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Crafting Freshman Engagement: A Study of Library Orientations in the Fledgling First Year Experience Program at UC San Diego

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CRAFTING FRESHMAN ENGAGEMENT: A STUDY OF LIBRARY ORIENTATIONS IN THE FLEDGLING FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE PROGRAM AT UC SAN DIEGO

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BACKGROUND

In the Fall of 2013, the Council of Provosts, whose membership is comprised of the Provosts from each of the six colleges at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), was charged with creating a First Year Experience (FYE) Program pilot in order to support students' transition to UCSD ("About FYE," 2015). For the first year of the two-year pilot program, the FYE was offered as a for-credit elective course open to as many as 120 students from each of the six colleges. In total, 472 students enrolled in a Fall 2014 FYE class (Guan, 2015).

The library was asked to contribute to the information literacy portion of the course, which was offered in the third week of the first 10-week quarter of the academic year. The library shared the 50-minute discussion section with another campus service, leaving only half of the available time for library instruction. After many conversations with the Provosts and other campus leaders, librarians successfully made the argument that the "information literacy" segment of the FYE should focus on library services and resources.

The library's contribution to the FYE Program was designed by Learning Services Program (LSP) librarians and consisted of three distinct but connected elements. The first was a brief 15-20 minute presentation about library resources given during the FYE class lecture. Secondly, students participated in an online interactive library scavenger hunt as an in-class activity during their discussion section. Finally, they completed a homework assignment where they had to create a public service announcement (PSA) featuring their favorite library resource, space, or service.

LIBRARY ORIENTATIONS FOR FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

It has been well documented that students who receive an orientation to library resources and services are more likely to seek needed research assistance with course papers, projects, and presentations (Brown, Weingart, Johnson, & Dance, 2004; Pellegrino, 2012; Vance, Kirk, & Gardner, 2012; Du Mont & Schloman, 1995; Boff & Johnson, 2002; Ury & King, 1995). Further, a library orientation exercise where students feel they can succeed can help combat feelings of library anxiety, as students are often intimidated by the size of the library, feel inadequate because they lack knowledge about where items and services are located in the building, and are uncomfortable with both the research process and asking questions of library staff (Mellon, 1986; Gross & Latham, 2007; Jiao & Onwuegbuzie, 1999; Cahoy & Bichel, 2008; Van Scoyoc, 2003).

Additionally, active learning exercises such as scavenger hunts have been successful in library orientations, providing low-pressure games that introduce library locations and research concepts, without the high stakes of a graded class research assignment (Broussard, 2010; Burke & Lai, 2012; Kasbohm, Schoen, & Dubaj, 2006; McCain, 2007; Marcus & Beck, 2003; Cahoy & Bichel, 2008).

Further, several studies have shown the effectiveness of using public service announcement assignments for freshman courses in raising student awareness of issues and services highlighted in the PSAs (Artello, 2014; Truong & Zanzucchi, 2012;

Kingston, MacCartney, & Miller, 2014). By combining the game dynamic of a scavenger hunt with a PSA about the students' favorite part of the library, this library orientation module sought to increase students' awareness of and comfort level with the library and its resources.

Module Goals and Objectives

Considering the scope of the FYE Program—a self-selecting, small percentage of UCSD students with little to no experience with university libraries—and because there was no research assignment tied to the library orientation, LSP librarians felt strongly that traditional information literacy instruction would not be suitable. As has been cited in the literature, information literacy in a vacuum, with nothing to tie it to results or real time needs, has little impact on students and low retention (Seamans, 2002; Glenn, 2001). Thus, the orientation module had a more general learning goal: to introduce students to library spaces and resources.

The first level of the scaffold the LSP sought to build with UCSD's undergraduate population was to make students comfortable coming into library spaces, know where to approach a librarian for help and understand the basics of the library's catalog and reserves. By addressing these, the LSP hoped to mitigate library anxiety and prepare students for research assignments they will face in their future writing programs. Appendix A includes a partial list of the questions used in the library activity, with a link to the complete list.

Technology Selection

In considering technology options for the activity, it was important that the platform be scalable, mobile and easy to use. After looking at several GPS-enabled scavenger hunt applications, it was decided to forgo GPS technology, as the geographic area of the activity was limited to the library building, which does not lend itself well to GPS locating. Instead, educational gaming platforms were considered. The Edventure Builder platform (http://www.edventurebuilder.com) that was used for the FYE is flexible and allows for customization that includes the ability to upload various content such as images and videos. It has unlimited editing capabilities and the creation of games occurs in real-time. Included in the platform is the ability to create branching logic that facilitates "choose your own adventure" style gaming as well as game analytics. As a hosted software service, the pricing model is based on a per month, per game structure. This pricing model allows for test-driving the platform without the need to make a large software investment.

Design Considerations

LSP librarians accounted for both technological and instructional design considerations when creating the activity. Although it was designed to be mobile and could be completed using a variety of mobile technologies (e.g., phones and tablets), a paper option was made available for students who may not have access to a mobile device. To limit the workload of having to collect paper copies of the activity, students who completed the activity on paper were still required to use a library computer to input their results. Additionally, using branching logic, students were given the option to complete the activity using photo capture or no photo capture to account for different mobile device technologies. Other technological aspects that were looked into included Wi-Fi coverage. Users were able to connect their mobile devices to the library's Wi-Fi network, permitting them to complete the activity without having to incur data charges.

The overall goal and objective to introduce students to library spaces and services was accomplished by asking questions that directed students to physical spaces, for example locating the reference desk, and instructed them on how to use library services, for example looking up a course reserve. To limit potential disruption to points of service in the library, LSP librarians posted signs in front of key areas with validation codes that would enable students to report visiting a specific service point without actually interfering with the work that occurs there. Numerical validation codes were used to reduce the need to create numerous answer possibilities associated with the misspellings of a word entry. Student completion was captured by having students input their name and course section number at the end of the activity as a way to encourage full participation.

Figure 1: Scavenger Hunt Question Example
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Evaluative Feedback

The library activity had an 87% completion rate among FYE students, the largest number of whom completed the activity using a smartphone. Both before and after the activity, students were asked about their comfort level using the library; however, the

remainder of the pre- and post-evaluation was coordinated and disseminated by the FYE Program, not the LSP. Creating evaluation questions about the library will be a more collaborative process for the second year of the pilot program.

When asked at the beginning of the FYE course about their desire to learn about the library, students responded positively, with 80% agreeing or strongly agreeing (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Pre-evaluation of Students' Desire to Learn About the Library
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Students were also asked to rate their knowledge and skills with regard to using the library pre- and post-course. Overall, students reported an increase in their library knowledge and skills after the library activity (see Figure 3). In the pre-survey, only 12.5% rated their abilities as high, the majority of students (62.7%) rated their abilities as neither high nor low, and nearly a quarter (24.8%) rated their library abilities as low. The post-survey showed that 61.1% now ranked their library knowledge and skills as high, 36.3% were neither high nor low, and only 2.6% believed their library skills remained low.

Figure 3: Pre- to Post-Library Knowledge/Skill Level
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Finally, when students were asked to rank their comfort with using the library on a scale of 1-5, there was a 27% overall increase in comfort after the FYE library activity (see Figure 4). During the post-evaluation, 48% of FYE students reported an increase of 1, 14% had an increase of 2, and approximately 1% each had an increase of 3 or 4. About 34% of students experienced no increase in their comfort with the library, 2% had a decrease of 1, and 0.5% had a decrease of 2.

Figure 4: Pre- to Post-Comfort Level Using the Library
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NEXT STEPS

In planning for the future of the FYE library module, the LSP intends to both incorporate feedback and coordinate with the FYE Program to discuss new directions the FYE staff and faculty plan to take in the 2015-2016 academic year. From there, librarians will decide what improvements to make to the module so that it best meets the FYE Program's evolving needs.

The two-year pilot FYE Program plans to expand by 50% in its second year. There were 100-120 students allowed from each of UCSD's six colleges during 2014-2015, and during 2015-2016, the program expects to accept 150 freshman students per college into the program. Further, sections for first-year transfer students will admit up to 100 transfer students per college into the FYE Program. In total, this would raise the number of students from each college to 250. Another new feature under consideration for the 2015-2016 academic year would be the inclusion of an electronic badging system and incentives to encourage students to revisit the campus programs which provided guest lectures during FYE classes. The FYE courses conclude in fall quarter, and the incentive system would take place throughout winter and spring quarters.

LSP librarians will implement a variety of changes to the module, from technical to collaborative. Regarding the pre- and post-survey that FYE students are given at the beginning and end of the fall quarter, librarians will work with the FYE Program staff to develop questions that touch on both the library and research. From a technical standpoint, librarians will be testing the wireless internet throughout the library building to assure—as much as possible—that students will not experience connectivity issues while completing the activity. Further, librarians will examine the number of attempts students made for each question on the scavenger hunt to ensure that incorrect answers were not due to problems with the way questions were worded. If a pattern of incorrect answers emerges, questions will be reworded as needed.

BEST PRACTICES

Reflecting on this experience, LSP librarians would recommend the following best practices to those developing similar collaborations.

- *Create a team that has a variety of skills.* The LSP was fortunate to have a solid team in place that included people with institutional history, a project manager, an instructional technologist, and an instructional designer. Each person made unique and valuable contributions that led to the success of this project.
- *Foster internal and external communication.* Throughout the project, the LSP needed to communicate with a contact person within the FYE Program to ensure students had a positive experience, especially since librarians had very little actual

interaction with FYE students. Additionally, the LSP needed to make sure other programs within the library were both informed about the activity and willing to allow LSP librarians to post signs with validation codes at service points.

- *Select a flexible and scalable technology solution.* One of the most important factors that led to the module's success was that the selected technology solution was flexible enough that last-minute design decisions could be made related to institutional review board (IRB) requirements for this study. The selected technology is also scalable so LSP librarians are prepared for the future when they are asked to accommodate many more users.
- *Manage internal and external expectations.* At the beginning of the project, librarians had several conversations with provosts about why it would be better to focus on an orientation to library services and spaces rather than traditional information literacy concepts and research skills. LSP librarians used literature about information literacy pedagogy to manage the provosts' expectations about what type of instruction could be reasonably provided given the time constraints, access to students and lack of research assignment. Internally, the LSP needed to manage the expectations of librarian colleagues related to the amount of information covered. After the activity was created, the LSP received many requests from other library departments for additional "stops" at their respective service points to be included in the activity in the future.
- *Consider accessibility.* Accessibility can refer to many things. Due to the short timeframe, LSP librarians were not able to focus on accessibility in terms of universal design, although it is a priority in the future. Instead, the LSP concentrated on making the activity accessible without a mobile device. To accomplish this, students were offered a paper form that they could fill out and then enter their answers using a library computer. Informal data suggests that most students who took advantage of this option did not, as might be anticipated, do so because they did not have mobile devices, but because they found it easier to work in groups, their phone did not have enough charge, or the Wi-Fi connection was slow.
- *Make a realistic timeline.* Due to many factors out of the LSP's control, the activity's design and implementation timeline was very short—only six weeks. In many ways, LSP librarians were lucky. There was a dedicated team in place and the LSP was able to push the contract with the software vendor through quickly because it was used as a "training tool." Under normal circumstances, more time would have been needed to get a software contract signed. While beta testing went fairly smoothly, ideally additional time would be allotted in case of unanticipated issues.

CONCLUSION

A pilot project of this scope requires a number of pieces to fall into place. The LSP had the luck and foresight to have a variety of skill sets to draw upon: Instructional design expertise, technological skill, librarians with strong ties to the faculty and provosts, and a strong understanding of project management. All of these factors allowed the LSP to work quickly to create a scalable product which, if moved out of the pilot phase, would reach exponentially more students, and thus provide a complete base to the scaffold of undergraduate instruction the library continues to build upon.

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APPENDIX A

Online Scavenger Hunt Question Examples

For a full list of the questions used in the activity, please see http://bit.ly/ucsd_loex_questions

The Information Desk is here to help you! The Information Desk can answer the all-important "How do I find Course Reserves" and other questions you may have about printing, locating library materials, etc. Whether you're looking for information related to the Library or campus, we can point you in the right direction.

Visit the Information Desk, look for the validation code, and enter it below.

_____

The library has computers, printers, copiers and a scanner for you to use. Locate the scanner on the first floor and provide us a description of where it is located. *Hint: Try the west wing near the windows across from the media desk.

_____

Librarians can answer your research questions in-person and remotely through Ask a Librarian. You can check out the Ask a Librarian options from the library's homepage **http://libraries.ucsd.edu/** by using one of the library's computers near the Information desk.

What is your preferred way to get in touch with a librarian?

_____

We've created a guide to help you start your research. Go to one of the computers near the Information Desk. From the Libraries website **http://libraries.ucsd.edu/**, Click Course and Subject Guides from the Research Tools menu. Use the search box and type Get Started to locate the Get Started guide. When you have located the guide, go to the Find Articles tab.

What is the name of the multidisciplinary database that has publications in English, Spanish, German, French, Italian and Portuguese?

- ○ Academic Search Complete
- ○ Wed of Science
- ○ JSTOR

The Roger catalog is the tool you will use to look at the library's inventory of books, magazines, journals, media, etc. Using one of the library's computers perform a catalog search from the libraries homepage http://libraries.ucsd.edu/ to locate the book *Dr. Seuss: American Icon* by Philip Nel by searching the Roger catalog. *Hint: Under the Catalog menu, select Search UCSD and try a title search.

What floor is this book located on?

- ○ 5th floor
- ○ 6th floor
- ○ 7th floor
- ○ 8th floor

Is your library card number the same as your student ID number? *Hint: Your library card number is on the back of your student ID card.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Course Reserves are course-related materials that your professors make available either electronically or physically through the library. To get print material that has been put on reserve go to the Reserves computers near the circulation desk on the main (second) floor. Search by course (Library Orientation 101) or professor (Heath) for the book we have reserved.

What is the call number for the reserve item?

- ○ PS3513.E2 Z785 1995
- ○ BP 195.W2 A426
- ○ D745.2 .M56 1999

Have you had a tour or library orientation from a UCSD library staff member prior to this activity?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

After completing this activity, on a scale from 1 to 5, how comfortable do you feel using the UCSD Library and its resources?

- ○ 1 = not comfortable
- ○ 2
- ○ 3 = comfortable
- ○ 4
- ○ 5 = very comfortable

For a full list of the questions used in the activity, please see http://bit.ly/ucsd_loex_questions

Images for Tables and Figures (Editor will put in body of the text later)

Figure 1: Scavenger Hunt Question Example

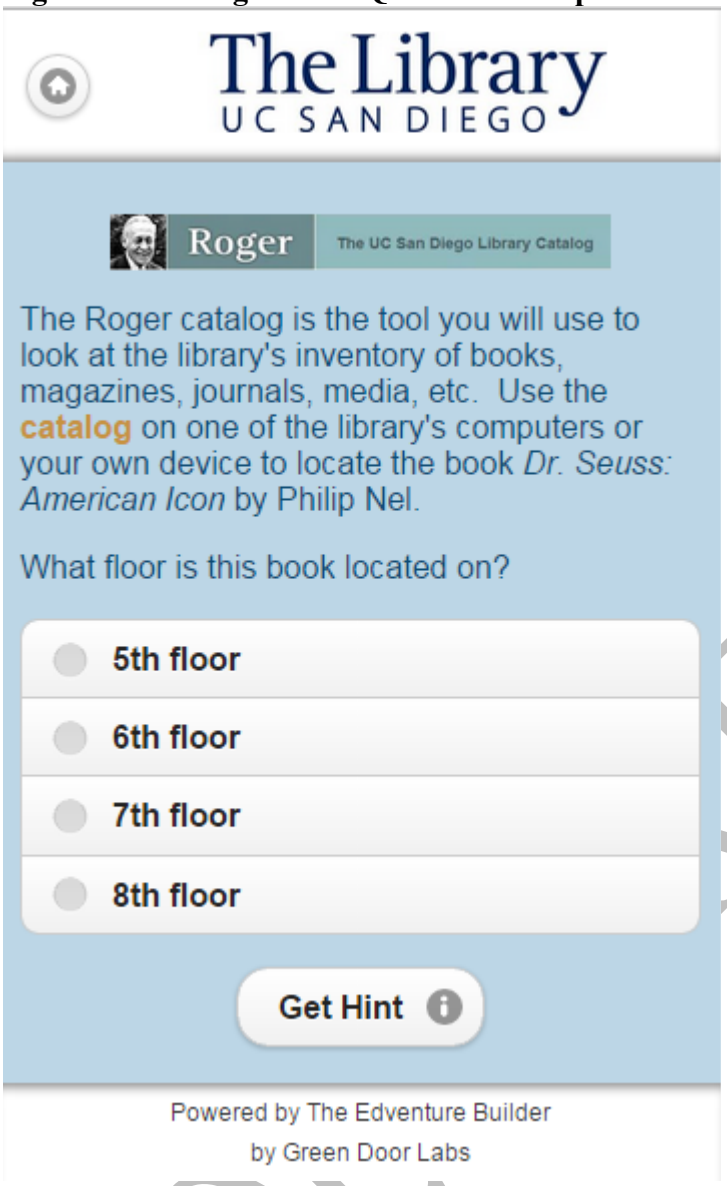

Figure 2: Pre-evaluation of Students' Desire to Learn About the Library

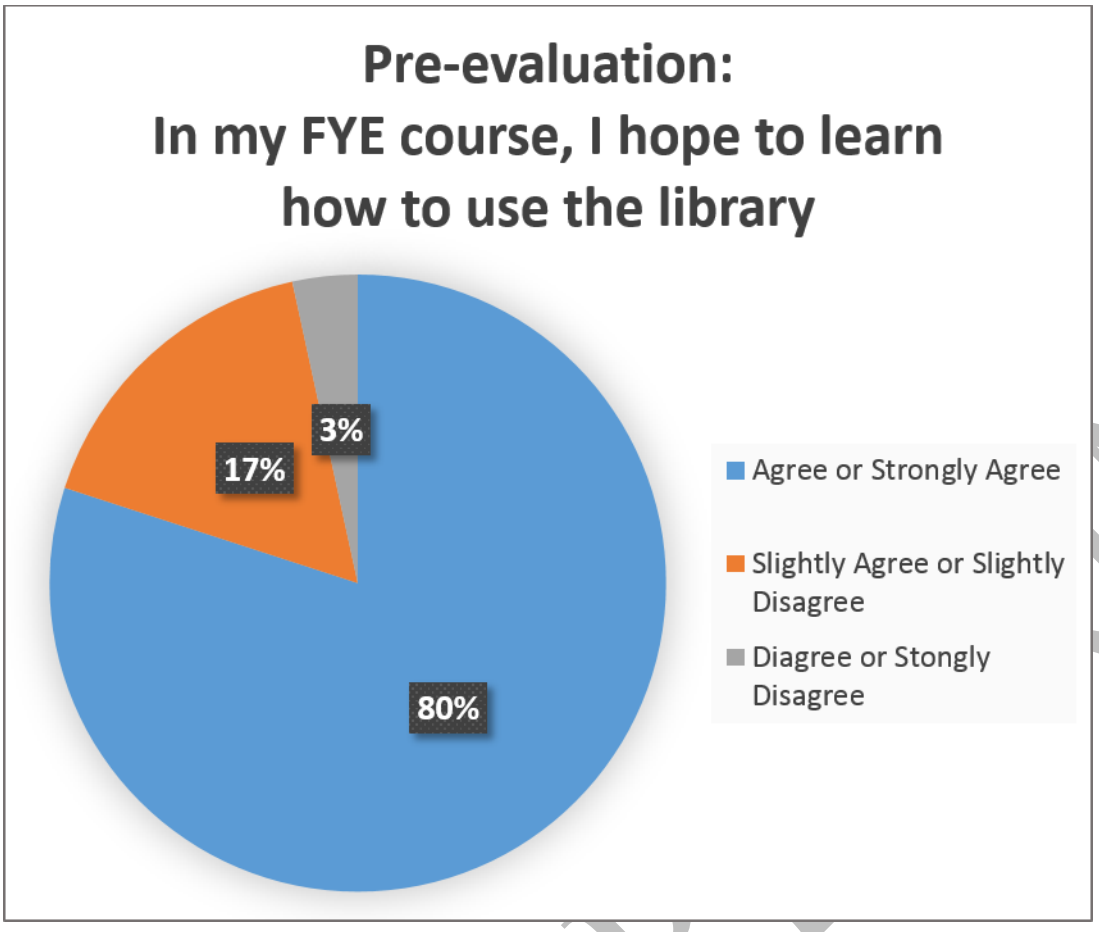

Figure 3: Pre- to Post-Library Knowledge/Skill Level

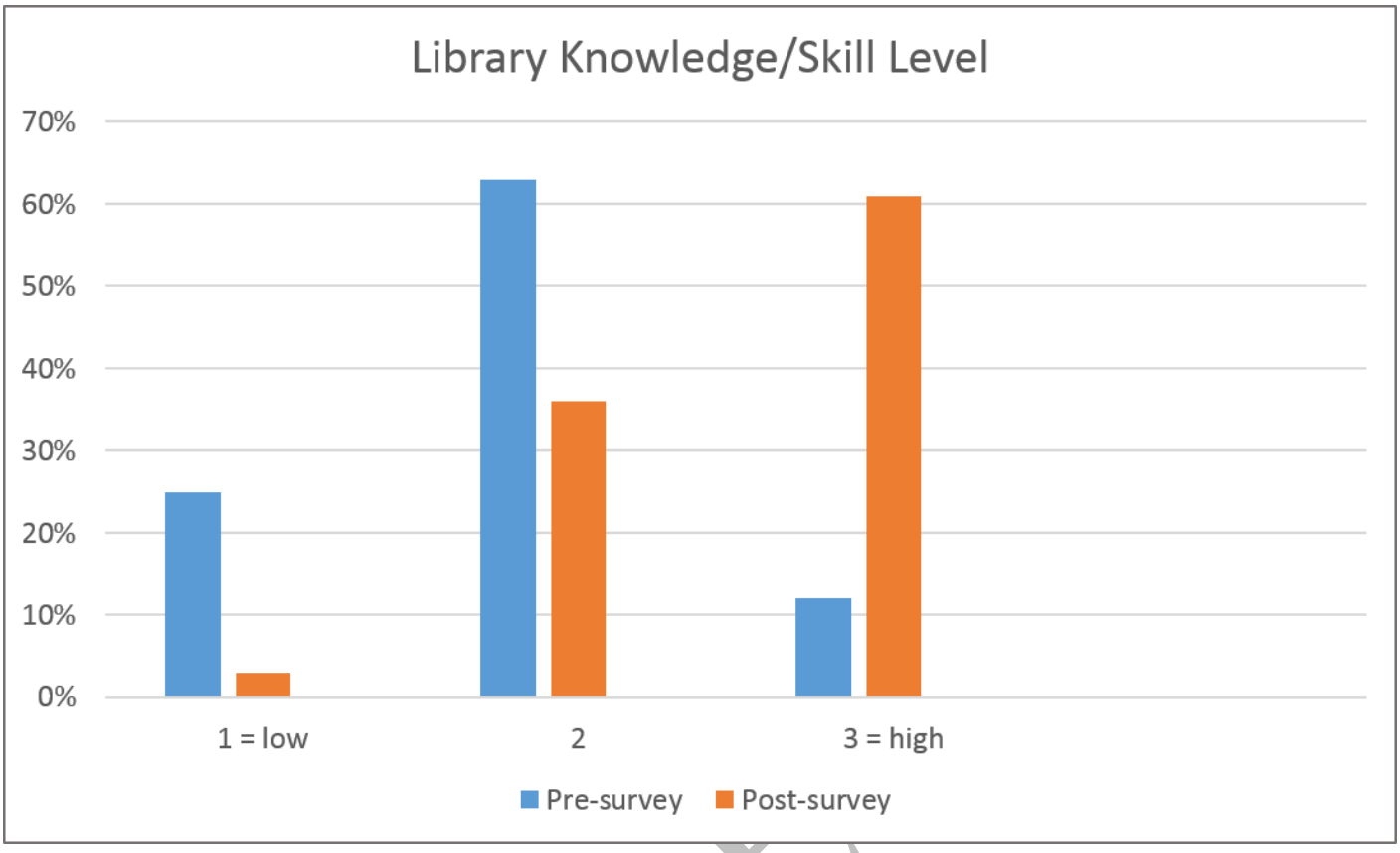

Figure 4: Pre- to Post-Comfort Level Using the Library