

# Improving Student Success: Researching How Students Use Electronic Library Resources

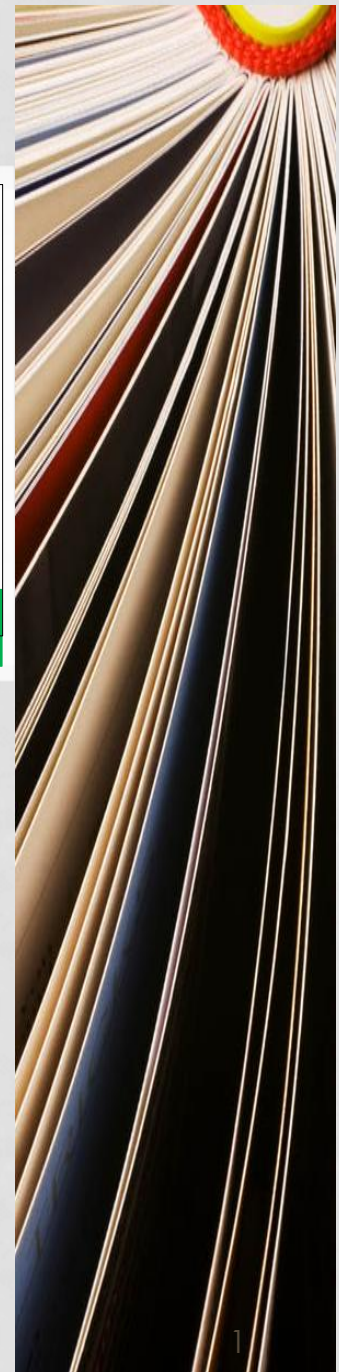
Ethnographic and Qualitative Methods 2010

Dr. Lisa Henry

Anthropology Department

University of North Texas

Research Conducted for the  
UNT Libraries



# Research Goal

To investigate how students at the University of North Texas use electronic library services.

# Major Research Questions

1. To create a profile of the typical library user, including student career, external obligations, work style, and technology use.
2. To investigate students' knowledge of and learning about electronic library services.
3. To investigate students' behaviors regarding electronic library services.
4. To investigate students' needs regarding electronic library services.
5. To investigate students' preferences regarding electronic library services.

# Research Population

UNT Students

## Data Collection

10 observations

20 interviews

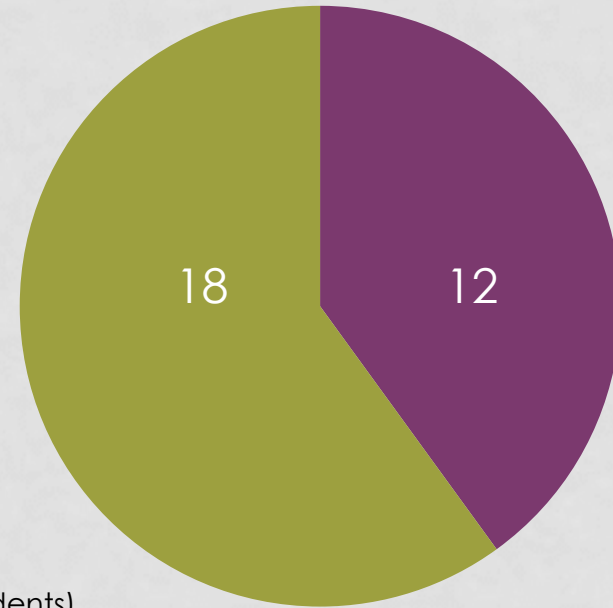
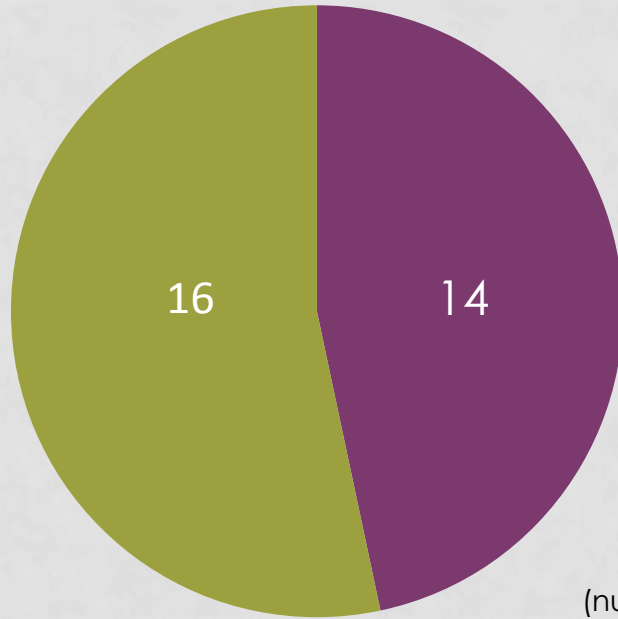
5 focus groups

# Demographic Profile

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# Age and Gender

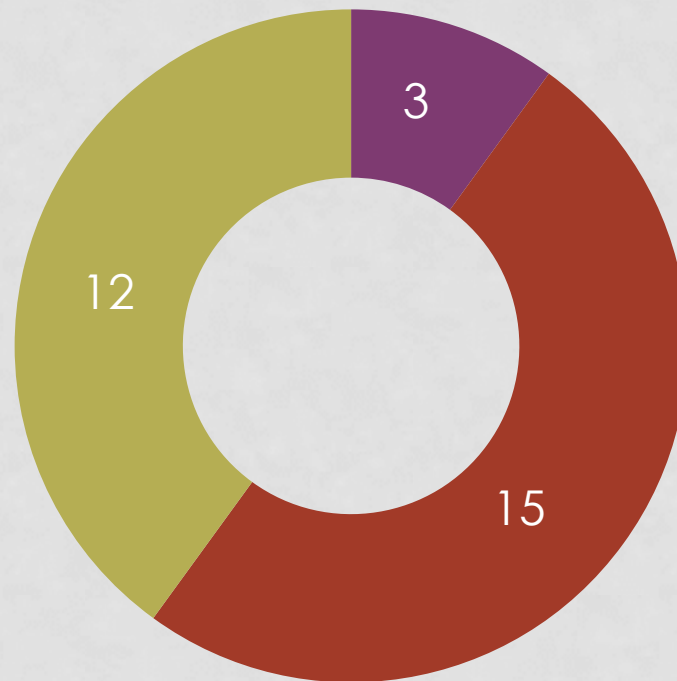


(number of students)

■ Over 26   ■ 26 and younger

■ Male   ■ Female

# Class Level



(number of students)

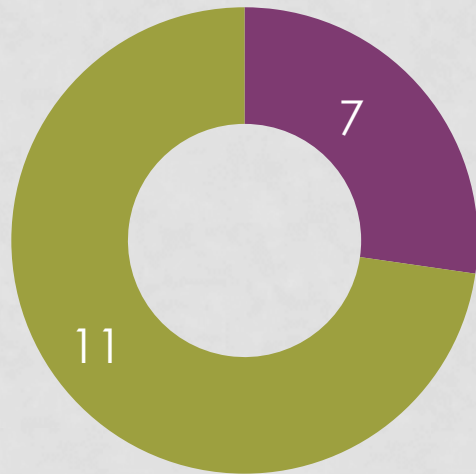
■ Freshmen and sophomore

■ Junior and senior

■ Graduate

# Class Load

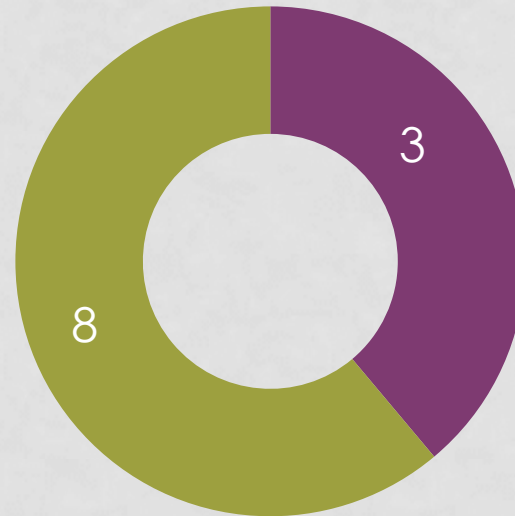
## Undergraduate Students



(number of students)

- Taking less than 12 hours
- Taking 12 hours or more

## Graduate Students



- Taking less than 9 hours
- Taking 9 hours or more



# Background

- Majority from Texas (22)
- International students (8)
- Rest from various areas and other states (3)

# Language Profile

- Majority speak English (22)
- Many speak English as a second language (8)
- Wide variety of languages from Arabic to Vietnamese

# Cities



Majority live in Denton

# College Profile

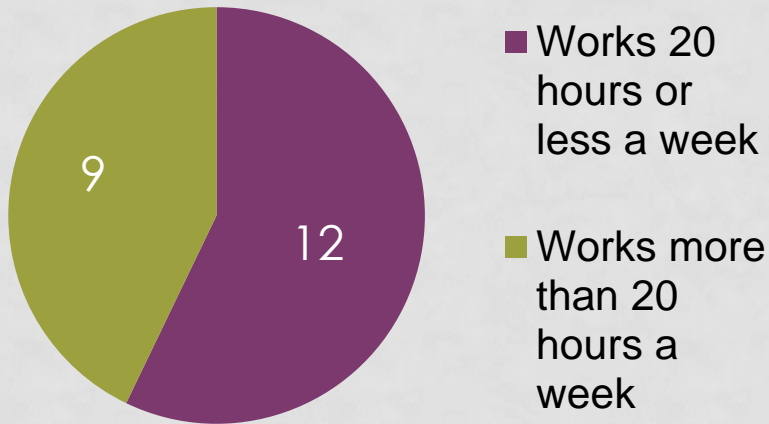


# Disability

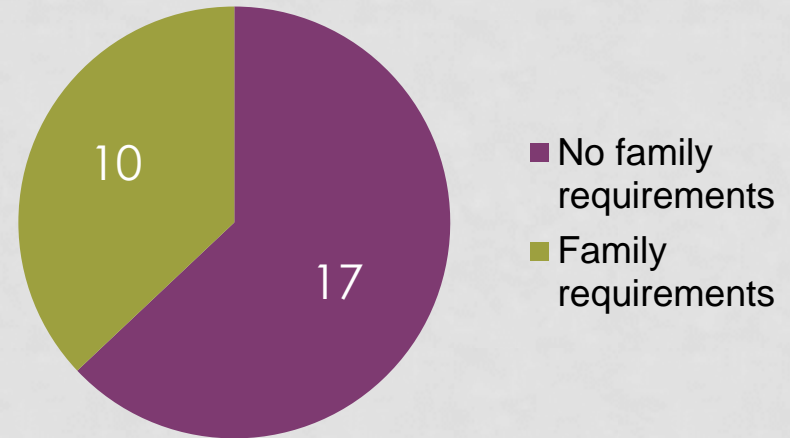
- Majority reported no disabilities
- 3 out of 24 (12.5%) had disabilities
  - ADHD, Dyslexia, Vision Problems and others

# Outside of School Obligations

## Work Profile



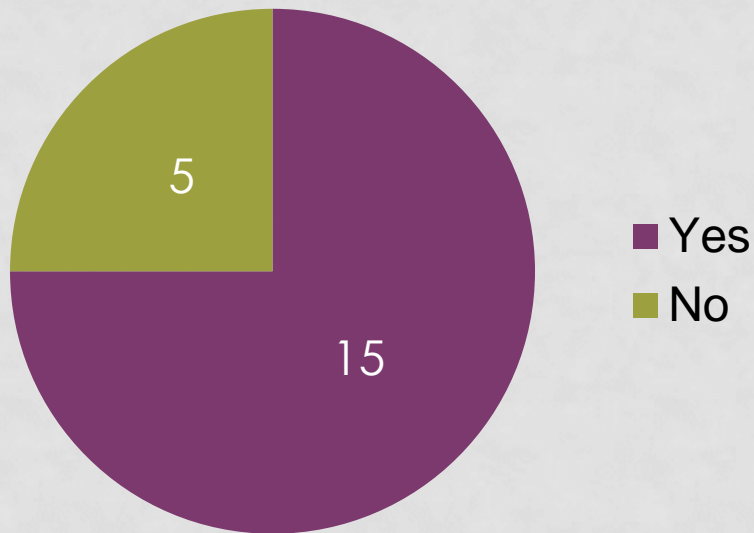
## Family Profile



(number of students)

# Personal Resources

## Adequate Resources



(number of students)

- PC laptop 21
- Printer 17
- PC desktop 14
- Smart phones 2
  
- 12 People talked about using the UNT computers and printers

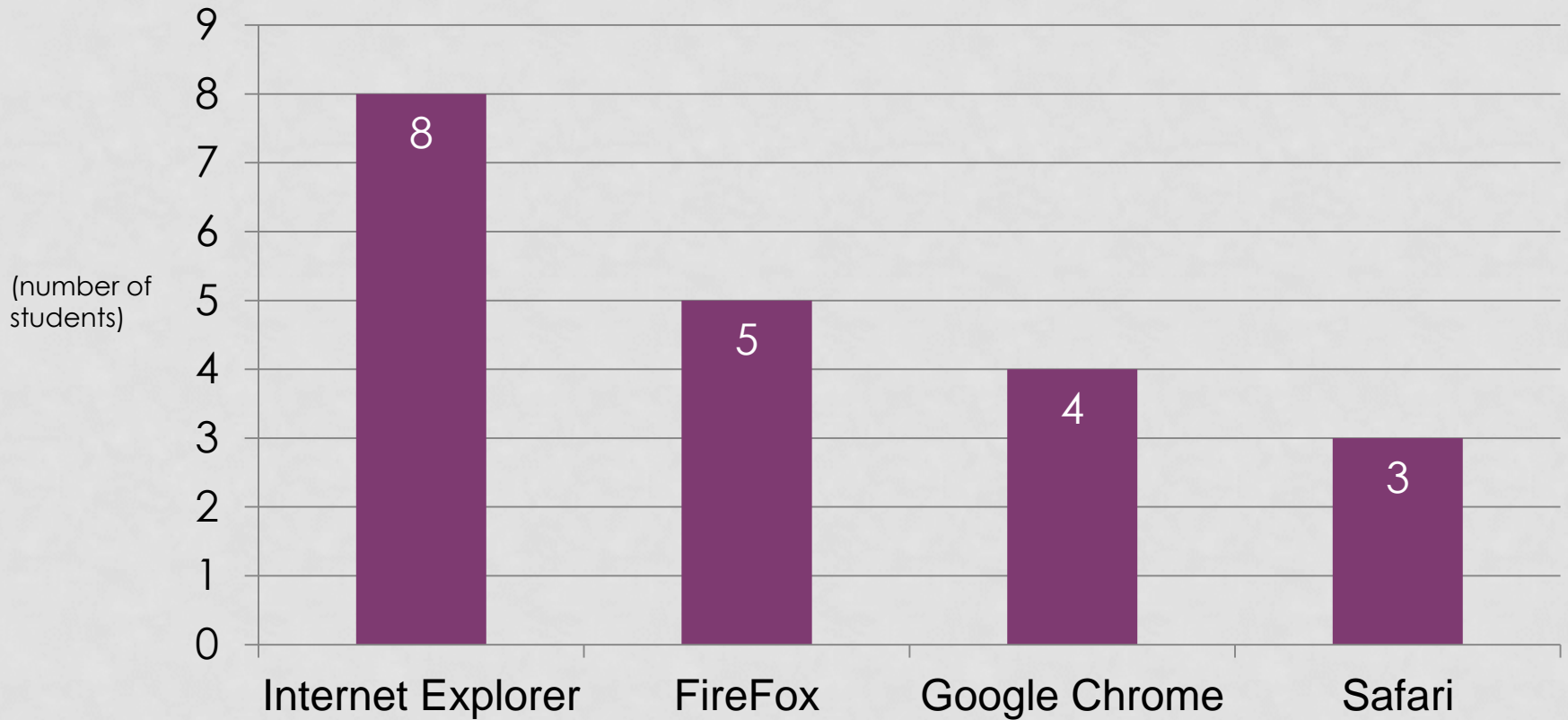
# Preferred Resources

## Preferred resources to conduct online research

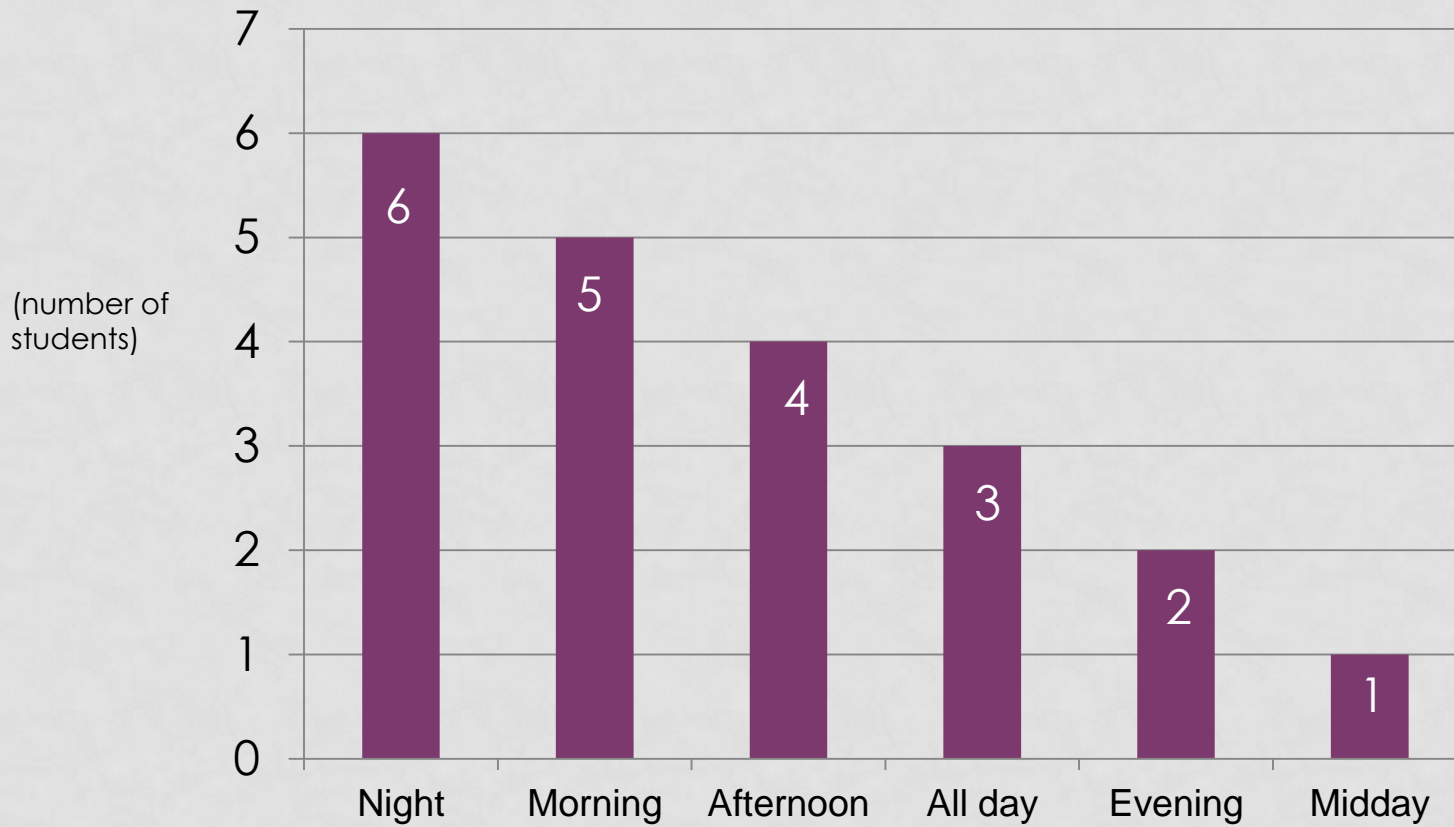
- Laptop
- Desktop
- Kindle
- I-Pad



# Preferred Browsers



# Preferred Time of Day



# Work Environment Preference

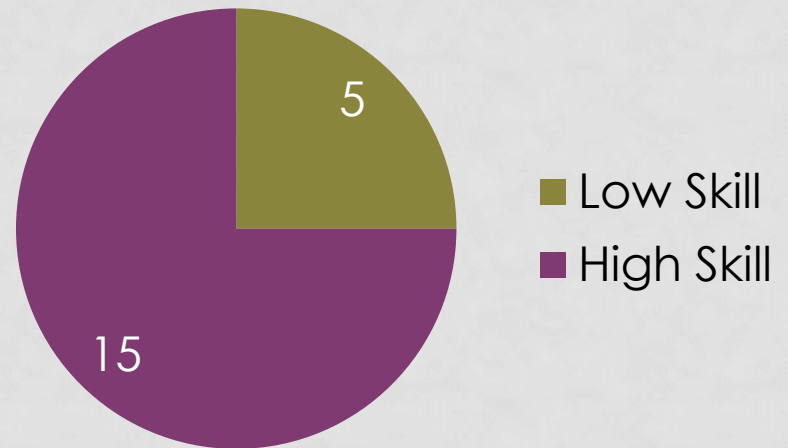
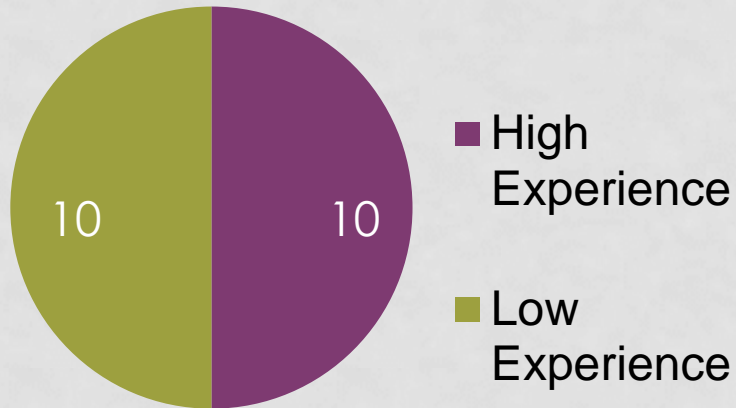
1. Work at Home
2. General Access Labs
2. Work Offices
3. School Library

# Student Experience with Online Research

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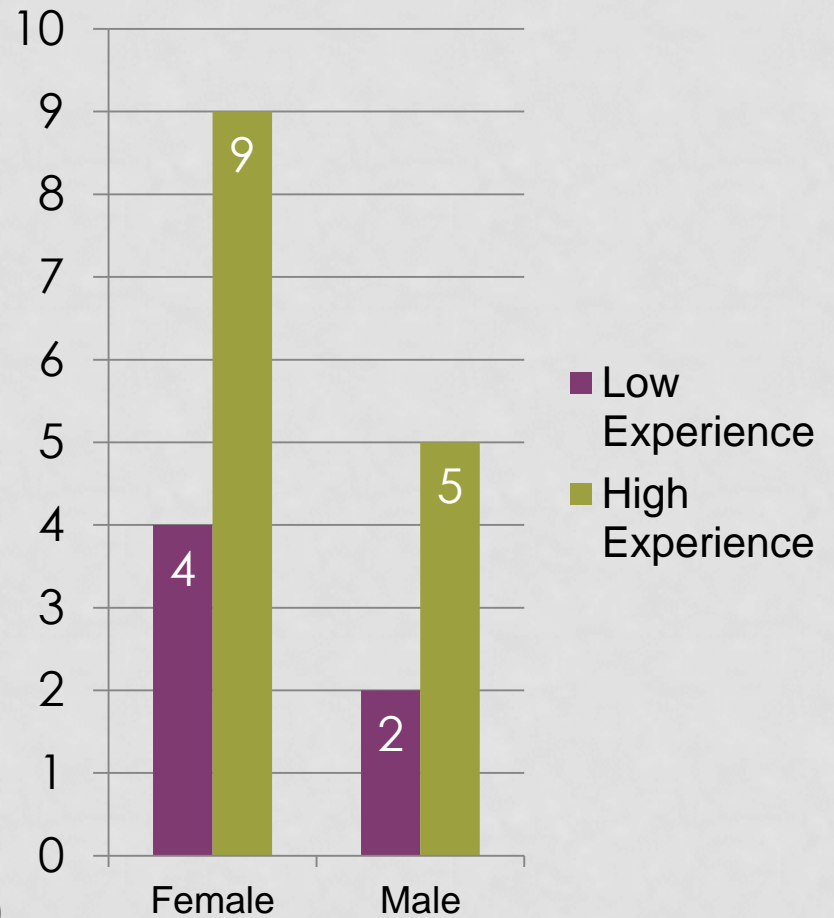
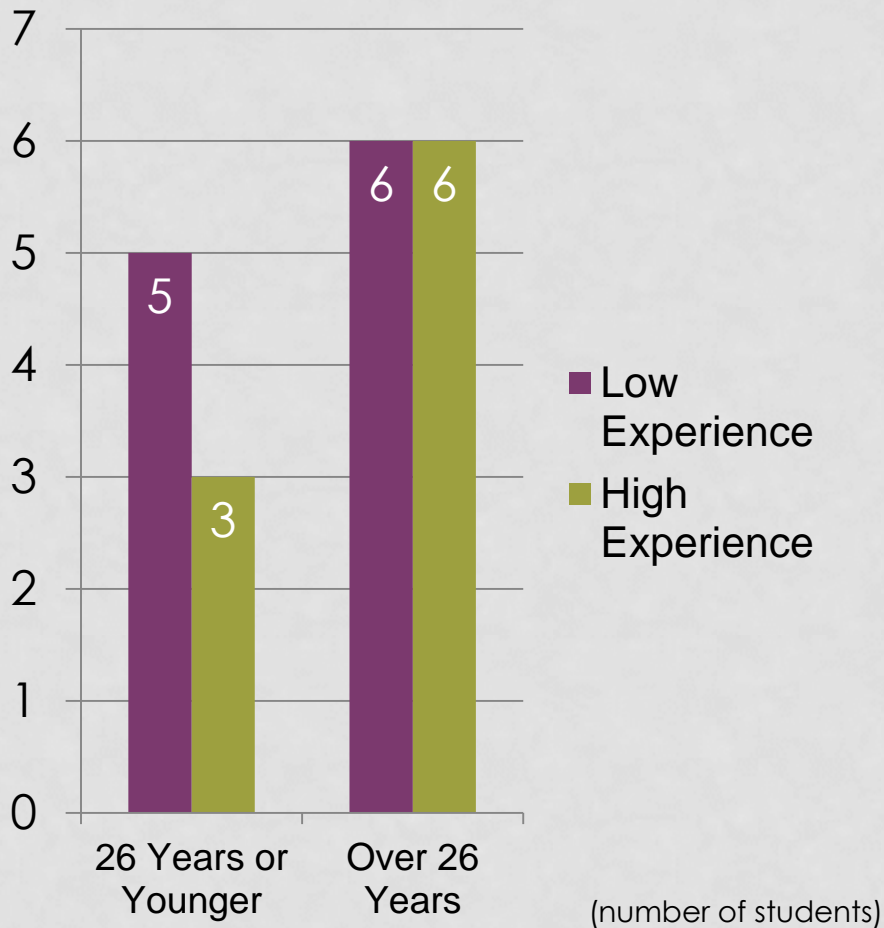


# Experience & Skill Level



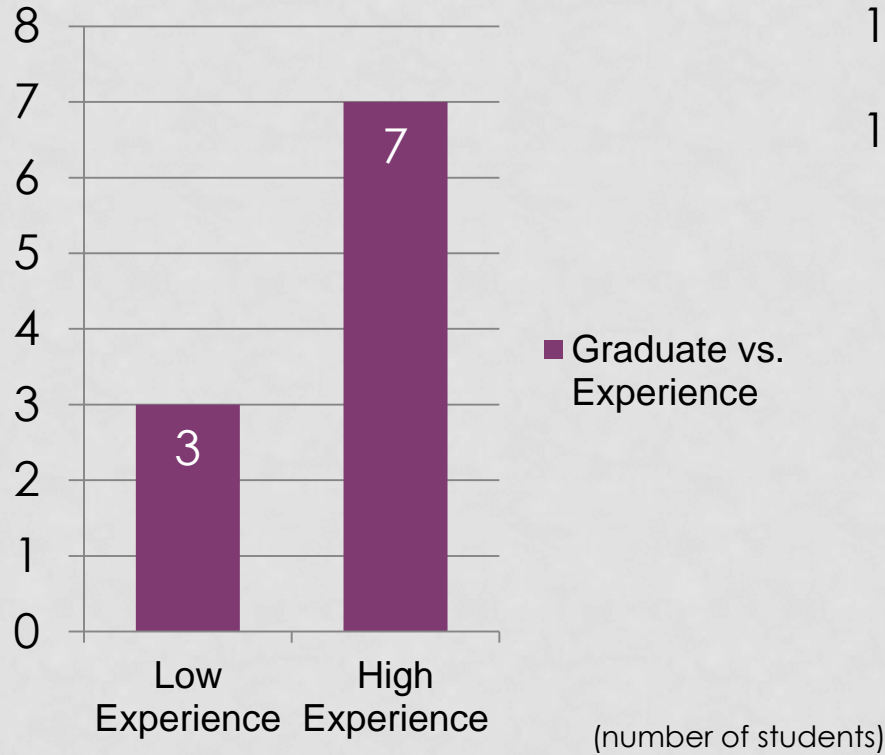
(number of students)

# Experience

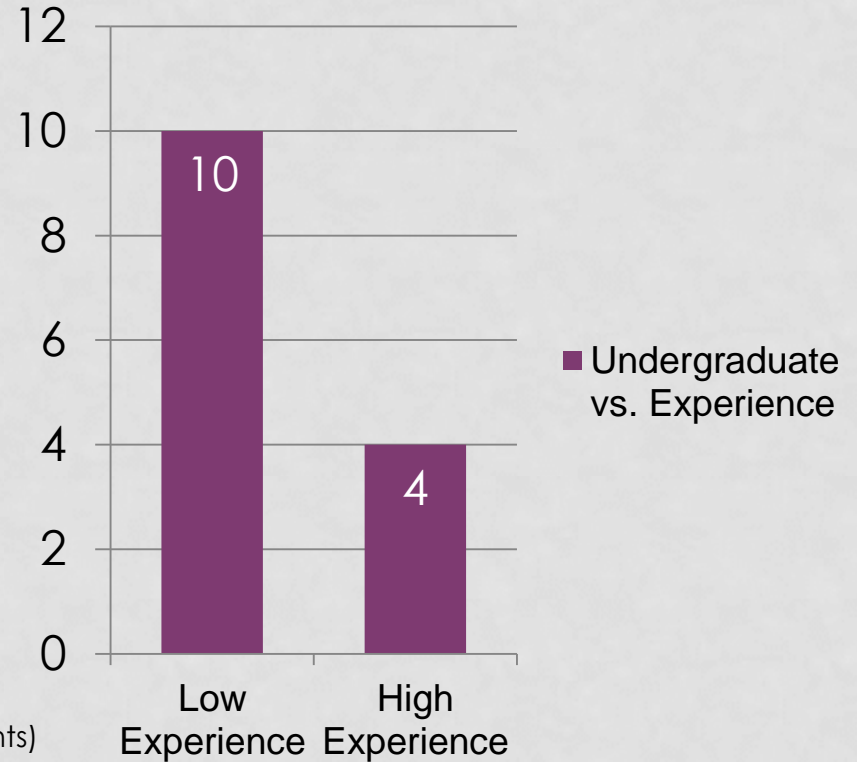


# Experience

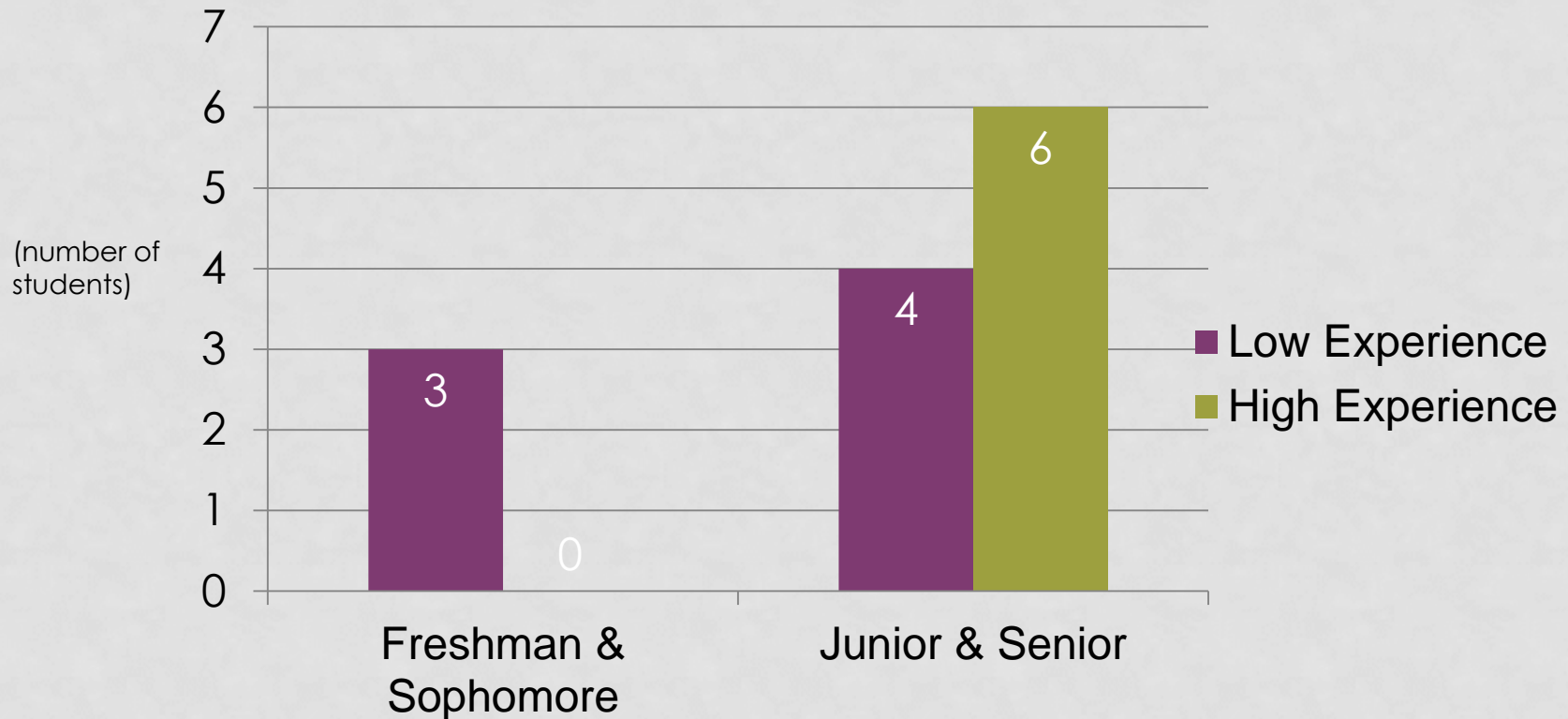
## Graduate Students



## Undergraduate Students



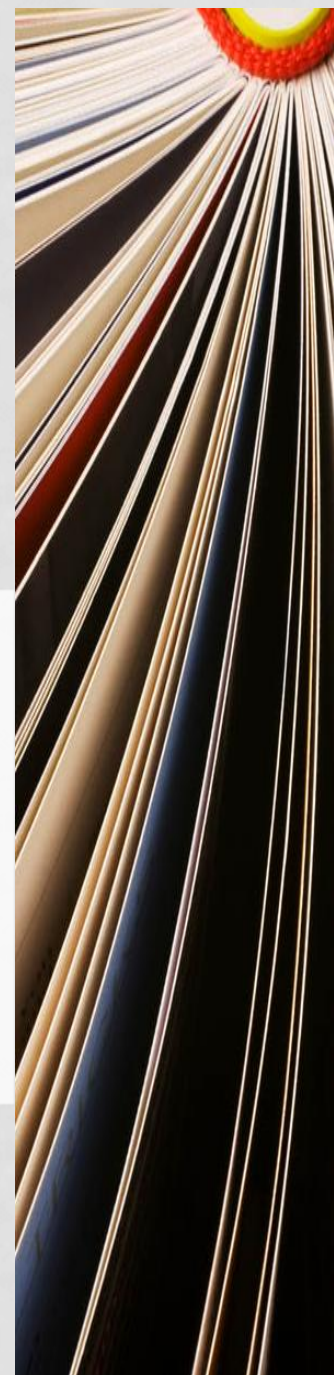
# Undergraduate Student's Experience Conducting Online Research





# Knowledge of UNT Electronic Resources

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# Knowledge

E-Journals	E-books	Full Text	Interlibrary Loan	Search Databases	Theses/ Dissertation Database
85%	75%	75%	65%	65%	30%

## Search Databases

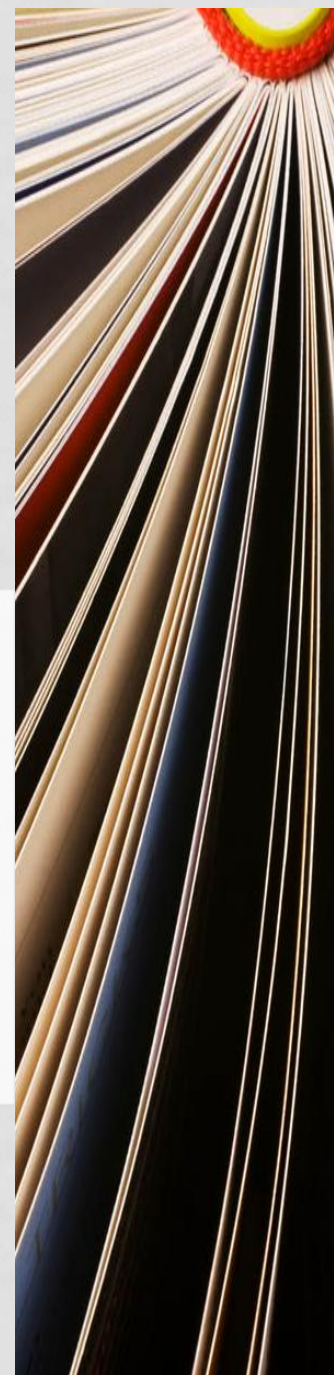
All	<b>Undergrad</b>	Undergrad Lower	Undergrad Upper	<b>Graduate</b>	Masters	Doctorate
65%	54%	33%	60%	86%	100%	80%

# Knowledge

- E-Journals
  - 33% - Lower level undergraduates
  - 90% - Upper level undergraduates
- ILL
  - 83% - Over the age of 26
  - 38% - 26 and under
- Theses and Dissertation Database
  - 71% - Graduate students
  - 8% - Undergraduate students

# Library Instruction

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# Library Instruction

- Instruction from librarian
  - 63% yes, 37% no
  - 73% helpful, 27% unhelpful
  - Criticisms
    - timing, relevance, information overload
- Instruction from professor
  - 55% yes, 45% no
  - Comments
    - helpful, generally quick, sometimes outside of class (one on one), more relevant to class
- Online tutorials and workshops
  - 37% aware, 63% unaware

# Preferred Learning Method

- Personal interactive instruction
  - Course specific
  - Physical material for future reference
- Separate library orientation
  - Orientation is overwhelming
  - Research instruction not yet relevant
    - later in semester
  - Field specific
- Online video instruction
  - Short, “how-to” videos
  - Relevant to certain problems

# Library News

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# Ideal Way to Get Library News

- 75% - e-mails/newsletters
  - Field specific
  - Possibly from specific department's librarian
- Links on blackboard
  - Every class now has a blackboard page
  - Librarian contact information

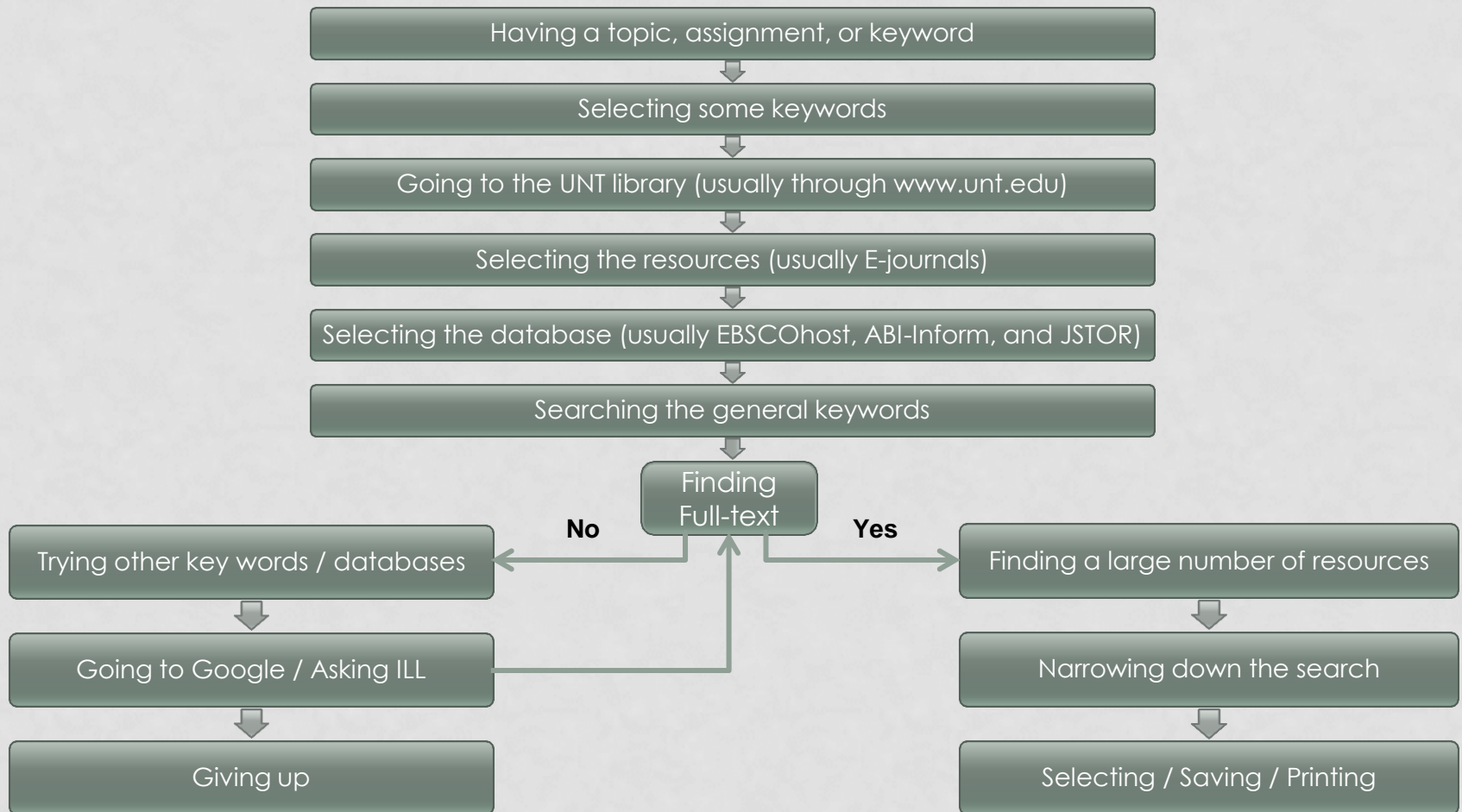


# The General Research Process

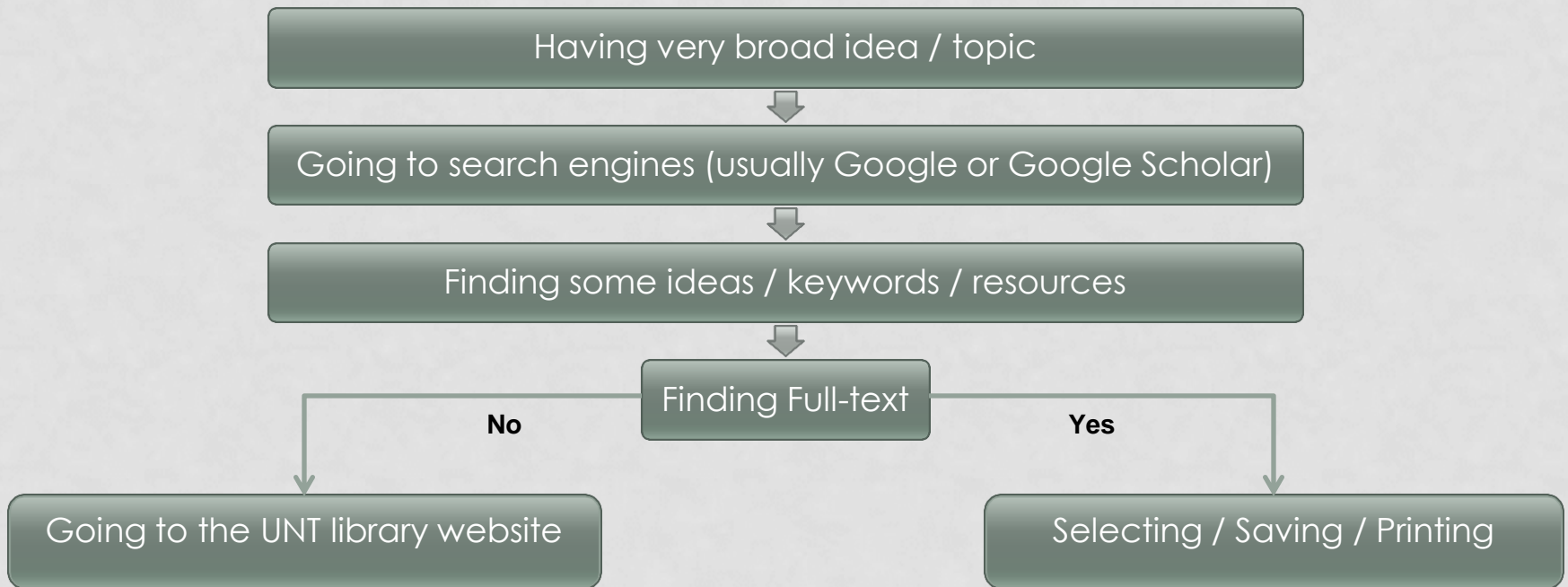
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# Starting with UNT Website (4)

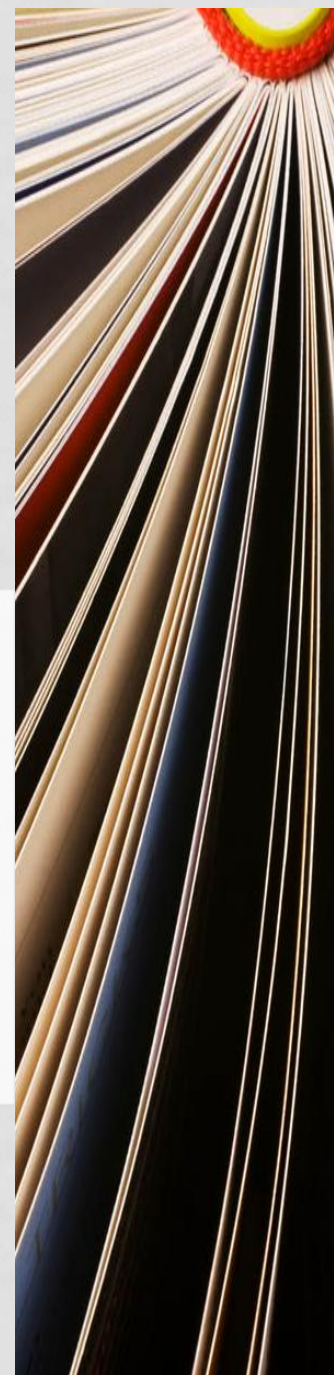


# Starting with Other Websites (16)

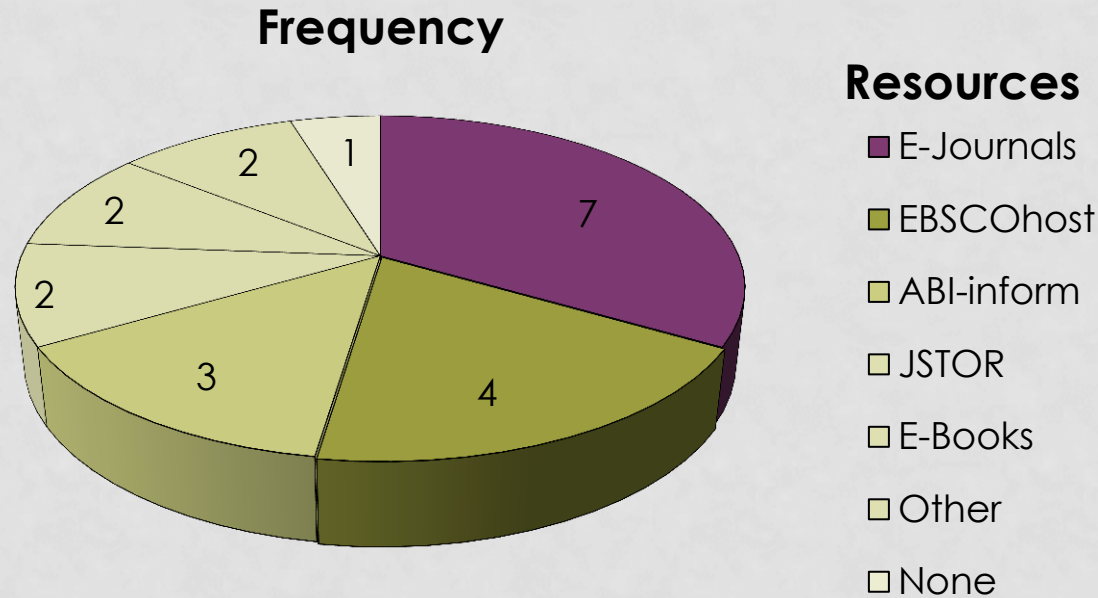


# Use and Preference of UNT Electronic Resources

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# Most Often Used and Most Preferred

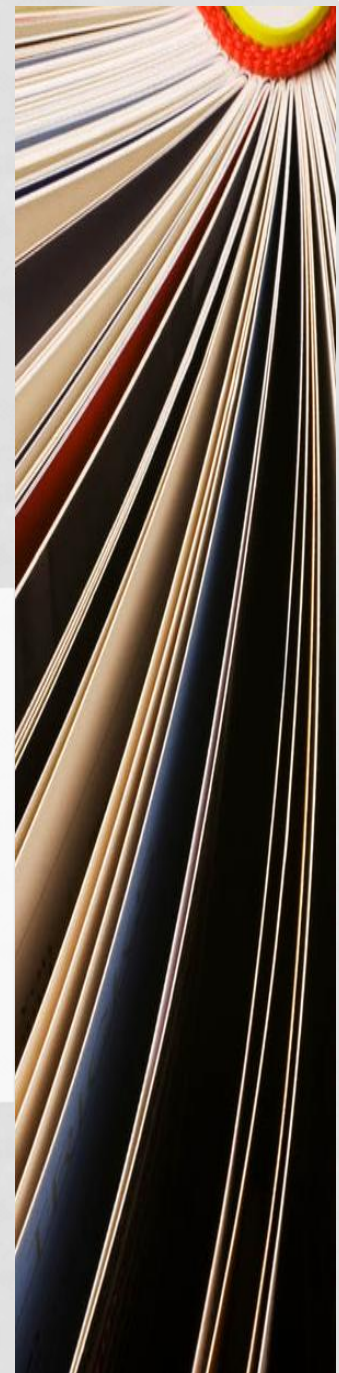


Although they were asked about UNT electronic resources, three participants mentioned that they start with Google and then go to UNT website.

*“I don’t always think of the library first.”*

# Strengths of UNT Electronic Resources

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# Strengths

- Accessing resources other than journals (financial databases, music databases, books/e-books, dissertations, or ILL services)
- More credible and relevant search results (compared to Google search)
- Accessing full text resources for free
- Being required to use specific resources (via links on Blackboard)
- Using electronic folders and personal accounts, and resuming search within a database with the same keywords

# Barriers to Using UNT Electronic Resources

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# Barriers

- Search difficulties

- Complex and not user friendly website

*“It was like a maze getting to it, but I remember when I finally found my article, I was so tired of searching for it.”*

- Not an umbrella or comprehensive search engine

*“I just think the server needs to be consolidated into a single search rather than having you know the exact engine you’re looking through.”*

# Barriers

- Limited access to full text (limited coverage, not updated)

*“Sometimes when you are looking for an article, it’s not there or they don’t have the subscription to this publication so you can’t access it.”*

- Technology related problems

*“Sometimes there is something wrong with the server... it doesn’t work... just freeze...”*

# Searching with other Websites

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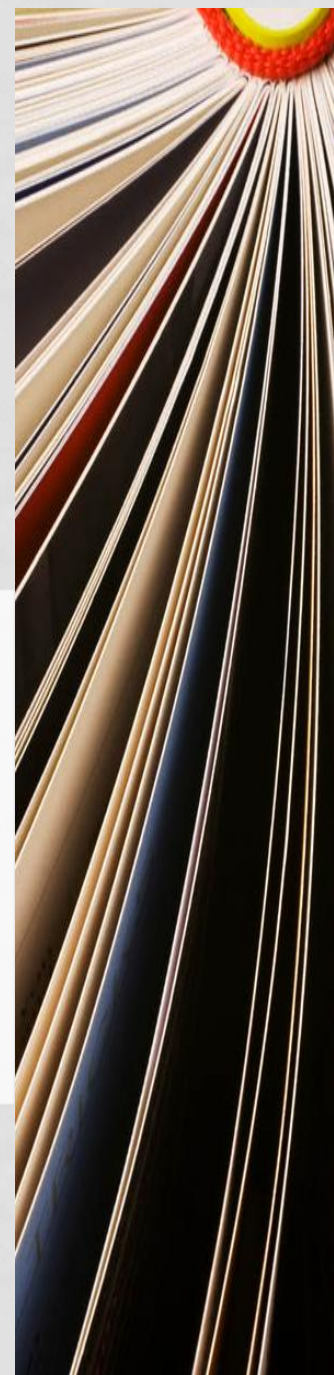


# Why Other Websites?

- Accessing articles available in library resources through Google and Google Scholar
- Checking citation counts in Google Scholar
- When cannot find a resource in UNT library
- Very broad search for exploratory research without specific keyword (just the topic or idea)
- Very easy to use (only one box)

# Research Roadblocks and Getting Help

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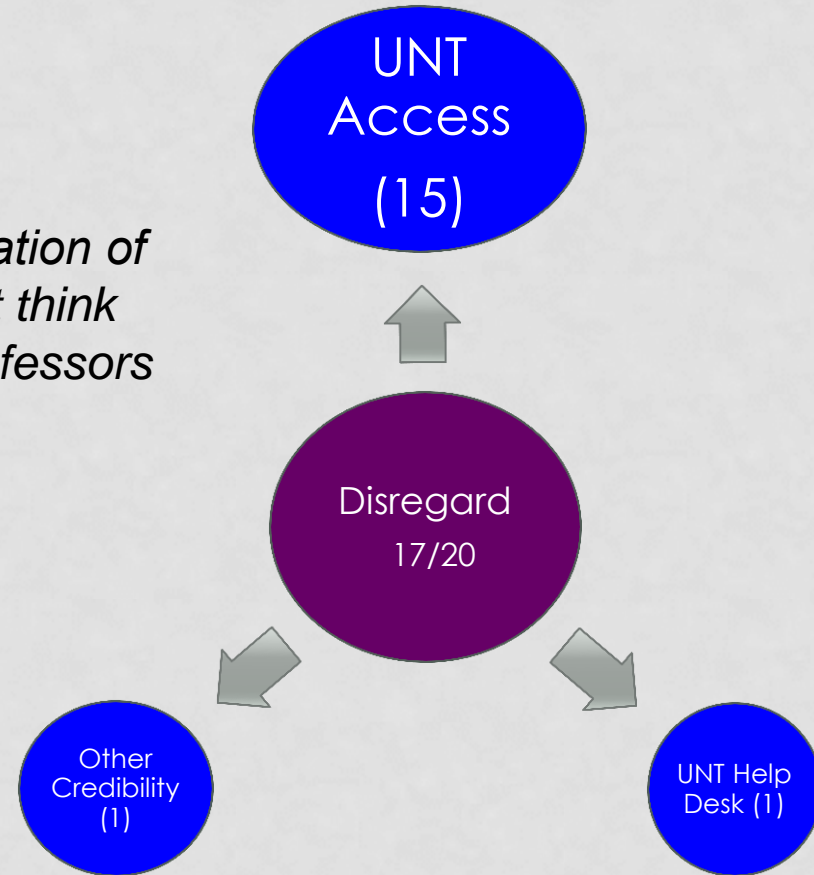


# Research Roadblocks

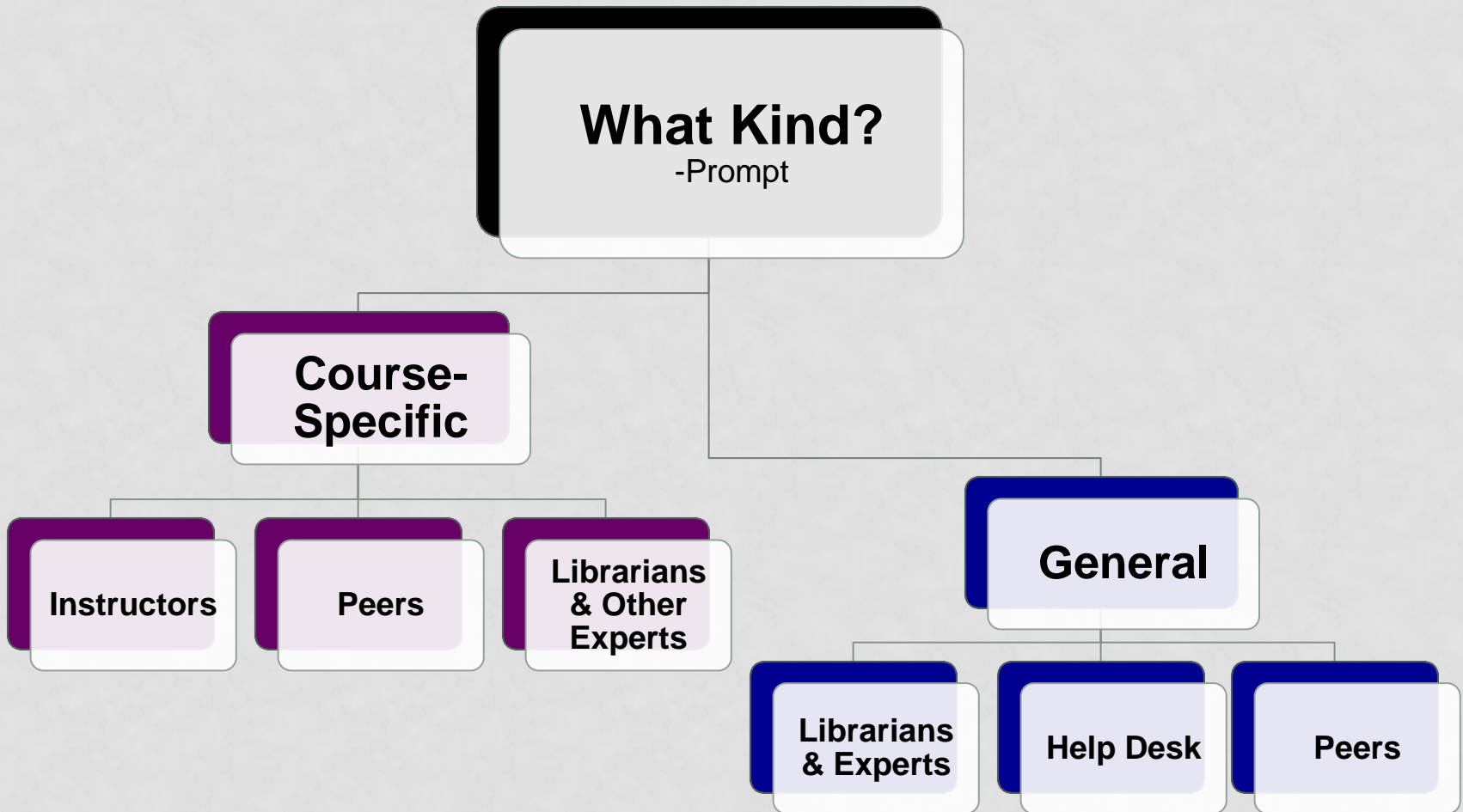
- Do users get stuck?
  - 19/20 on UNT

*"...seems like it was made by either a combination of computer nerd and professor, but I really don't think there's much professors in there, because professors would be able to help a little bit."*

What do they do?  
And Why?



# Preferred Help Strategy



# How to Get Help

## Instructors and Peers

Syllabus  
Instructions

Blackboard

Emails

Demos

Tours

Chat &  
Blogs

Invite  
Librarian

## Library

Chat

Video Chat

Remote  
Access

Fun & Short  
Tutorials

Emails

Popup  
Instructions

Hands On

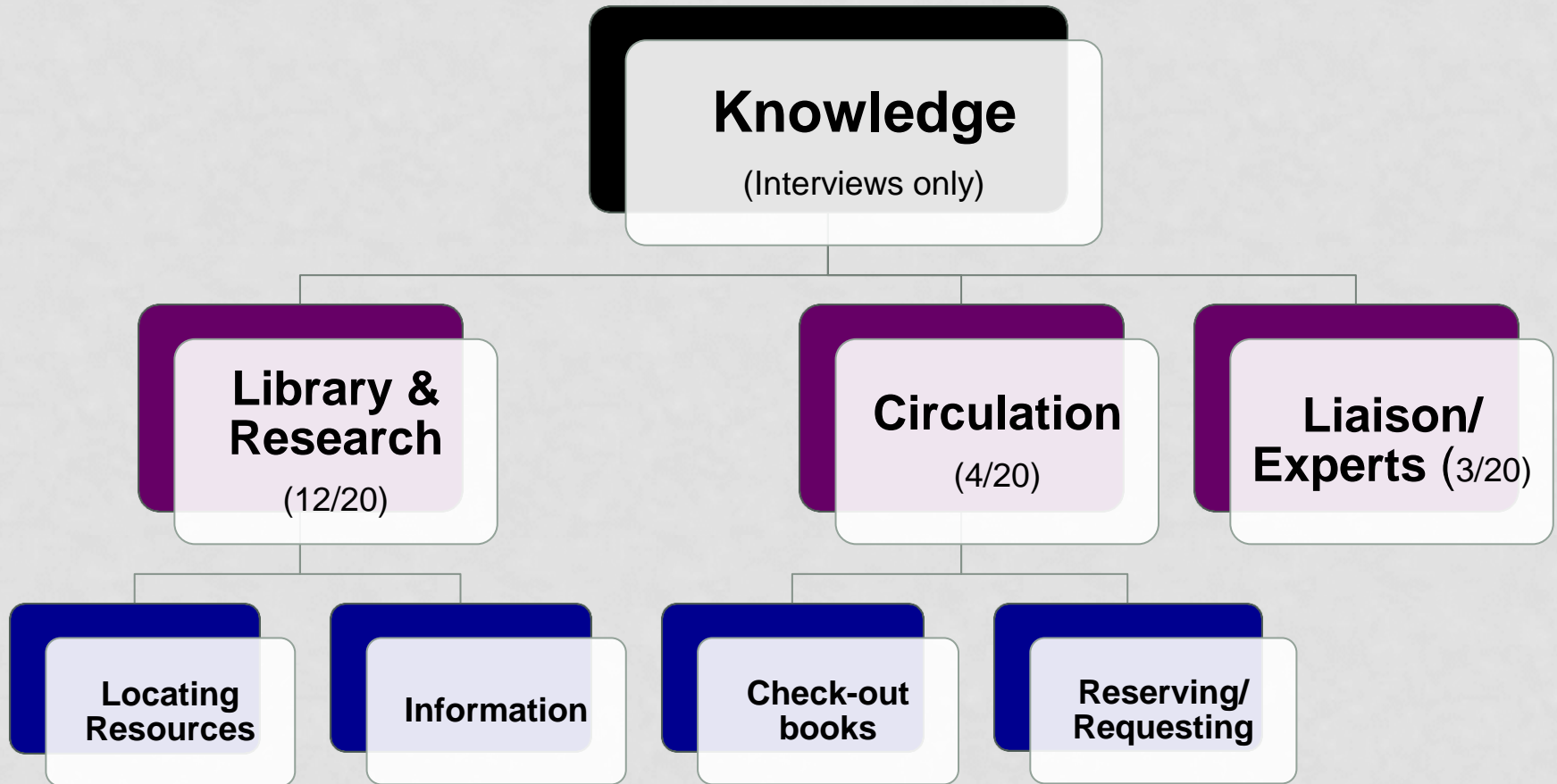


# Librarians

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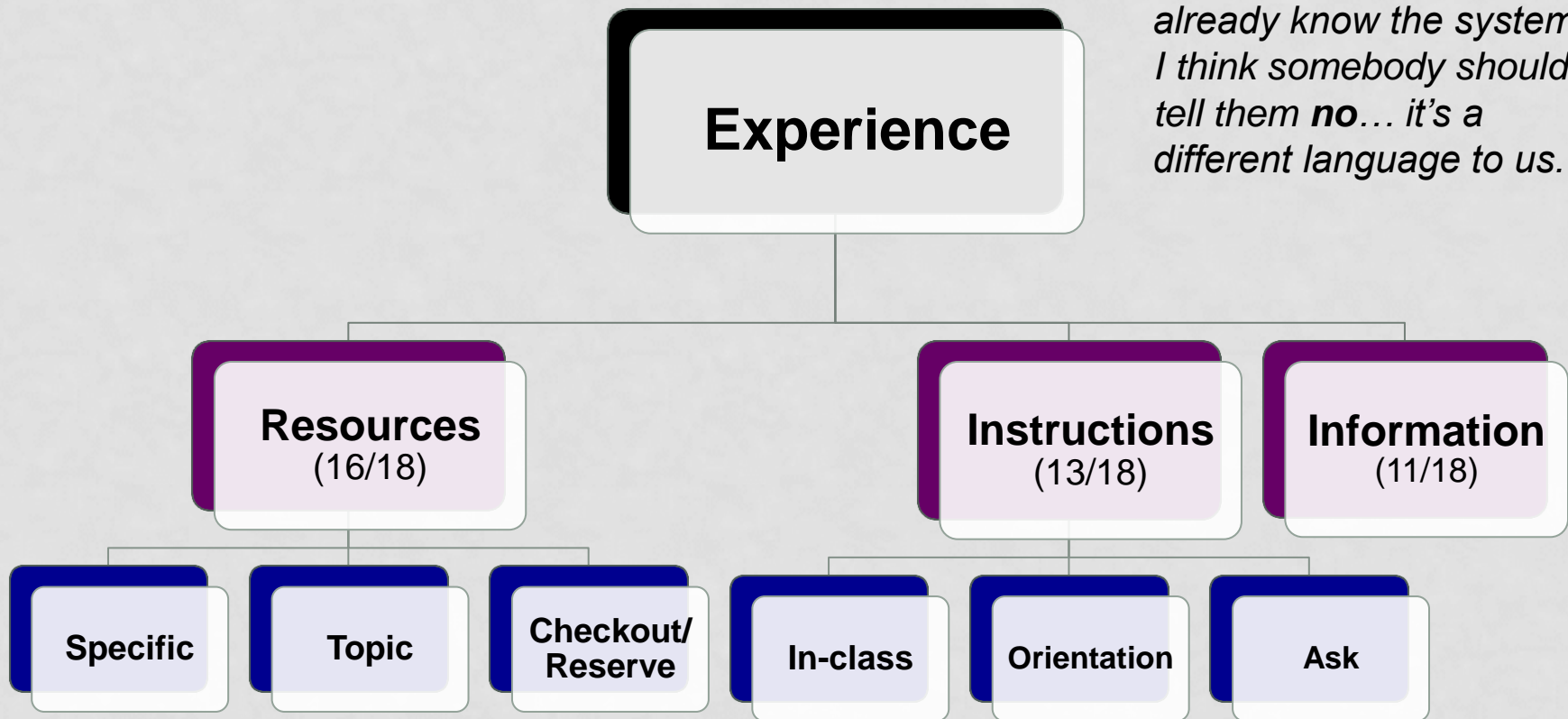


# Knowledge of Librarians



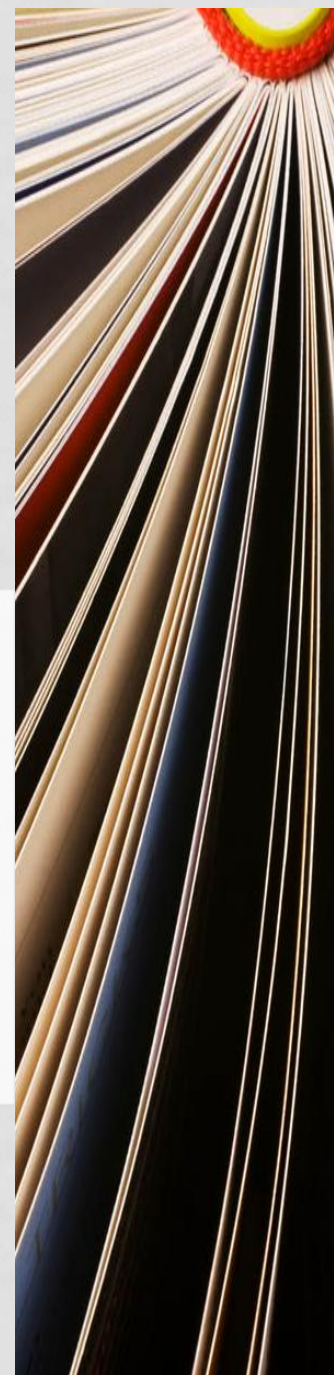
# Experience with Librarians

*"...they know the system and expect everybody to already know the system... I think somebody should tell them **no**... it's a different language to us."*



# Managing Information

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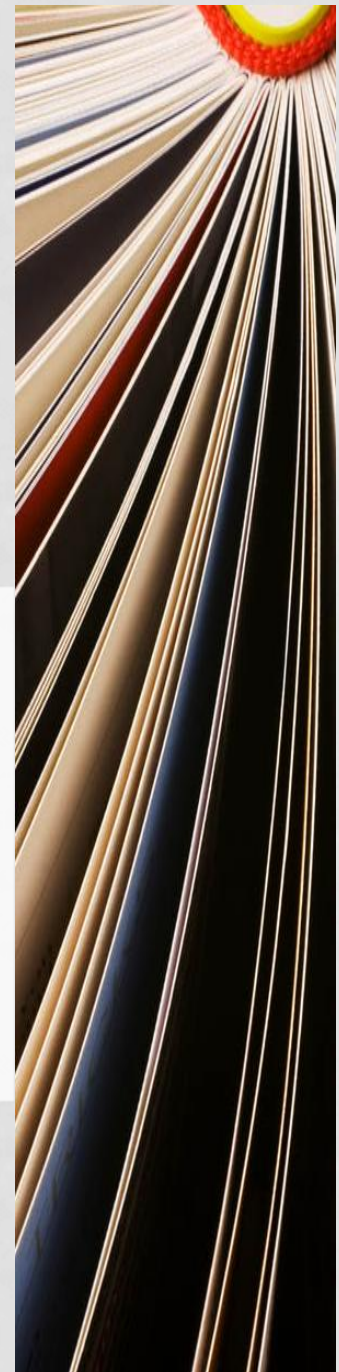


# Managing Information

- 17 out of 26 print out their articles for review
- 12 out of 26 copy and paste and half keep some sort of electronic files (most use PDF files)
- Almost half of users keep notes through their process

# The UNT Libraries Website

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# UNT Libraries Website

- ***“...UNT is always the last resort... I just panic when I know that I have to go on the UNT website... because it’s not user friendly... so I try to work around it first.”***

# UNT Libraries Website

- Most users reach the site from UNT home page
- 23 of 26 users said the site is confusing
- 16 users were unaware of online tutorials
- Hard to find library services information



# User Suggestions

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# User Suggestions

- More user-friendly design
- Opportunities for user customization
- Improved searching of databases and articles
- Video assistance and video tutorials
- Late hours online assistance
- Compatibility with a variety of devices

# User Suggestions

- ***“The library should be the hub of the university because it’s the one place where all the disciplines will intersect. So it has to be a physical place and it also has to be an electronic place.”***

# Recommendations

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# Recommendations

- Improve user experience
  - Design integrated search tool
  - Simplify website
- Improve library instruction
  - Collaboration between library and professors
  - Personalize instruction (major specific)
    - Instruction during semester
  - Make video tutorials quick and interesting
- Improve Communication
  - Highlight department librarians
  - E-newsletters with library updates