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# Play Your Cards Right: Creating a Library Orientation Game (poster)

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# Play Your Cards Right: Creating a Library Orientation Game

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## Background

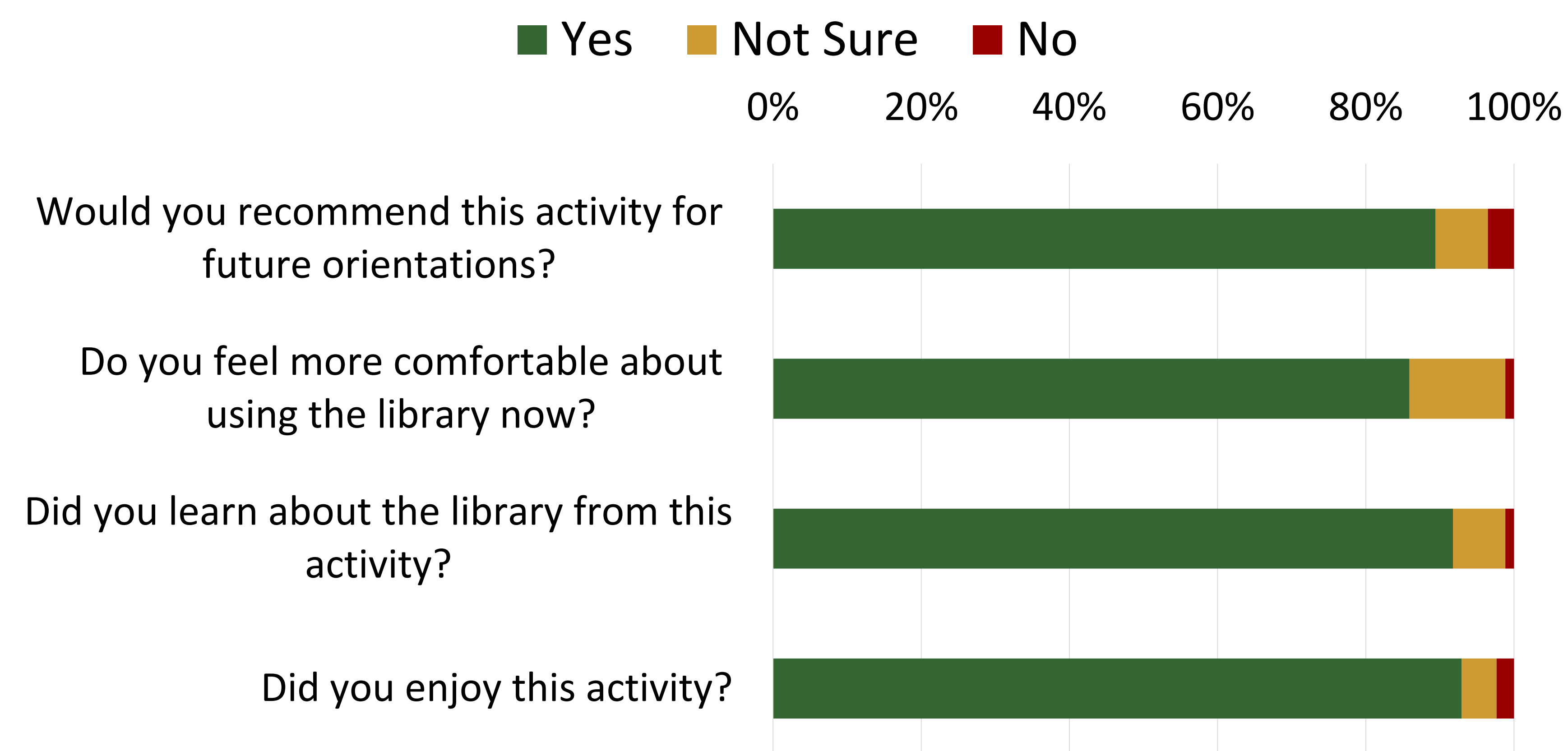
In 2015, librarians and staff at JMU Libraries piloted a card game as an introduction to the campus library system. This *Apples to Apples*-inspired game was originally developed as a training activity for student employees (Evans & Giles, 2015). The card game format was selected so that the game would not be technology dependent and could accommodate a large number of players. Cards were created with the Fruit to Fruit Card Generator (<http://a2a.browndogcomputing.com>).

The updated game made its debut at transfer student orientation 2015. The two library sessions went well, with facilitators observing lively conversation and laughter during the game (Giles, Shuyler, Evans, & Reed, 2016). Over the following year the game was used as an icebreaker in a freshman level instruction session and as an orientation activity for athletes. Librarians reported anecdotally that the activity was popular with students, but no formal assessment was conducted until the 2016 transfer student orientation.

## Methods & Findings

The two “Welcome to JMU Libraries” sessions offered during transfer student orientation in August 2016 were attended by a total of 99 students. At the end of the session, an IRB-approved survey was distributed to attendees asking for their opinions about the activity. 85 completed surveys were returned.

Survey results confirmed that the activity was a success. A large majority of respondents agreed that the card game was enjoyable, helped them both to learn about and feel more comfortable in the library, and should be used for future orientations.



“Awesome”

“Really liked the activity, it wasn't like reading a brochure”

“This was lots of fun, thanks”

## Discussion

Card games are relatively easy and inexpensive to produce, and can be played in almost any setting. The *Apples to Apples* format is flexible in terms of group size and play time, and many students are already familiar with the rules. The subjective judging allows students with different knowledge levels to compete against one another.

A card game may be an especially effective orientation activity for transfer students. These students often face challenges integrating socially at a new institution and meeting increased academic demands (Townsend & Wilson, 2006; Kearns, Kirsch, & Vidas, 2014). Library orientations

that include card games provide an opportunity for transfer students to interact socially while learning about library resources and services that will help them succeed.

## References

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- Kearns, A., Kirsch, B., & Vidas, C. (2014). Searching for Blackbeard's Treasure: Using an interactive information literacy game to reach transfer students, in Kirsch, B. A. (Ed.). *Games in libraries: Essays on using play to connect and instruct*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company.
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