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Research Practices Survey 2015-16

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Research Practices Survey 2015-16

Overview

2015 marks the first year of Carleton's participation in the Research Practices Survey sponsored by the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium [(HEDS)](). The HEDS Consortium is comprised of a nationwide group of private colleges and universities, who collaboratively collect and share data institutional data.

The HEDS Research Practices Survey is uses the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) competency standards in information literacy to assess student information literacy as well as student research experience. The five-section survey takes roughly fifteen minutes to complete.

Entering first year students were asked to take this survey at the beginning of fall term, and will be asked to take the survey again at the end of spring term to assess the changes in their research experiences and level of information literacy.

Download the Survey

The full text of the 2015-2016 Research Practices survey is available from HEDS for [download]().

2015-2016 Preliminary Results

The HEDS Research Practices surveyed was administered in August 2015 for the incoming class of

2019. 268 students, or 54% of the incoming freshmen, responded to the survey. The survey asked students to report their previous and current library experiences, their level of comfort with and enjoyment of research, their confidence in their research skills, and their ability to do research.

The survey will be administered again in the spring to the same group of students in order to measure changes in attitudes, perceptions, and research skills after a year at Carleton.

The student responses to the Fall 2015 survey were in some areas predictable, but others show changing information gathering and research trends, noticeable from the 2006-2007 survey. The finding detailed below cover only a few of the areas addressed by the survey, but present a good picture of Carleton's incoming freshmen.

Findings

Library Experiences:

- Most students visited a library once or twice a month, with 59% responding that they visited their high school library at least once or twice a week, a percentage that rises to 72% when student are respond that they visit at least once or twice a month. After high school libraries, public libraries were the most-frequented, with college and university libraries rarely if ever used. *See figure 1.*
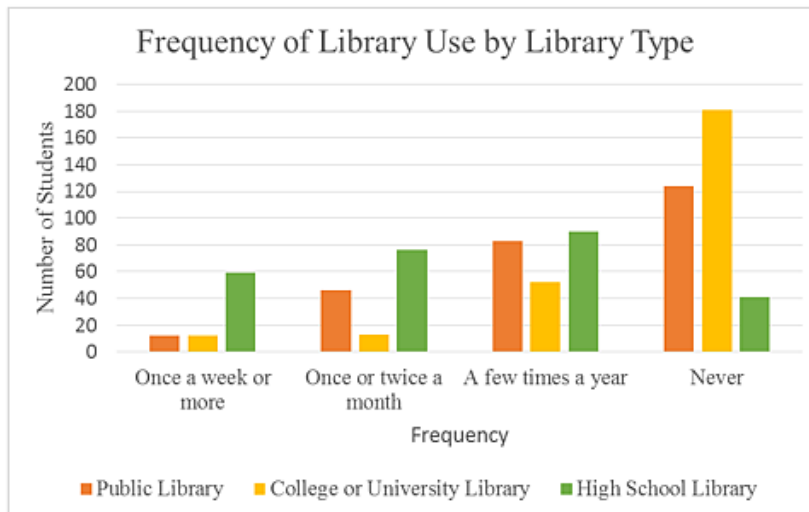
Fig. 1 "Frequency of Library Use by library Type."

- Students used a variety of resources in high school. 82% reported having used print books or eBooks, 74% reported using academic journals, 56% used encyclopedias or dictionaries, 55% used newspapers or magazines, and 34% used audiovisual resources.

- When surveyed about their primary reason for using a library, 47% said they primarily used libraries for homework and studying, 24% for recreation and nonacademic purposes, 22% for conducting research, 3% for other purposes, and 4% reported not using a library in the past academic year. *See figure 2*.
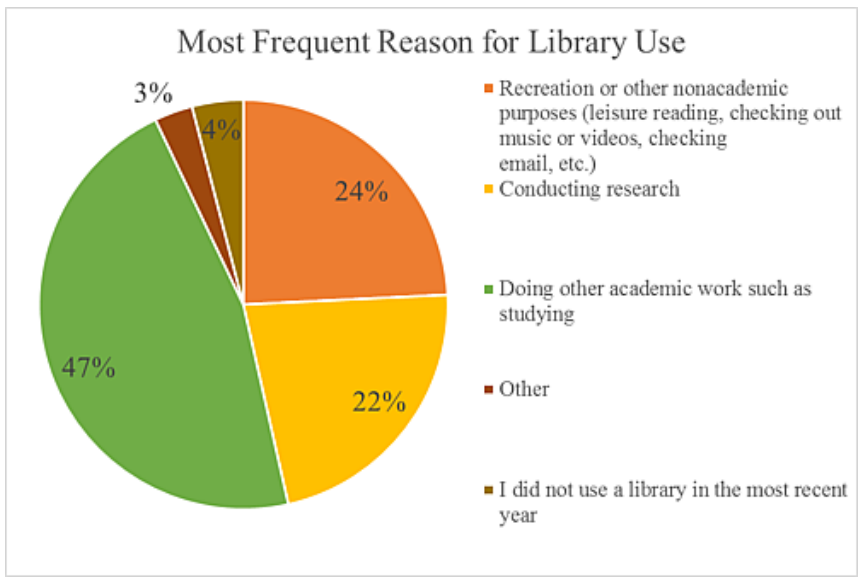
Fig 2. "Most Frequent Reason for Library Use."

- When they needed help or advice, students generally turned to online resources first, then friends. After consulting friends, they typically ask either teacher or their parents. Librarians and writing labs were the least likely sources to which students turn. This marks a change from the 2006-2007 data, where teachers and parents both were seen as more important resources. *See figure 3.*
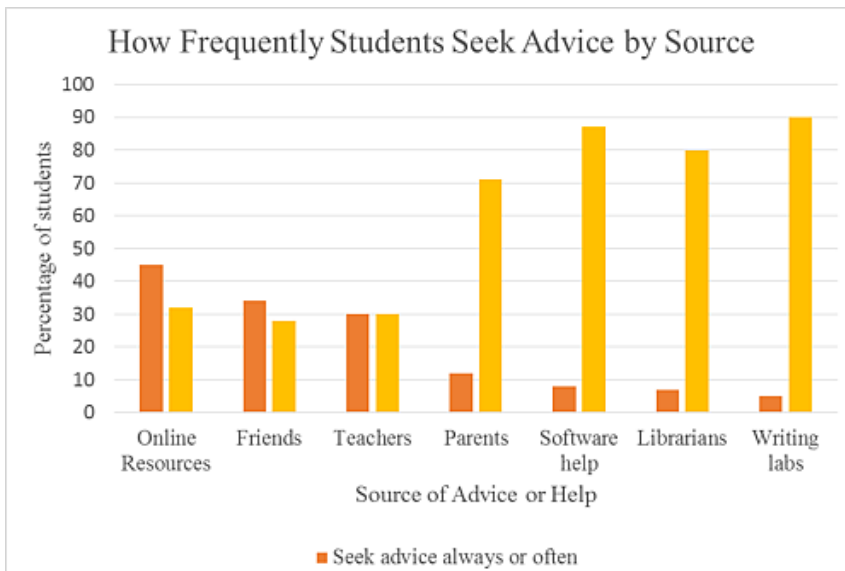
Figure 3. "How Frequently Students Seek Advice, by source."

Library Instruction:

- 59% of the respondents said a librarian had spoken with one of the 12th grade classes about library and Internet resources and their use.

Perceptions of Research:

- Concerning their attitudes towards research, 51% of students responded that they like research "Very much" or "Quite a bit", 39% of students said that the enjoy doing research "Some", with the remaining 10% in the "Very little" or "Not at all" categories. *See Figure 4.*

- When questioned about their perceptions of difficulty in different aspect of research, students appeared overwhelmingly confident about their research skills. 73% felt that using search tools to

find possible sources was "Very easy" or "Somewhat easy 70% thought that documenting sources was "Very easy" or "Somewhat easy", and 59% felt that they could easily determine source credibility. Areas where the responses were less enthusiastic were selecting a topic (43% felt this was "Very easy" or "Somewhat easy"), developing the main argument (40%), and obtaining materials through interlibrary loan (28%).
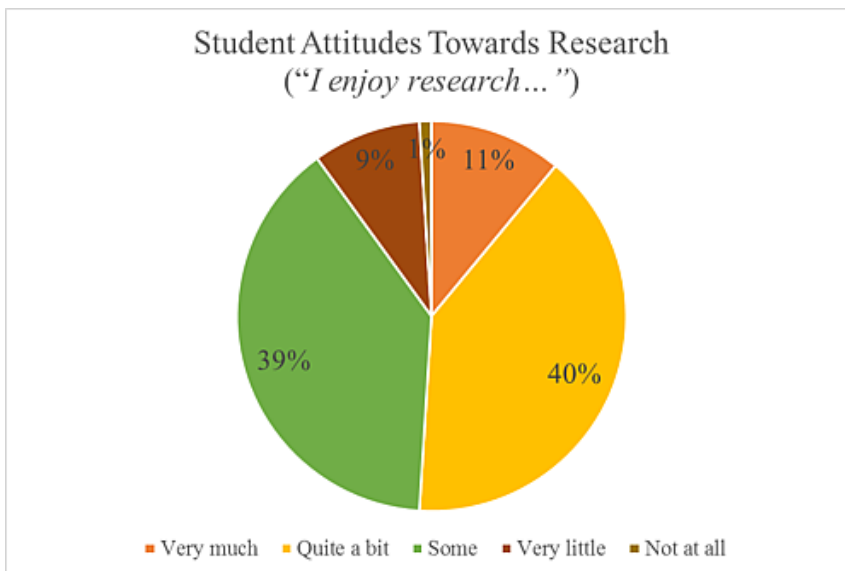

Fig.4 "Student Attitudes Towards Research".

Research Proficiencies:

- On the whole, students self-reported a moderate to high level of comfort and familiarity with research tasks and skills. 91% were able to select the appropriate search term/phrase from a set when asked which would yield the most relevant results, 91% could also identify the best statement to support and author's argument, and 72% were able to identify which among a set of websites was most

likely to contain biased information.

- Students struggled with certain survey questions, such as understanding similarities and differences between academic journals and popular magazines (50% answered correctly), identifying the type of resource based on the citation only (47%), identifying appropriate sources to cite given a set of search results (34 and 30% for two similar questions).