### Data

The above data was gathered from five different Tier 1 writing courses after a brief library orientation and instruction session. There was an average of 105 responses per question, six questions total.

The data from the initial 2007 Clickers pilot suggest that some students have a hard time understanding where to begin to search for books in the MSU Libraries.

Feedback such as this makes it clear that more time needs to be dedicated to informing students of the difference between the online catalog and periodical indexes.



At the end of Fall semester and before concluding the Clickers pilot library administration agreed to purchase more equipment for the audience response system. Hand-held radio frequency keypads were added. This allowed the system to be used by more than one librarian at any time.



The most crucial aspect of assessment for any instruction program is to utilize the data that is being gathered. Whether the data is collected with a tool such as clickers or some type of in-class assignment. The data must be put to use in order to assess and evaluate not only students but the effectiveness of the program as well.

The data will act as a guide that leads to the next step. The three pilots conducted by MSU Libraries seem to build upon one another, but were not planned. The data led the way.