
The purpose of this qualitative study was to assess the effectiveness of two UNC course pages to introduce students to library tools, and to improve librarian/ faculty communications. Course pages, developed by UNC Library staff, are customized web pages that are populated by links to library resources and services chosen to help students complete assignments for a specific course. Through an evaluation of student research habits and their use of the course pages, the researcher found that the majority of students do not use course pages as a primary research tool for their assignments, rather turning to Google or the libraries’ OPAC to begin their research. However, the study shows that through the collaborative effort of creating the course pages, faculty were made more aware of library products such as article databases, and services such as library instruction.

Headings:

- Library Instructional Design
- Academic Libraries
- Library Pathfinders
- Undergraduate Students
- Graduate Students
- College and university libraries/Relations with faculty and curriculum
- Humanities
- E-learning
- Usability Study
- Website Evaluation
TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COURSE PAGES IN ENHANCING STUDENTS’ FAMILIARITY WITH LIBRARY SERVICES AND IN IMPROVING LIBRARIAN/FACULTY COMMUNICATION.

by
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Approved by

_______________________________________
Lisa Norberg
INTRODUCTION

In recent years, academic libraries have tried hard to change their image from a large building filled with dusty reference books to a dynamic, user-centered source of navigational tools to help students brave the challenging waters of the prolific information of the twenty-first century. From the increasing subscriptions to electronic journals to physical changes that re-think library space, libraries are striving to keep their image fresh and to stay the leaders of information brokers in the 21st century.

As the channel of academic information has changed from the more traditional print format to a predominantly digital format, the way students conduct their research has also changed. While the vast majority of today’s college students are supposed to feel comfortable with online resources, recent studies have shown that there is a gap between the quality of student research and faculty expectations of their research skills. Gonzales’s 2001 study showed that, while faculty’s satisfaction levels increased in proportion with the length of time that students were enrolled at the University, their overall satisfaction rate with their students’ research skills was very low. Librarians are attempting to fill the gap between the actual student research skills and faculty expectations, taking a more proactive role in the academic environment and creating new positions devoted to information literacy. However, as academic librarians work more closely with faculty, research has shown that there are barriers to faculty/ librarian collaboration. Givens’s 2003 analysis of listserv respondents provides insight on
librarians’ expressed frustrations with faculty collaboration, and exposes the need to improve faculty/ librarian relationships.

The explosion of information in general and the complex network of academic information resources available to college students compounds their task of finding quality information sources to use in their academic work. The complexity of available information sources has spurred efforts by librarians to make research easier for students. One result of these efforts can be found in the development of library subject-specific online guides, or subject guides. The guides attempt to aggregate all the library’s resources into one online tool, designed to aid students in their research needs. An example of these guides is LibGuide, a software platform that many institutional libraries, such as Cornell University and Butler University, use as a platform for their research guides. These online guides are receiving a lot of attention from field, although most of the attention comes from the librarians themselves. Although many studies have been conducted to evaluate the usefulness of these guides, very few have been initiated to evaluate the effectiveness of course-specific guides. Staley’s 2007 study suggests that course-specific guides, or course pages, may be more effective than subject guides, but it is important to note that these course pages require librarian outreach both to students and to faculty in order to be effective.

While the available literature evaluates student research skills, faculty satisfaction with their students’ research skills, and the nature of faculty/ librarian collaboration, this analysis attempts to find out if course pages can be the stone that kills two birds: Are course pages that are created collaboratively between faculty and librarians an effective tool for introducing students to the tools and literature of a particular discipline in the
humanities? Can they provide a bridge between faculty members and librarians? After a
review of the currently available literature on student research skills and faculty
conceptions of campus libraries, this study evaluates student research behavior while
using (or not using) available course pages, faculty expectations of their students’
research skills, and the ability of course pages to facilitate faculty/ librarian
communication.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Undergraduate students have difficulty comprehending the nature of research
necessary for academic achievement within a subject-specific discipline. The nature of
research for a three-page paper in a first-year biology course can be quite different from
the research necessary for a ten-page paper in a literature course. Once a student
becomes comfortable using one academic database, they may turn to that database for all
their research needs, whether the database is designed for the subject at hand, or not.
Mellinger (2008) observed in a usability study that students who are looking for a place
to start their research will use sites that they are already familiar with, such as Google “or
sometimes a library tool that they used successfully in a previous assignment, even if it’s
not the best thing for their current information need. Using JSTOR for everything since it
worked in History.” (¶ 3)

To compound this problem, students often lack a clear understanding of how
information or research is communicated in different academic disciplines. As Reeb and
Gibbons (2004) observe,

“A student might begin with a single course in political science, for example. Through immersion in that course, or perhaps several more courses in that
While online subject guides can simplify the students’ navigation of library resources, students’ concept of research within an academic discipline remains problematic. A study conducted by Staley at San Jose’ State University in 2007 suggests that narrowing subject guide content to specific areas might prove to be more useful to students. In the study, she found that “over one third (33.9%) of Journalism and Mass Communications students described their major as Advertising, suggesting that a new subject guide in this area would be useful.” (p. 130) To further this notion, Reeb and Gibbons (2004) conclude that “Guides that are organized or delivered at the course level appear to be more in line with how students approach library research. If librarians are to meet students where they are, we need to move away from the traditional use of discipline-based to more course-based devices for organizing library resources.” (p. 128)

Although subject guides and course pages are similar in that they aggregate library and online resources to facilitate scholarly research, they differ in their scope and in their projected audience that will conduct this research. Subject guides amass a broad range of library and web sources to be used in research for all courses of a certain discipline. These guides are an attempt to cater to research conducted by anyone in a field, whether he or she is a doctoral student or an undergraduate. Since they offer an extensive collection of sources, they are usually organized on a template of multiple web pages, which can be navigated from a home page. Course pages, on the other hand, are
designed solely for students of a specific course. The library and online resources that are included on a course page are chosen for their ability to facilitate student research of assignments for the semester in which the course is offered. The type of student (e.g. doctoral-level graduate or first year undergraduate) that will take the course is also kept in mind when the librarian chooses the types of resources to include in the course page design. Because of this limited scope, the course page template consists of a single webpage that is populated with only a few links to library resources that would be helpful to students completing assignments for one specific course.

For example, the UNC subject guide “Researching the American South” (http://www.lib.unc.edu/subjectguides/american_south/index.html) consists of eight web pages containing links to resources for background information, bibliographies, biographies, data and statistics, and government information. While the aggregation of this myriad of library resources is indubitably helpful to a history scholar, the sheer number of resources might intimidate a first-year student.

However, the course page for the “History 571: Southern Music” class (http://www.lib.unc.edu/coursepages/hist/F08_hist571/) has a link to the class syllabus, a link to e-reserve readings for the course, a few helpful databases, and guidelines on how to tackle the research assignments that the students will complete in the course, such as the “Record Review Assignment”.

Course pages could be a useful starting point for these students, as they bring together several scholarly resources that concentrate on a specific assignment instead of providing a large amount of resources aimed at a discipline as a whole, and give the students the guidance that they need to tackle a research project. But while course pages
can be a vehicle to improve student research by introducing peer-reviewed or other quality academic resources available through the library, the users must first be made aware of the existence of these resources. One study revealed that “users generally are unaware of the many tools and services that librarians have created to assist them with subject searching, and that asking a librarian for help simply does not occur to them.” (Antell et al. 2008, p.68) It is assumed that today’s undergraduates belong to a generation who grew up with computers in the classroom, and that they are comfortable with Web 2.0 technologies such as social networking websites, podcasts, and texting. However, when confronted with the task of identifying and finding resources to complete an academic assignment, they swim blindly, looking for information online, sometimes using search boxes on library websites without actually knowing what, if anything, they are searching (King 2008, p.32). A 2007 study conducted at Brock University by Morrison revealed “low research skills among students. This reflected two factors: Internet use over library resources and a misguided assumption that students arrive at university with adequate research skills or develop these in lower year courses.” (p. 2)

One of the possible causes for this lack of information-seeking skills may stem from the lack of communication on the part of the faculty, whose information-seeking strategies differ greatly from those of current undergraduates. In 1996, Leckie put forth the notion that faculty research methods follow an “expert researcher model”:

The model requires a long process of acculturation, an in-depth knowledge of the discipline, awareness of important scholars working in particular areas, participation in a system of informal scholarly communication, and a view of research as a non-sequential, non-linear process with a large degree of ambiguity and serendipity. The expert researcher is relatively independent, and has developed his or her own personal information-seeking strategies (e.g., a heavy reliance on personal contacts and citation trails). Libraries may or may not play
a large part in these strategies, and librarians are rarely thought of as key people in the research process. (p. 202)

Undergraduate students, however, develop their own strategies of information-seeking that have very little in common with the “expert researcher model” techniques. Leckie (1996) points out that first-year students have little to no experience conducting research in certain fields, and that the materials that are given to them in the classroom, such as textbooks and lecture notes, are not sufficient for completing academic assignments.

Beyond the lack of awareness of library resources, students also have difficulty understanding the research expectations placed on them by faculty. Leckie (1996) suggests that faculty members “have not been undergraduates for a long time. Simply because of the passage of time, they have often forgotten what their own undergraduate educational experience was like.” (p. 203)

Although librarians are in a position to assist undergraduates with their research needs with in-class library instruction, they must first break through the barriers that separate them from faculty. A 2004 study by Christiansen, Stombler, and Thaxton illustrated the disconnect between librarians and faculty. This disconnection begins with the physical separation. Since individual faculty members can now conduct most of their research from their campus or home office, they are not coming to the library as often as they once did. What’s more, faculty members often employ the help of graduate students to conduct their research, a practice which further widens the gap between faculty and the physical library. The result is that faculty members are often not aware of the information and human resources available in the library. Another cause of disconnection is the environment of librarian work vs. the environment of faculty work, in that librarian research is cooperative and contains a spirit of outreach, while faculty
research is propriety. Faculty members have a sense of ownership in the courses they teach and are reluctant to allow intervention into their classes by an outside influence. While faculty members regard librarians as a resource, they do not see librarians as subject-specialists who are a valid source of consultation. (Christiansen et al., 2004, pp. 118-119)

Further evidence that faculty are unaware of all the resources that the library offers was found in 2003 by Julien and Given, who conducted a seven-year study on librarians who had worked with faculty members in information literacy sessions. Two listservs were set up to allow librarians to post their observations about these collaboration efforts they had had with faculty members. The study found that “faculty make misguided assumptions about the library. Teaching faculty, for example, were frequently characterized as likely to be stunned by the changes to library resources, and that all teaching faculty require a refresher course in research skills and concepts. One common criticism was that faculty do not take the time to find out what online services their library provides.” (p. 78)

The literature reviewed thus far points out the difficulty that students face when doing research for their courses as well as the gap between librarians and faculty. Are course pages the solution? Can they bridge the divide that exists between students and library resources, as well as the disconnect between librarians and faculty? This study explores student research behavior for two courses offered at UNC in the spring of 2009, faculty expectations of their students’ research skills, and the collaboration between a librarian and faculty members, in order to review the effectiveness of course pages in
helping students find appropriate resources for their research in a specific course, as well as the effectiveness of course pages to improve librarian/faculty communication.

METHODOLOGY

Course pages at UNC

For courses held in the 2009 spring semester, the university libraries had 76 course pages available. The course pages are built using a template with a three-column format that is intended to be integrated into the frame of Blackboard, the course management system used at UNC. The design of the course pages and the philosophy behind them is to provide only the most pertinent resources relevant to the particular course. Librarians, in collaboration with faculty, choose only those resources students need for specific course assignments. The resources on a course page are in no way exhaustive.

The two course pages used in this study were created for an undergraduate and a graduate Italian course offered by the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures. Since course pages are designed with specific course assignments in mind, the contents of each course page differ. The first page used in this study created for a conversation and cultural Italian course for undergraduates. The first column contains information regarding librarian contacts, a chat feature, a link providing additional help in library research, several links for citation creation, and links for Italian language resources both online and in print. The second column contains a search box for the library’s online catalog (OPAC), a list of recommended books on Italian culture, and a section for subscription databases. As a subtext to this database section, there are links
that build information literacy skills, such as suggestions on how to find articles (even if articles are not available in full-text), and criteria of different types of journals (popular vs. scholarly). Since a large part of language learning is listening and reading comprehension, the third column contains websites pertaining to different types of media, such as television, radio, newspapers, and film resources. This column also contains links to reference resources such as encyclopedias, biographies, and maps.
1.1.1 Figure 1: Course page for undergraduate course Italian 310: Conversation in Context. Available at: http://www.lib.unc.edu/coursepages/ital/S09_ital310.html

The second course page used in this study was for a graduate level course on Italian film. While many features are similar to the course page for Italian culture (librarian contact information, chat feature, citation tools, search box for library’s OPAC, article databases, reference resources, library film resources), there are different tools
offered on this site, such as a link to the library’s interlibrary loan service. The Google scholar feature was highlighted on this guide, as the designer felt that this source should be easy for students to find, given its popularity. Also added is a list of websites which were specifically requested by the professor of the course, as well as a link to the course’s syllabus and a link to a subject guide of finding film reviews.
1.1.2 Figure 2: Course page for graduate course Italian 830: Italian Film, History and Culture. Available at: http://www.lib.unc.edu/coursepages/ital/S09_ital830/
Data collection

This study consisted of two parts: the first part involved a survey (see Appendix 1) of the students of the two courses at UNC; the second part involved in-depth interviews (see Appendix 2) with the faculty members who taught these courses. In the fall of 2008, UNC library personnel collaborated with two faculty members from the Italian department to design course pages for both the Italian 310 and Italian 830 courses for the spring 2009 semester. These two courses received library instruction sessions from a member of the library staff focusing on the resources that are included in the course pages. Four weeks after the library instruction sessions, the students were asked to fill out a survey assessing their research methods and the perceived helpfulness of the course pages. The survey was administered in the final minutes of a class period chosen by the faculty member. The survey was distributed after the faculty members had left the room so the faculty members did not know which students participate and students did not feel unduly pressured to participate because of their faculty member’s presence in the classroom. Students were informed verbally that the survey was completely voluntary and would have no bearing on their grades or academic standing in the class. The researcher also left the room while the students complete the survey, selecting a volunteer from among the students to alert them when the entire class had placed their surveys (completed or not) into manila envelope provided at the front of the classroom. The survey took no more than five minutes of class time and did not ask for any identifiable information. This data was entered into an Excel spreadsheet and standardized so comparisons between graduate and undergraduate data could be drawn.
Near the end of the semester after the students research assignments had been collected and graded, the principal investigator conducted interviews with the two faculty members. These interviews focused on both the faculty members’ perceptions of campus libraries and the usefulness of these libraries to their course, as well as their expectations regarding research skills of their students. The faculty members’ participation in the study was completely voluntary and their participation or non-participation had no influence on their standing in the department or with the library. Their students were not informed of the faculty members’ participation or non-participation. This data was clustered, analyzed, and searched for key themes and discrepancies between the two faculty members.

RESULTS

Student Survey

The first part of the study collected survey data from students enrolled in the two Italian courses. The students were given the same survey questions and responses were analyzed to determine if any differences existed between undergraduate and graduate students.

Question 1: First Consulted Resources

The first question asked what resource students consulted when first starting their research. Although the survey asked for a singular closed response (e.g. Google, Library
OPAC, Course page, Librarian, Textbook, Faculty, Other), some students named more than one resource. Although these plural responses can skew the data, they also illustrate the myriad resources that some students turn to when tackling a research project. Out of the twelve graduate students, six responded that they turn to Google when first beginning their research, while five looked to the library’s OPAC, and only one responded that they used the course page. The undergraduate responses were more spread out among the resources; however, the majority start with Google as a first source. The results are presented here in percentage form:

**Graph 1: First Consulted Resources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Consulted Resources</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Google</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library OPAC</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course page</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library OPAC</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course page</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 2.1: Previous knowledge of course page**

As was stated in the Methodology section, the students received one 15-minute library instruction session about the course pages. Prior to the instruction session, the
researcher had sent an email to both faculty members when the course pages went onto the live server, asking both faculty members to show, or at least mention, the availability of the course pages, which were available both through the library’s homepage and also through the Blackboard site for each course. The second question on the survey asked whether they had known about the existence of the course page before this library instruction session. The possible responses were in a yes/no format. Those students who had responded yes were also asked how they found out about the course page, and were given the following choice of responses: Blackboard course page; library website; librarian; professor; and another student. This question was asked in order to determine how many students (if any) had received word from the faculty member about the existence of the course page. An overwhelming majority responded that they didn’t know about the course page before the librarian came into the classroom to present the course pages. Out of the nine graduate responses, seven did not know about the course page’s existence, and the two that reported a previous knowledge of the course page found out through a librarian. Out of the twelve undergraduate responses, nine responded that they did not know about the course page, while two responded that they had found out through a librarian, and one responded that they had found out through the Blackboard site for their course.
Graph 2.1: Previous knowledge of the course page

![Previous knowledge of course page graph]

Graph 2.2: Source for course page knowledge

![Source for course page knowledge graph]

Question 3: Course page visits since library instruction session

This question was included in the survey to determine the frequency of course page visits after students had received the bibliographic instruction session. The results
between graduate and undergraduate responses differ greatly, with more graduate students than undergraduates reporting more frequent use of the course page. The possible responses on the survey were: more than 8; 5-7; 3-5; 1-2; and never used the course page. Out of the twelve graduate students, only 11% reported visiting the course page 5-7 times; 22% reported 3-5 visits, 56% responded that they had visited the course page only 1-2 times, and 11% reported never visiting the course page after the bibliographic session. The undergraduates reported less visits overall: only 30% responded that they had visited the course page 3-5 times, 20% reported 1-2 times, while 50% reported no visits at all.

Graph 3: Course page visits since bibliographic instruction session
**Question 4: Resources most useful**

As was stated in the course page description, there are several resources available on the course pages. These resources include not only print and digital information sources, such as subscription databases (including Google Scholar) and websites, but also links to the libraries’ holding pages for print reference books, and a widget to search the library’s OPAC. In addition to these information sources, there are also links to library services, such as interlibrary borrowing, librarian contact information, and a chat widget. There was also a link to the course’s syllabus. The survey asked the respondents to indicate the resources most useful to their research for the courses. The range of responses between graduate and undergraduate students differed greatly. An overwhelming majority of graduate students reported database/Google Scholar use (78%) and website links (56%). 33% graduate students reported use of the library’s OPAC, while 11% responded using the interlibrary borrowing link or no course page use, respectively.

Undergraduate responses were distributed more broadly, with 31% using website links, 15% using subscription databases/Google scholar links, 8% using librarian contact information, 8% using the library’s OPAC widget, and 38% not using the course page at all. None of the graduate or undergraduate students used the chat widget, the syllabus link, or the print reference sources.
Graph 4: Resources most useful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Library feature</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chat feature</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlibrary Loan</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Databases/Goo...</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library OPAC</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllabus link</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print reference...</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A (didn't use)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 5: Desire for additional bibliographic instruction

This question was asked in order to gauge students’ desire for instruction in seeking information within the library’s resources. The three possible responses intend to capture student comfort levels in searching for specific information in the library’s databases, OPAC, and other resources. The possible responses were: “No, I’m comfortable using the different library research tools”; “Yes, I sometimes get lost or can’t find what I need”; and “N/A – I never use the library resources offered.” About half of both graduate (56%) and undergraduate (50%) reported no desire for additional bibliographic instruction, claiming that they are comfortable using the different library research tools. More graduate students (44%) than undergraduate students (33%) reported a desire for more bibliographic instruction, reporting that they sometimes get lost or can’t find what they need. None of the graduate students reported never using the library resources, while 17% of undergraduates (two out of twelve responses) reported never using them.
Question 6: Previous use of other course pages

For the spring 2009 semester in which this study was performed, there were 76 course pages available through the UNC libraries. In the previous semester (fall 2008), there were 100 course pages available. This question asked the students if they had used course pages for another class at UNC, without specifying a semester, either present or past. The possible responses were in a yes/no format. The majority of graduate students (78%) responded ‘yes’, while exactly half (50%) of the undergraduates responded ‘yes’. For those responding no previous use of the course pages (22% of graduate students, 50% of undergraduate students), a subset question asked why they had never used one. The possible responses were: “Course page/subject guide wasn’t available”; “Course page/subject guide might have existed, but I didn’t know about it”; “Course page was available, but I didn’t find it useful.” Of those graduate students who had reported no previous use of course pages, none responded that a course page wasn’t available, while half (50%) responded that they didn’t know of a course page existing, and the other half
(50%) responded that they knew the course page was available, but that they did not find it useful. On the other hand, half (50%) of the undergraduates answered that a course page was not available, the other half (50%) answered that they weren’t aware of a course page’s existence, and none of them reported having known about a course page.

**Graph 6: Previous use of other course pages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coursepage wasn't available</th>
<th>Existence of coursepage was unknown</th>
<th>Coursepage available, but didn't use</th>
<th>Coursepage wasn't available</th>
<th>Existence of coursepage was unknown</th>
<th>Coursepage available, but didn't use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 7: Comfort in writing citations**

This question was asked to determine both graduate and undergraduate students’ comfort in writing citations for the sources they use in their research papers. The four possible responses were: “Very comfortable”; “Somewhat comfortable”; “Rarely comfortable”; and “Not at all comfortable”. Graduate student responses leaned towards a positive comfort level in writing citations, with 22% reporting a “Very comfortable” level and 78% reporting a “Somewhat comfortable” level. There were no graduate student responses for “Rarely comfortable” or “Not at all comfortable”. Undergraduate student responses were slightly different, with 42% reporting being “Very comfortable” and 50%
reporting being “Somewhat comfortable”. 8% of undergraduates reported being “Rarely comfortable”, and none reported being “Not at all comfortable”.

**Graph 7: Comfort in writing citations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comfort Level</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very comfortable</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat comfortable</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely comfortable</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all comfortable</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 8: Citation guides used**

Among the many links to library resources offered on the course page, there are links to resources which are designed to help students cite sources properly. These resources include Citation Builder, a webpage which allows students to fill in metadata information, which is then generated into a correct citation in MLA, APA, or CBE/CSE formats. Another citation help resource is a tutorial developed for the UNC libraries, as well as a link to the online bibliographic management program RefWorks, which is available to UNC affiliates through the university libraries’ website. Links to these resources were placed on the course page. The survey asked students about their use of these citation resources, as well as other resources, such as the university’s Writing Center website and print citation manuals.
The survey asked the students which citation guides they had used, including those available through links on the course page, as well as others. Students were allowed to choose more than one response. The responses were: Citation Builder, RefWorks, UNC Libraries citation tutorial, Print citation manuals, and the Writing Center website. Over half (56%) of the graduate student responses indicated RefWorks, while the remaining responses indicated 33% usage of Citation Builder, 22% using the UNC libraries’ tutorial, 11% using print citation manuals, 22% using the Writing Center’s website, and 11% choosing “other” as a response (which was written in as the Online Writing Lab website offered by Purdue University (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/).

Undergraduate responses indicated an overwhelming majority (69%) use of Citation Builder, with the other responses receiving 8% each, excluding the choice of “Other”, which received no responses.
RESULTS- FACULTY

In conducting 30-minute interviews with the two faculty members, three themes arose out of the questions and responses. These themes include: 1. Faculty expectations for and satisfaction with students’ ability to find, select, and cite quality information resources; 2. The faculty members’ role in the collaborative process of creating and presenting course pages; 3. The faculty members’ past, present, and future use of library resources and services.

Faculty expectations regarding student research

The senior faculty member was wary about the proliferation of web resources which his students cite in their papers which he did not explicitly recommend. “Everything that they write for me, they have to have a list of works cited. Wikipedia is a

---

Graph 8: Citation guides used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation guides used</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citation builder</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RefWorks</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNC Libraries Tutorial</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print Citation Manuals</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Center website</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*Faculty expectations regarding student research*}

The senior faculty member was wary about the proliferation of web resources which his students cite in their papers which he did not explicitly recommend. “Everything that they write for me, they have to have a list of works cited. Wikipedia is a...
temptation. They have to double-check information they find in Wikipedia.” It is common in academia not to accept Wikipedia as a scholarly source, but what about other sites on the Internet? The faculty member had clear reservations about information on the web: “They have to have no more than two or three web sources. They have to identify reliable authors. I’ll accept [something that they found on the web] only if it corresponds to a print source.” When the researcher pointed out that, at least in the field of library science, many articles are now published solely in a digital format, the faculty member said, “yes, but literature is a different field. I’ll always have questions about a web source that has never appeared in print. The authority comes from the fact that there is a name, publisher, and date—this information never changes.” When asked about his overall satisfaction with the resources that his students cite in their assignments, he responded, “In general, I’m very satisfied with the resources that my students use, but we can always do more. We can always do better.”

The junior faculty member, however, was clearly not satisfied and decided at the beginning of the semester to relieve her students of the burden of research: “I usually do all the research for them. I tried at the beginning of the semester to give them a task – how a theme like Courtly Love could be seen in La Tigre e La Neve [film], but they couldn’t produce any results.” Her dissatisfaction lies not only with her students’ ability to conduct research, but also with her students’ approach to readings and the quality of in-class discussions: “They’re missing the ability to analyze. If I give them a topic to discuss, they don’t do any research—they don’t have a lot of aptitude to conduct research. Either they don’t know how to conduct research, or they don’t have the will. Maybe they’re lazy – they never take initiative in class discussion. It’s frustrating.”
When asked about their satisfaction with the correctness of their students’ citations, the senior faculty member simply responded: “It’s a nightmare. It’s a continuous struggle.” The junior faculty member posts all the sources she expects students to use on Blackboard, and doesn’t ask the students to use a standardized format (MLA) for her students’ papers.

Faculty members’ role in the collaboration process in creating and presenting course pages

The researcher asked the faculty members about the process they went through when working with the library to develop the course page. The senior faculty member explained that he had seen a course page that had been made for another course in the department, and this made him interested in working with a librarian to develop a course page for his class. The course page used for this study was the second one that was developed for one of his courses. The first one, an extensive page dealing with Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, had been developed for his course of the previous semester. At the end of the semester, he approached the same librarian, asking for a course page for the cinema course. “It was a collaborative effort. I only had to provide the syllabus and make suggestions – it was a give and take process.”

The senior faculty member talked about creating a similar guide, “before websites were common. I tried to create a guide for Italian studies, but then…. The danger of web pages is that they become obsolete.” [web pages can be easily taken off the Internet and their content lost forever.] “You need guidelines – it’s helpful for students. For students, especially undergraduates, it’s useful to have a site to identify primary sources. I see a lot of usefulness in web pages and subject guides.”
The junior faculty member was initially approached by a librarian to make a course page. “She made me see other course pages, and I liked it – the resources seemed very useful—all the databases, and other resources. We made arrangements to meet in the library and the librarian showed me some books about Italian culture that I thought could be useful; and language dictionaries, newspapers, television and radio websites, and I said OK.”

She was especially excited about the citation tools and chat feature offered through UNC libraries. These included Citation Builder and RefWorks, tools which allows the user to fill in different fields with the appropriate metadata about the source cited (e.g. author, title, journal, etc.), which is then used to create a citation in the desired format (APA, MLA, Chicago), and a citation tutorial developed by UNC libraries which gives examples of different kinds of works that could be cited. “It’s a good resource that I can show my students, especially students of literature… how to get to electronic articles; I used this also for my own research. The chat was very useful; you say more on chat than you would person-to-person. I shared some film resources, but the librarian knew more than me about these.”

A follow-up interview question attempted to find out about how the faculty members felt about having a librarian come into their class to present the course page. While the senior faculty member said it was “very helpful”, the junior faculty member replied that having a librarian in her class was essential for the presentation of library resources because she “wouldn’t have known how to present the course page and all the resources that are there.”
Faculty members’ past, present, and future use of library resources and services

Both faculty members have collaborated and continue to collaborate with librarians, although neither mentioned previous collaboration with reference librarians at UNC. Rather, the junior faculty member talked about her time at St. Louis University, where an archivist found a rare manuscript for her. She added that she uses the UNC libraries’ online catalog to find parts of texts for her students. However, she had never worked with library personnel before. “I just didn’t know about the course pages”, although these pages had been available to her in her entire time at UNC.

The senior faculty member mentioned his continuing consultations with a bibliographer at the university library, although bibliographers at UNC are tasked with collection development and do not typically conduct research consultations, instruction, or other public service. When asked why he didn’t use the UNC libraries more, he complained about a lack of time, saying that he wished that he had more time, but was tied up in administrative affairs within the department and that he spent about two hours a day just composing and answering emails.

Both faculty members said that they are more likely to collaborate with the library based on the experience with the course pages. Both faculty members were concerned to learn that the librarian who had created the course pages for them would be leaving UNC. They wanted contact information for another librarian so that they might collaborate with him or her when “their” librarian left. The senior librarian added, “I appreciate [the librarians’] work very much. We could not perform our tasks without librarians. [They] are the unsung heroes of our profession.”
The senior faculty member requested that the library not move the course pages off the web when the semester had passed (although course pages from the previous semester are still available on the live web, he did not see the “previous semester” link on the course pages’ homepage. He requested that the library take the course pages off the web only when the faculty member approves of its removal.

Another question asked if the faculty members found the course page useful in pointing students to useful resources they might not otherwise find. Both answered positively. The senior faculty member lauded the course page, even though he didn’t exactly answer the question: “[The course page] simplifies my job.” He went on to say that he always supplies a bibliography on his courses’ syllabi, but with the course page, he doesn’t necessarily have to do this, since these resources exist on the course page. The junior faculty member also responded positively: before the collaboration in the creation of the course page, she was unaware of the subscription databases at the library, of the links to media sites (television, radio) and of the books available in Davis Library. She reiterated how she had never worked with library personnel before – “I just didn’t know about the course pages”.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study confirmed many of the same issues discussed in the previous literature, but also revealed a few unexpected issues that can be organized into themes. These themes involve the types of resources that students prefer to use and the faculty wariness of these resources; the lack of awareness on the part of students and faculty of library resources, including course pages; issues involving the quality of
citation writing; and the overall effectiveness of the course pages to improve librarian/faculty relationships.

**Conflicting trust issues regarding resources**

One of the most striking findings of this study regards the resources that students first turn to when starting a research project and the attitudes of faculty regarding these resources. As the results show, the students’ most familiar and trusted resource is Google, a search engine which brings up a near-infinite quantity of links to sites which may or may not be appropriate for scholarly work. Fifty percent of graduate students and forty-four percent of undergraduates reported consulting Google as a first resource. In contrast to the students’ trust of sources they find on freely accessible websites (as opposed to licensed commercial academic resources) lies the faculty distrust of these sources, especially Wikipedia, as the senior faculty member pointed out in the interview by saying, “They have to double-check information they find in Wikipedia. I’ll accept [something that they found on the web] only if it corresponds to a print source.” The course page could be the happy medium through which this disconnection could be mitigated: by using web resources which are approved by the faculty on the course page, students could explore these resources for their research.

The senior faculty member seemed to equate print with quality, a conclusion that can be drawn from the fact that all resources that his students cite must be found in print somewhere: “I’ll always have questions about a web source that has never appeared in print.” The surveys show that seventy-eight percent of graduate students and fifteen percent of undergraduates used the database and Google scholar links on the course page; also fifty-six percent of graduate students and thirty-one percent of undergraduates
reported using the website links on the course page. Although some of the sources found in the databases and in Google scholar could exist also in print, many of the articles on the websites do not. Even though the literature in some fields has been published solely in a digital format, literature has traditionally been available in print as well as electronically. This may change soon, as a recent article about the future of humanities journals, which was published in The Chronicle of Higher Education, points out: “A journal started today, however, is likely to be online-only and open access.” (Howard, 2009).

**Student and Faculty Awareness of Library Resources**

Faculty dissatisfaction with the types of web resources reveals the lack of the students’ ability to identify trustworthy websites. Although the UNC Libraries website offers a tutorial about identifying trustworthy websites, a link to this tutorial was not included on the course page. By adding a link to this tutorial and pointing out this link during the library session, students can be made more aware of this library tool, and can therefore become more educated about the web sources that they are so fond of using.

In addition to using resources found on the free web, students also make use of the library’s OPAC and databases, and feel they could benefit from further instruction in using these resources. Given the low satisfaction level of both faculty members, there is a clear desire and need for additional intervention by librarians. The frequency which the students use the course pages are disturbing, and must be reviewed. Since the library instruction session, 67% of graduate students and 70% of undergraduate students reported visiting the course page 1-2 times, or never visiting the course page at all. This raises the question that if the course pages contain such helpful library and online tools, then why
the low usage? Is the reason simply a matter of marketing the course pages more, informing the campus community of their existence? Or does the reason lie in the design of the course pages themselves? The course pages could benefit from further study regarding this low usage. It would also be helpful to find out if course page usage would increase by using a different 2.0 format, such as a wiki.

Also notable is the junior faculty member’s lack of awareness of library resources and services. Before the librarian approached her with the idea of creating a course page, the faculty member was unaware of the range of databases available through the university libraries. Neither of the faculty members was aware of the course page services offered through the library, since both found out about the course pages through a librarian. In addition to the faculty members, most of the students were also unaware of the existence of the course page, and the majority of those that knew about the course page before the information literacy session found out through a librarian, even though the librarian had informed both faculty members about the presence of the course pages on the live web as soon as they were available. This finding is clear evidence of the need of librarians to make the campus community aware of their products and services, and to improve communication with faculty members, since they are the prime point of reference in the classroom.

There is an important point to make about the junior faculty member, who is so unsatisfied with her students’ research skills that she does it all for them. A prerequisite of this course is that students must have completed at least two years of Italian grammar before enrollment in the course. Thus, the students in this course are in at least their third year of higher education enrollment. The fact that she is so dissatisfied with their
research skills is at first appalling. However, there may be a cultural note to take into consideration: she has only been in the American academic environment for a few years – the academic environment in Italy, even at a high school level, requires a firm understanding of early literature, such as Dante and therefore the concept of Courtly Love. It could be that her expectations of American students’ prior knowledge of such a concept are equal to her expectations of Italian students’ prior knowledge. If this is the case, her expectations are unrealistic, since American and Italian curriculums differ.

**Citing Sources**

Additional library instruction is needed in the question of writing correct citations: even though students report feeling comfortable with writing citations, the faculty interviewed for this study are clearly not satisfied with the quality of their students’ citation-writing ability. This finding points to a need to emphasize citation writing in library instruction sessions, especially given the enthusiasm of the junior faculty member for the citation tools available at UNC. In addition to helping students, these tools can also be beneficial to faculty members conducting their own research.

**Effectiveness of the course pages in improving faculty/librarian collaboration**

The good news is the success of the course pages in improving faculty/librarian collaboration. Both faculty members were enthusiastic about the course pages, and said that they were happy to work with a librarian and have the librarian come into their classrooms to talk about the resources that the course pages could offer. Also encouraging was the faculty members’ desire for future collaboration, as well as their wish for the contact information of a librarian with which they could collaborate after “their” librarian had left the university.
Faculty members could enjoy an additional benefit from the course pages: making their jobs easier. The senior faculty member had tried to create similar guides in the past, as well as provide bibliographic references on the syllabi of his courses. With the course page, the faculty member could leave this task to the librarian. The researcher suggests that these benefits can be used as an incentive when marketing the course pages to faculty who are approaching course page collaboration for the first time.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of two UNC course pages to introduce students to library tools, and to improve librarian/faculty communications. Through an evaluation of student research habits and their use of the course pages, the researcher found that the majority of students do not use course pages as a primary research tool for their assignments, rather turning to Google or the libraries’ OPAC to begin their research. The study’s observation of students’ use of Google agrees with Reeb’s 2004 findings:

“Usability test results on information retrieval reveal that students, when confronted with a much more open-ended task than a directive to find books or articles, typically exit the library Web site and use Google or another search engine. Many do not explore the library site for content other than books or articles. When the University of Rochester Libraries posed usability questions such as "Find a Web site on Chippewa Indians" or "Find information on how to include a Web site in your bibliography," students did not explore the library site for answers. They used neither the subject guides nor site search, even though both open-ended questions were covered in the subject guides. Instead, they proceeded immediately to a Web search engine.(p. 125)

Although it's not the first place they start, the study also revealed that the students do rely heavily on web-based resources, especially the article databases and websites included on the course page. In addition to these findings, the study also showed that the
students’ knowledge of the existence of the course pages came from the librarian and not from the faculty member. It is suggested that the course pages need further emphasis on the part of faculty members in order to be used more by the students. If faculty members do not promote the importance of the course pages or of the library, students will be likely to dismiss library resources and services and use only sources available on the free web, without consideration of the authority of the sources. Further study could be conducted to explore how to impress the importance of library resources on the faculty, and help them see how their role in promoting library resources could be beneficial to them, to their students, and to the library.

The study also attempted to discover the nature of librarian/ faculty communication and to see whether the course pages were effective in enhancing librarian/ faculty relations. It was shown that through the collaborative effort of creating the course pages, faculty were made more aware of library products such as article databases, and services such as library instruction. This study agrees with Matthias’s 2004 study which revealed a ninety-three percent increase in information literacy sessions at the College of Business Administration at Butler University thanks to the efforts of a liaison librarian to build relationships with the faculty members of the College. The study also gave librarians insight on how students conduct their research and what faculty expectations of students’ research abilities and the resources they use to complete their research assignments. The study also revealed the gap between students’ perceived expertise at writing citations and faculty disappointment in these citations. Future library instruction sessions could address citation writing, since it is crucial to scholarly research.
This study gave a brief picture of students’ research habits, their knowledge of library resources, faculty expectations of their students’ research skills, and librarian/faculty relationships. Further study could explore these areas more in-depth, and give information professionals a strong base from which to develop and promote library services.

LIMITATIONS AND IMPORTANCE OF STUDY

While the study was intended to concentrate on a single discipline, logistics made it difficult to study more than two Italian classes in the designated semester. The small number of participants, both students and faculty, limits the conclusions that can be drawn. A more extensive study of this or any other discipline, or one that covers a number of differences would provide a clearer picture of the use of customized course pages and their impact on the librarian-faculty relationship.

Another limitation of this study related to time: the information literacy sessions in which a librarian came into both classrooms to talk about the course guides were only twenty minutes long, due to time restraints placed by the faculty members. Previous literature has suggested that these “one shot” sessions are not effective (Owusu-Ansah, 2004), while others argue that a one-shot session is one of many ways that academic librarians can promote information literacy in the college community (Zabel, 2004). At any rate, twenty minutes is a very small amount of time to introduce students to not only the concept of a course page, but also the resources available through that course page, not to mention basic library catalog searches.
Nevertheless, as a pilot for future research, this study offers evidence of a connection between outreach to faculty in the humanities and the use of quality information resources by students. It adds to the growing literature centered on course-specific guides, and provides a window into the information needs of humanities students. Perhaps most notable, the study exposed discrepancies between students’ perception of faculty expectations and what faculty actually expects from them in terms of resources they use for their assignments and how they cite sources in their bibliographies.

The study showed the value of creating custom course pages for improving faculty/librarian communication and exposed the lack of student and faculty awareness of library resources and services. The study also suggested areas that need improvement, such as more library outreach to faculty and their students.
Works Cited


Matthies, B. (2004). *The road to faculty-librarian collaboration*


APPENDIX 1: Student Survey

Survey

1. Thinking about the research project you had for this or any other class this semester what resource do you usually consult first when starting your research?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Google</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library online catalog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarian (in-person or chat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/ Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. A few weeks ago, someone from the library came to class to show you a handful of resources for your research, including a course webpage with a custom set of links. Did you know about the course webpage before the presentation?

- Yes
- No

If you answered yes, how did you find out about the course page?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blackboard course page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Please indicate how many times you’ve used the course page since the initial presentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never used the course page</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. If you have used the course webpage, please indicate the resources most useful to your research for this class (check all that apply).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Library personnel contact information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chat feature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlibrary Loan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Databases/ Google scholar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library’s online catalog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllabus link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print reference books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A: Didn’t use the course page for research in this course.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. If you used the library’s catalog, databases or other resources, do you feel that you would have benefited from additional instruction on how to search for specific information?

No, I’m comfortable using the different library research tools.

Yes, I sometimes get lost or can’t find what I need.

N/A – I never use the library resources offered.

7. Have you ever used one of the library’s course pages or a subject guides for another class at UNC?

Yes  No

If you’ve never used a course page, please specify why not:

Course page/subject guide wasn’t available

Course page/subject guide might have existed, but I didn’t know about it.

Course page was available, but I didn’t find it useful.

8. How comfortable do you feel about writing citations for the resources you use for a paper?

Very comfortable  Somewhat comfortable

Rarely comfortable  Not at all comfortable

9. Please specify whether you’ve used any of the citation guides available through the UNC library or Writing Center:

Citation Builder  RefWorks  UNC Libraries citation tutorial

Print citation manuals  Writing Center website

10. Are you an undergraduate or a grad student at UNC?

Undergraduate  Graduate
APPENDIX 2: Faculty Interview Questions
Interview Questions for Faculty

1. Describe for me the process you went through when working with the library to develop the library course page for this class:
2. Had you ever worked with the library on a project like this before?
3. Did you learn about any resources you didn’t know the library provided or did you share any good resources with the librarian that they were not aware of?
4. In general, how satisfied are you with your students’ ability to conduct research?
5. What kinds of sources do they typically cite in their writing assignments?
6. Would you say that the course page was useful in pointing students to useful resources they might not otherwise find?
7. Was it useful to have someone from the library come to your class to show them the course page and demonstrate how to search some of the different research tools?
8. Have you ever consulted with a subject-specialist librarian for your research?
9. Are you more or less likely to collaborate with the library in this way based on your experience this semester?
10. Is there anything else you’d like to share with me about the library, your collaboration on the course page or your students’ research?