

## Research Proposal for Assessing Information Literacy Outcomes from the *University of Saskatchewan Undergraduate Research Journal (USURJ)*

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I prepared a research proposal for an internship with the Science Library through Interdisciplinary Studies 380: Introduction to Librarianship at the University of Saskatchewan. Information literacy programming and education is central to the profession of librarianship, outlined in the Association of College and Research Library's (ACRL) Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education (2016). With the support of two faculty librarians, I designed a research proposal to evaluate the impact of participation in an undergraduate research journal (URJ) on students' information literacy, informed by the goals of the University Library (University Library 2019). My interest in measuring the outcomes of information literacy in the journal is influenced by my previous experience with the University of Saskatchewan Undergraduate Research Journal (USURJ) as an associate editor and a senior editor.

Information literacy is defined as "the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning" (ACRL, 2016, 3). The proposed research aims to fill a gap that exists in Library and Information Studies. While there is a wealth of literature addressing information literacy and a number of articles discussing the impacts of URJs, only a few information literacy outcomes from participation in a URJ are included (Garbati and Brockett 2018).

In the first phase of the research, a survey will measure information literacy pre-involvement with USURJ as an author or editor and post-involvement with USURJ. Incoming editors and the general student body will

voluntarily participate. Students will be asked whether they are interested in publishing with USURJ and in participating in a study that will follow their experience through the publishing process. This preliminary quantitative data will provide a basis for comparison of the level of information literacy for undergraduates that have participated in URJ publishing with those who have not.

The outcomes of publishing experiences and the students' post-USURJ surveys will be compared to the participants' level of information literacy demonstrated in the pre-USURJ survey. A focus group will be held to discuss the outcomes for both the authors in the study and the editors. This qualitative portion of the research program will provide a holistic view of undergraduate student information literacy learning through USURJ.

There are several methodological problems in assessing outcomes of undergraduate research experience (Weston and Laursen 2015). Serious issues arise in the self-selection of survey participation and self-reporting of academic outcomes (Pascarella, Seifert and Blaich 2010, Lopatto 2004, Weston and Laursen 2015). This research program attempts to mitigate these issues by creating quasi-control groups through the pre-USURJ online survey and by using a mixed-method approach.

### A statement from Virginia Wilson and DeDe Dawson, University Library

*During an INTS330 seminar about librarians as researchers, Sarah was inspired to think about the methods that librarians use to conduct research. Out of this came the idea to create a research proposal investigating the impact of participation in an undergraduate research journal on students' information literacy skills. The proposal is carefully thought-out and has the potential to be a successful study providing valuable evidence to the library on the effectiveness of USURJ in student learning.*

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