

**Institution Name**

Oakton Community College

**Institution Characteristics**

Oakton Community College, located in northern Cook County IL is a two-year community college offering both degree and non-credit courses. Oakton serves an FTE of 4,189, and a general student population of 46,000 students which includes both credit and non-credit students.

The Oakton Community College Library employs 11 FTE librarians, 14 adjunct faculty librarians, 3.73 other paid staff, and 3.05 student assistants.

**CARLI Counts Participant Name + Job Title**

Martinique Hallerduff

Associate Professor, Information Literacy Program Coordinator, Division of Liberal Arts Liaison

**Project Name/Title**

Oakton Students and Information: What information do students value and what do they do with it?

**Single Sentence Abstract**

The Oakton Librarian designed a survey (Appendix A) for First Year Experience and English 102 students to gather information about students' behaviors and values related to information-seeking, information evaluation, and library use in order to develop an information literacy curriculum.

**Motivation for Project**

Within "The Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education" there are six frames, which "are conceptual understandings that organize many other concepts and ideas about information, research, and scholarship." Each "frame" within the framework is accompanied by a description of the frame, and of how both experts and novice learners interact with that frame and is followed by both "knowledge practices" and "dispositions." Much of the work in the field of Library and Information Science (LIS) focuses on knowledge practices, particularly when discussing assessment. My goal for this project was to learn more about students' dispositions, particularly students that (are likely to) have not worked with an academic librarian yet in their college career so that I might keep these in mind when developing an Information Literacy Curriculum.

**Partners and Stakeholders**

Oakton's Assessment Committee (OPAL): OPAL is comprised of faculty members. The subcommittee for transfer programs reviewed and accepted this assessment plan. Results were also provided to OPAL.

The English Department: This project required collaboration with the English department, particularly faculty teaching English 102 in Fall 2019 and Spring 2021.

Faculty teaching courses with a First Year Experience designation. This project required collaboration with faculty teaching courses with the FYE designation in Fall 2019 and Spring 2021.

### **Inquiry Question**

What do early-career college students at Oakton believe about information and how do their beliefs affect their actions?

### **Study Participants/Population**

The study participants were students in English 102 classes (85) and students in classes designated as First Year Experience (FYE) courses (82). 167 students completed the survey.

### **Method(s) of Data Collection and Analysis**

Martinique Hallerduff developed an online survey which was hosted on the LibWizard platform. The survey was reviewed by full-time library faculty. The survey was provided to library student workers to gauge survey timing and to solicit feedback about clarity. Faculty teaching English 102 and FYE courses were recruited via email with follow-up by intercampus mail and in-person visits to faculty offices. Faculty disseminated the survey to students via D2L as a stand-alone assignment or request, or before a library class. In other classes, librarians provided instructions to complete the survey prior to a library instruction session in a computer lab.

The results of the two surveys, which were identical with the exception of the survey title, were combined in excel for analysis. Results of the survey were shared with the campus at large at an optional presentation during Orientation week prior to the start of Fall 2020 semester.

### **Findings**

Some of the more significant findings deal with student engagement in research, students' perception of authority and their understanding of bias, representation and access – all concepts related to critical information literacy<sup>1</sup>.

#### *Findings Related to Student Engagement in Research*

In terms of engagement, students report that after completing “an intensive research project” that they are most likely to “discuss what you learned with family and friends” (78/271) response. (See figure A) which garnered 4% more that “submit it for a grade and then forget about it” (67/271). Students' engagement in their research is also indicated in their expectation that their college research is based on their interest (158/352) (See figure B) where only 22/352 indicated “I expect to look for information based on professor's instructions and topic” a

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<sup>1</sup> “Critical information literacy (CIL) is a way of thinking and teaching that examines the social construction and political dimensions of libraries and information, problematizing informations' production and use that library users may think critically about such forces. (Tewell).

difference of 136 responses. This gap widens further when examining the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest response which is “I hope to be guided by my interest most sometimes” (108/352).

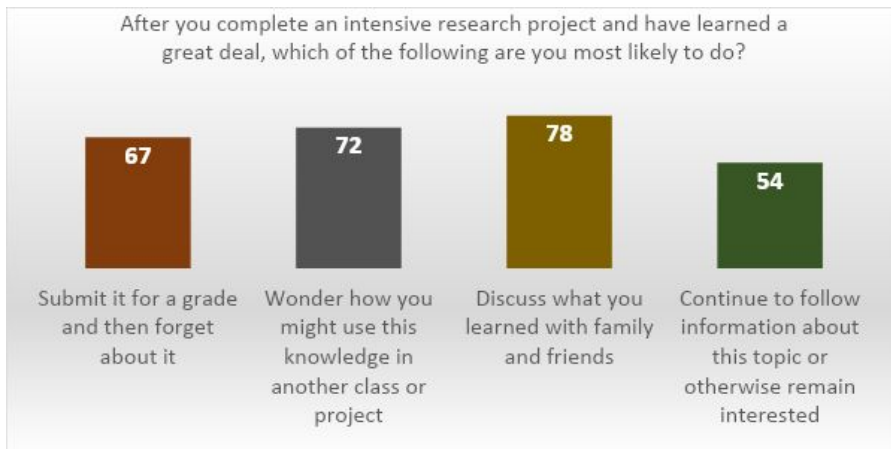


Figure A

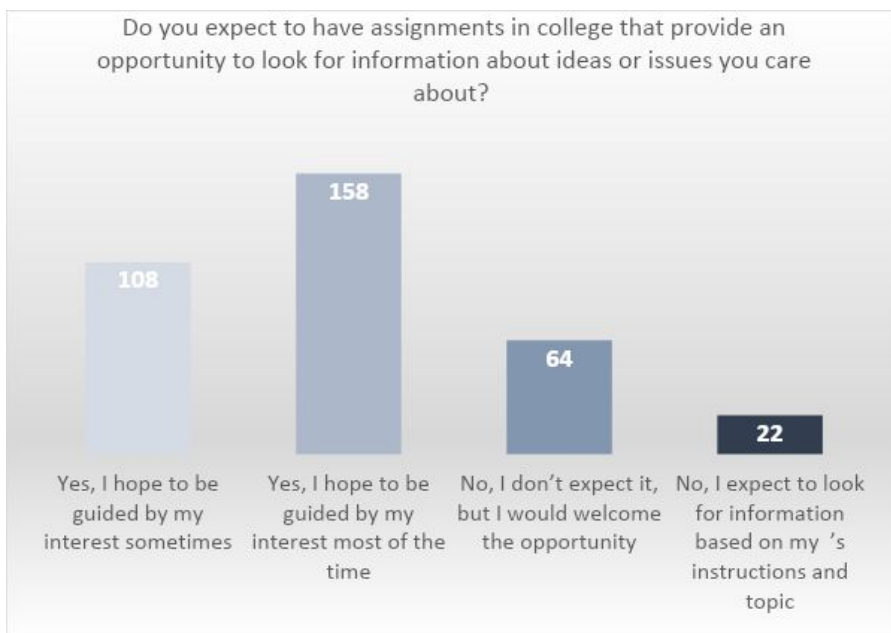


Figure B

### *Findings Related to Students' perception of authority*

Several questions asked students how they determine expertise or authority or which type of information they trust the most based on authority and their responses are somewhat inconsistent; they trust scholarly content and personal experience (theirs or others) the most. For example, when asked which sources they trust to provide information about an example topic research topic, “teenage immigrants to the United States,” students indicate that they trust a scholarly article or book the most (126/469) followed by two categories related to personal experience “a book written someone who’s had this experience” (105/469) and “Interview/conversation with a friend of family that’s experienced this (89/469). (see figure C.)

This is in contrast to responses to the question “When searching for resources for a research project, which of the following are you likely to consult” (select all that apply) (figure D) and a follow-up question that asks which students are *most likely* to consult (select no more than two) (figure E). In figure D students show preference for Oakton Library Databases (119/ 597), Course Textbook (111/119) and Professor (90/597) where “friend/family member” has only 37/597 responses.” Similarly, when forced to limit their choice to only two, Google jumps ahead of everything else at 112/359 and Oakton Library Databases drops to 2<sup>nd</sup> with 81/359. “Friend or family member” stays in its low position at 8/359. What may account for these differences is two-fold: the words “has had this experience” which is not present in figures D and E and with a lack of familiarity in the other options represented in Figure C, for example a “Reference article in an encyclopedia about immigration.” However, the significance attributed to personal experience should be noted.

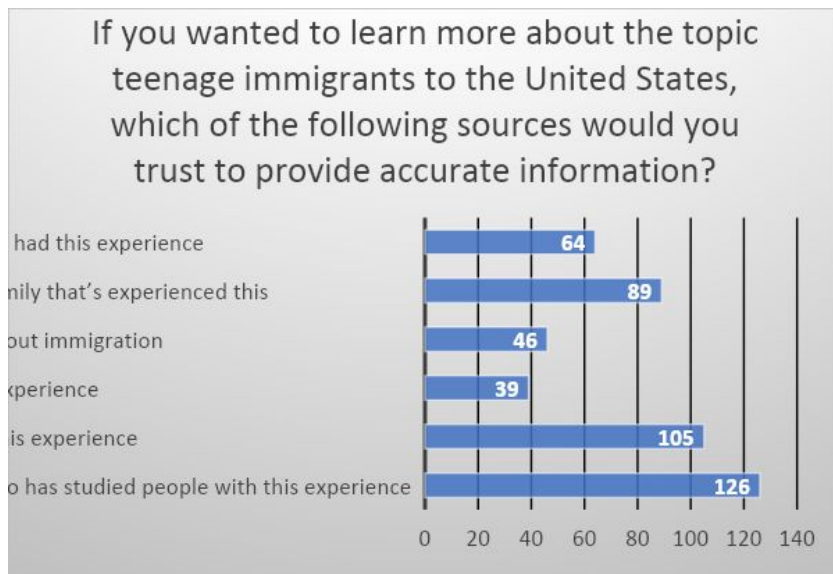


Figure C

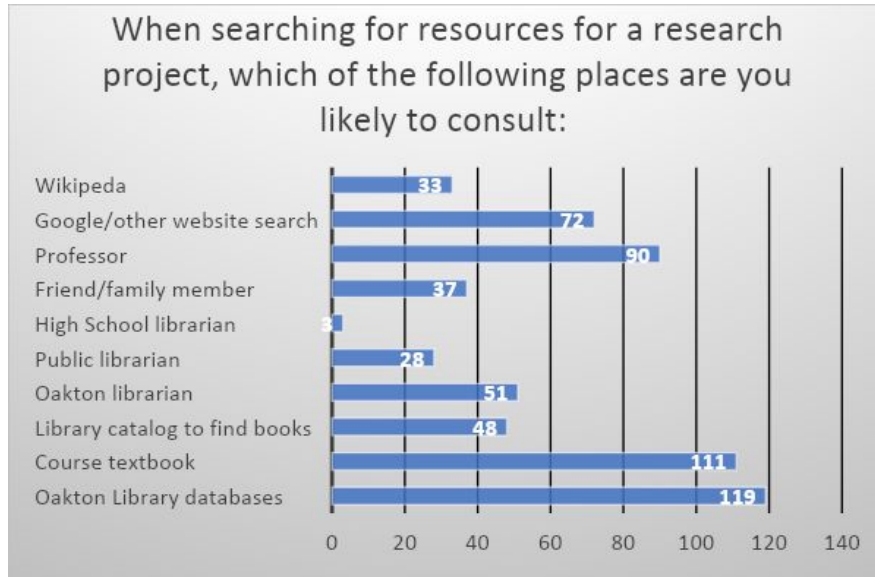


Figure D

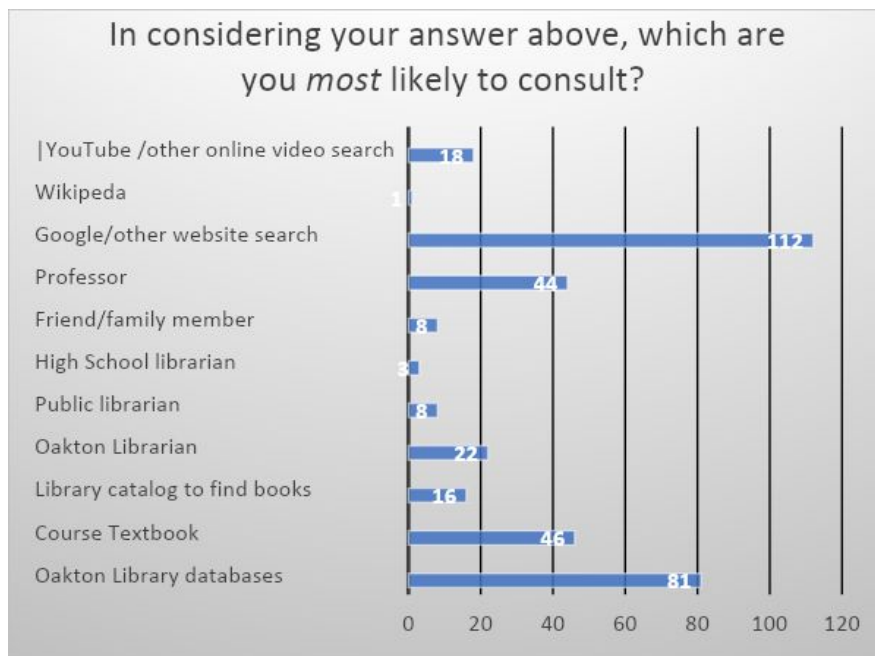


Figure E

Students value of scholarship and personal experience are further represented in “What is the most important factor in considering someone an expert on the topic of anorexia (an emotional disorder characterized by an obsessive desire to lose weight by refusing to eat).” In this question students again indicate academic scholarship first and personal experience second (see Figure F).

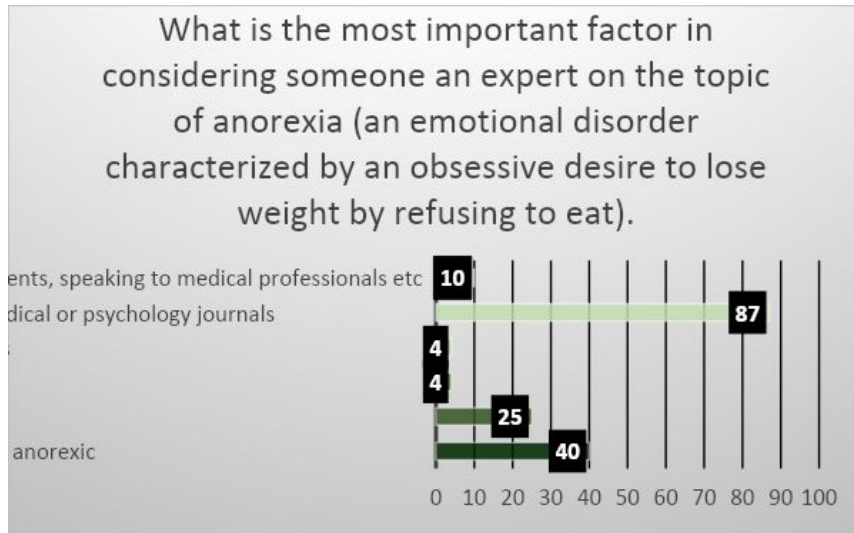


Figure F

*Findings related to critical information literacy*

Students value an “all-sides” approach to research and report that they seek out multiple opinions on controversial issues (Figure G). However, they equally report avoiding resources that provide evidence or an alternative option other than their own *and* largely indicate that they “seek out resources that provide me with evidence for my opinion.” This seems to indicate that while students value the idea of representing multiple points of view that they may, in practice, not do this in their own research.

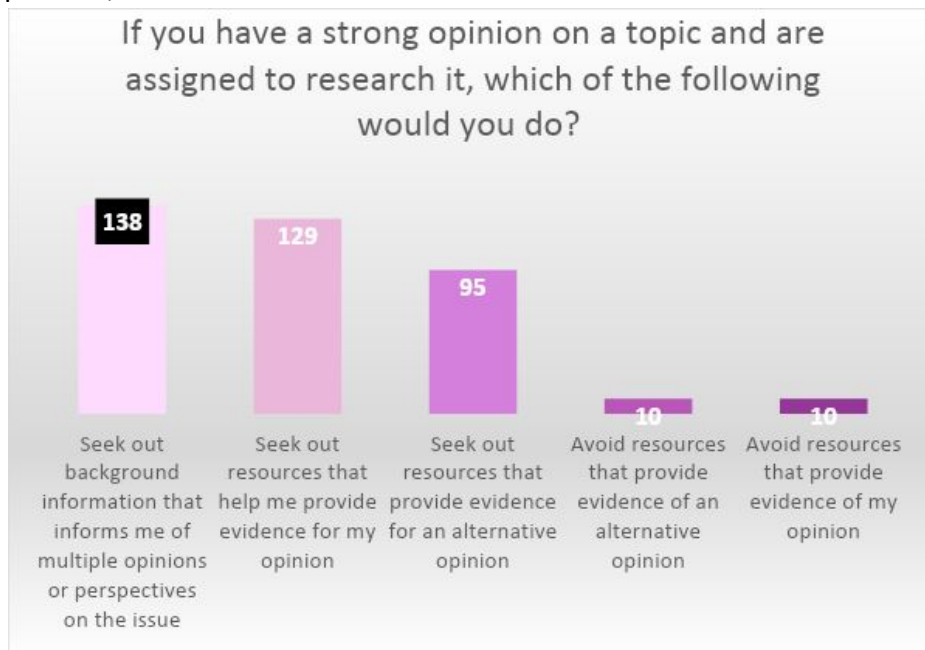


Figure G

Students overwhelmingly believe in the equality of access to information where 109/167 or 65% indicated that they believe “everyone has an equal ability to create and share information” (Figure H) It’s possible students were focused on the word “ability” to mean that people have the physical and intellectual *ability* to create information. However, the “no” response says “information created by certain individuals or communities is difficult to find.” Because so few students indicated “no” I am led to understand that students believe information creation and access is an equal playing field.

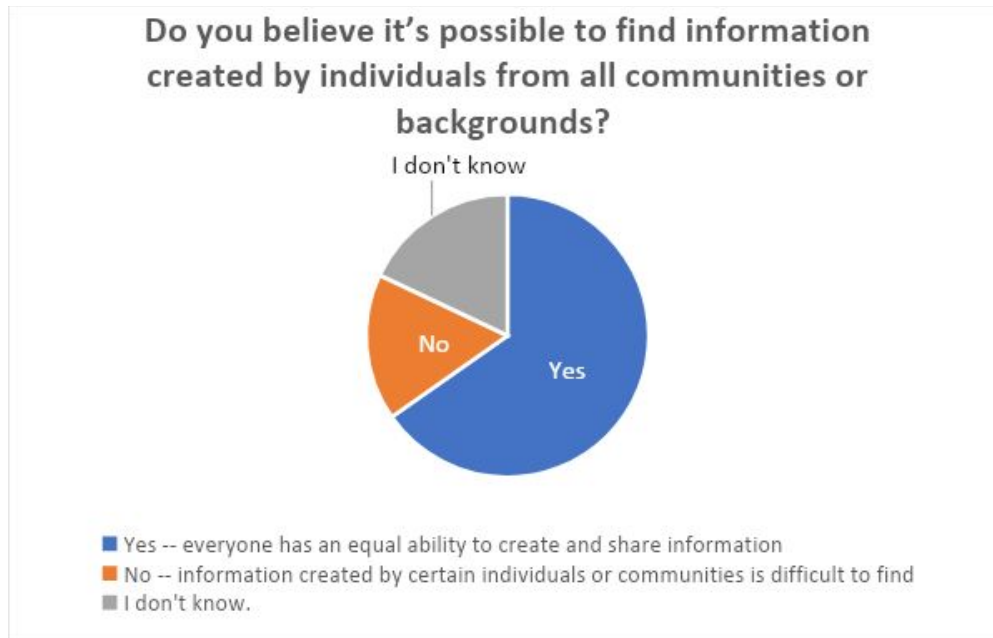


Figure H

When students are asked about their own representation in information, they more easily notice gaps and bias as indicated in Figure I where the largest share of students indicated that “sometimes” (80) or No (53) to the question, “Is the community or background you identify with most portrayed fairly and accurately in news and other media?” This may indicate that students can better see bias when they are its victim but have difficulty noticing it otherwise.

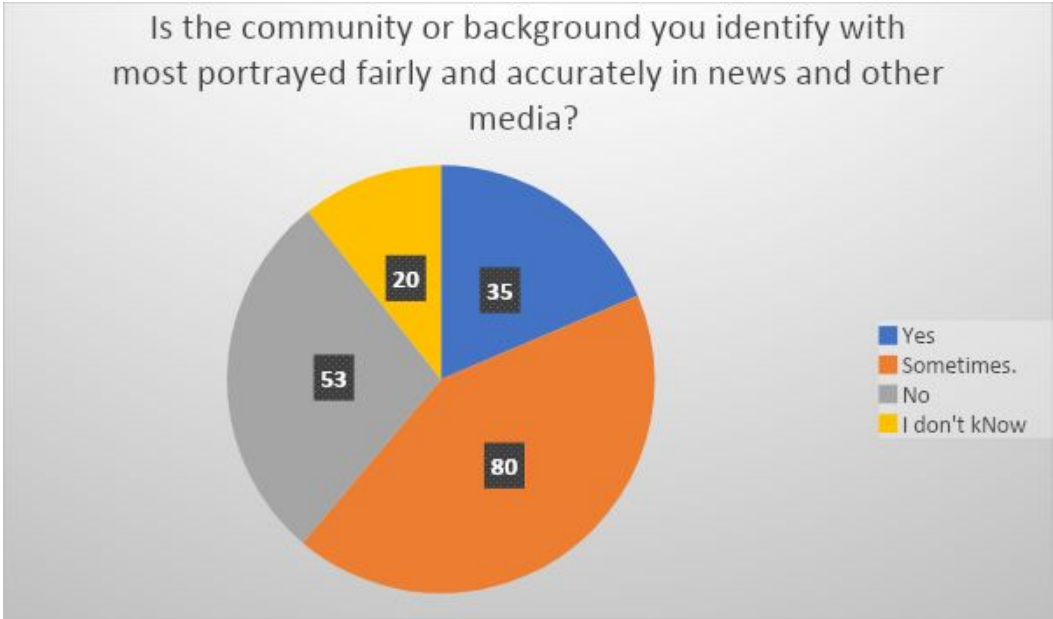


Figure I



### Findings related to plagiarism

There were two separate questions about plagiarism. The first asked, “Do you know enough about plagiarism that you are confident you can avoid it?” (figure J) while the second question which appears later in the survey asks “Are you concerned that you might accidentally plagiarize by either failing to cite properly or not quoting or paraphrasing properly?” (Figure K). The survey indicates that students have high levels confidence around avoiding plagiarism (Yes or mostly = 153/181). In the second question which focuses on anxiety and phrases the discussion of plagiarism into an accidental mistake, a larger number of students admit some uncertainty. The largest category here is “Yes, if I were in a hurry I might make a mistake” (56/225) and an almost equal number (55) describe themselves as having a “solid grasp” on the rules of plagiarism. However the options selected indicate that students worry about plagiarism (37/225), or that they have an understanding of some rules, but not others (see Figure K).

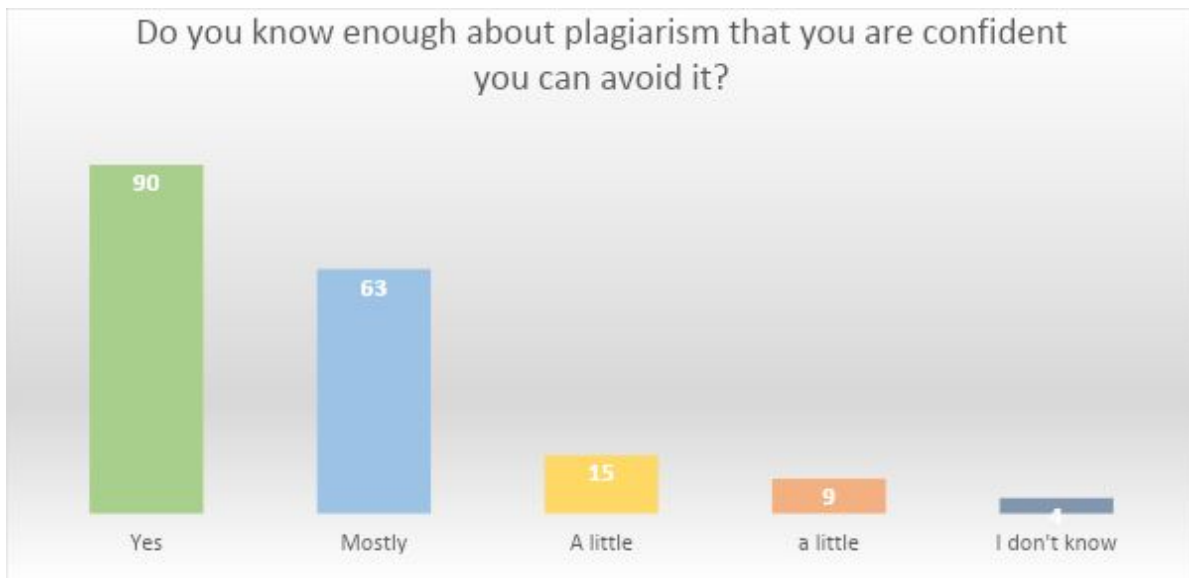


Figure J

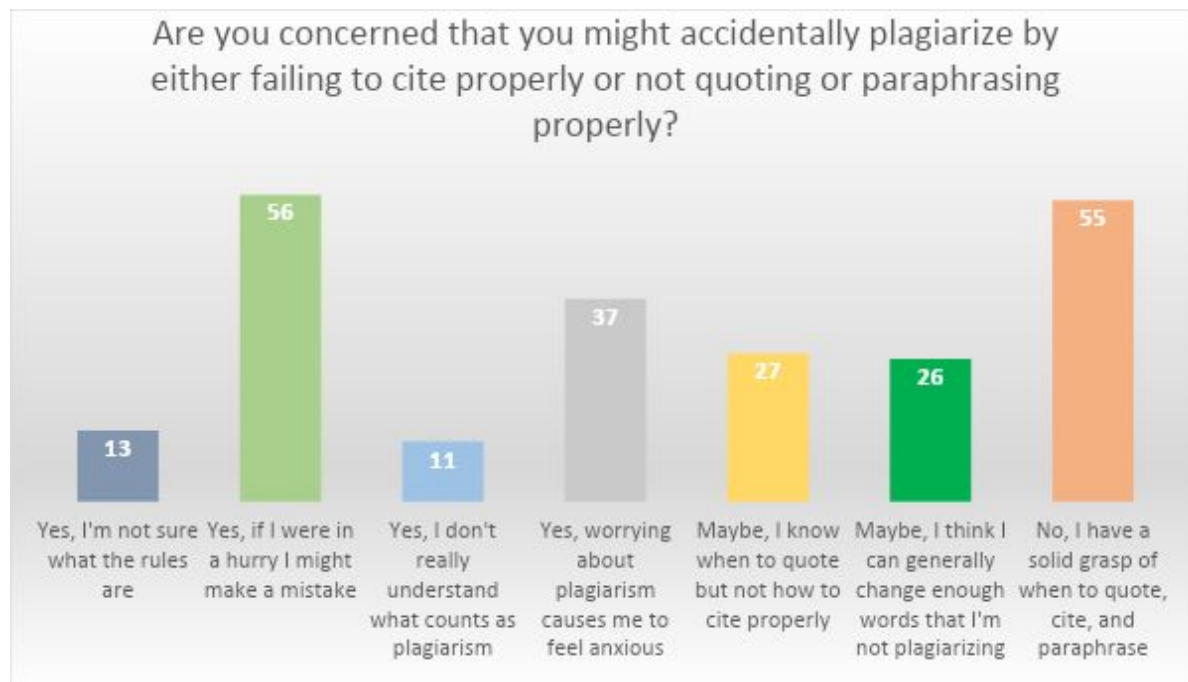


Figure K

### Use of Findings

The findings of this report have informed the development of an information literacy curriculum. The curriculum, which involves learning outcomes mapped both the “The Framework” and academic department outcomes, targets particular courses for information literacy instruction. The curriculum is incorporating elements of critical information literacy, creating space for students to explore personal experience as knowledge, and is more directly teaching and scaffolding citation education. As a result of this organization of the library department’s curriculum, the English dept is currently (as of December 2020) proposing an English 101 information literacy requirement in addition to the existing requirement in English 102.

These findings have also been used to communicate with the Oakton faculty to help them better understand how students relate to information and the scope of information literacy work. The findings were presented at a workshop during Fall 2020 Orientation week which was attended by several college faculty.

### Next Steps and Other Results

The information literacy curriculum is still under development and will continue. Additionally, we have a plan to provide a professional development learning opportunity for our librarians on the topic of critical information literacy which will take the place of an online self-paced course in the 2021-22 academic year.

### Additional Reflections

While many of these findings are likely to be reflected in literature about students' use of information, having locally-sourced information establishes greater credibility of its importance to the campus community.

## **Bibliography**

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## **Appendix A**

### **Survey Questions**

- 1. Please provide your B-Number**
- 2. Which of the following are truest for you, based on your own experience? (check no more than two)?**
  - a. Research is mostly about locating good sources
  - b. Research is mostly about answering a question
  - c. Research is mostly about summarizing and reporting
  - d. Research is mostly a way to learn something new about something I care about
  - e. Research is mostly about completing steps in a school assignment
- 3. Do you expect to have assignments in college that provide an opportunity to look for information about ideas or issues you care about?**
  - a. Yes, I hope to be guided by my interest most of the time
  - b. Yes, I hope to be guided by my interest sometimes
  - c. No, I don't expect it, but I would welcome the opportunity
  - d. No, I expect to look for information based on my professor's instructions and topic
- 4. When searching for resources for a research project, which of the following places are you likely to consult: (check all that apply)**
  - a. Oakton Library databases
  - b. Course textbook
  - c. Library catalog to find books
  - d. Oakton librarian
  - e. Public librarian
  - f. High school librarian
  - g. Friend/family member
  - h. Professor

- i. Google/other internet search engine to find websites
  - j. Wikipedia
  - k. YouTube /other internet search engine to find videos
  - l. Other
5. In considering your answer above, which are you *most likely* to consult? (choose top three)
- a. Oakton Library databases
  - b. Course textbook
  - c. Library catalog to find books
  - d. Oakton librarian
  - e. Public librarian
  - f. High school librarian
  - g. Friend/family member
  - h. Professor
  - i. Google/other internet search engine to find websites
  - j. Wikipedia
  - k. YouTube /other internet search engine to find videos
  - l. Other
6. If you wanted to learn more about the topic *teenage immigrants to the United States*, which of the following sources would you trust to provide accurate information?
- a. Interview/conversation with friend or family that's experienced this
  - b. Scholarly article or book by an expert who has studied people with this experience
  - c. A book written by someone who's had this experience
  - d. A museum exhibit that documents this experience
  - e. Newspaper article about someone who's had this experience
  - f. A reference article in an encyclopedia about immigration
7. For this question,
- Your research topic is *teenage immigrants to the United States*.
  - You are particularly interested in psychological effects and self-identity.
  - You would like to hear stories from people who have had this experience.
- How would you *most likely* seek out this information?**Check no more than two**
- i. Interview/conversation with friend or family that's experienced this
  - ii. Talk to friends/family
  - iii. Look for newspaper articles (online or in print) where people with this experience are interviewed
  - iv. Conduct a Google (or other search engine) search for websites
  - v. Conduct a YouTube (or other search engine) search for videos
  - vi. Search for academic articles where a researcher interviewed people with this experience

vii. Other

**8. Rank the choices below based on the most trustworthy/accurate to the least.**

- a. Interview/conversation with friend or family that's experienced this
- b. Scholarly article or book by an expert who has studied people with this experience
- c. A book written by someone who's had this experience
- d. A museum exhibit that documents this experience
- e. Newspaper article about someone who's had this experience
- f. A reference article in an encyclopedia about immigration

**9. What is the most important factor in considering someone an expert on the topic of anorexia (an emotional disorder characterized by an obsessive desire to lose weight by refusing to eat)**

- a. Personal experience - they are currently or have been diagnosed as anorexic
- b. A 4-year college degree in psychology or medicine
- c. Reading books or other material on anorexia
- d. Teaching a college psychology course with a unit on eating disorders
- e. Studying anorexia prevention and publishing these studies in medical or psychology journals
- f. Taking care of a child with anorexia -- taking them to appointments, speaking to medical professionals etc

**10. If you were assigned a research paper on a topic with which you are unfamiliar, what would you do first to learn background information on this topic?**

- a. Interview/conversation with friend or family that had knowledge of the topic
- b. Research article or book written by an expert who has studied the topic
- c. A book written by someone who's personally experienced something related to the topic
- d. A museum exhibit that documents the knowledge and experience of the topic
- e. Newspaper article or news website article about the topic
- f. A reference article in an encyclopedia about the topic
- g. Wikipedia
- h. YouTube or other media resource

**11. If you have a strong opinion on a topic and are assigned to research it, would you (check no more than three)**

- a. Seek out background information that informs me of multiple opinions or perspectives on the issue
- b. Seek out resources that help me provide evidence for my opinion
- c. Seek out resources that provide evidence for an alternative opinion
- d. Avoid resources that provide evidence of my opinion
- e. Avoid resources that provide evidence of an alternative opinion

**12. After you complete an intensive research project and have learned a great deal about a new issue, do you (check all that apply)**

- a. Submit it for a grade and then forget about it
- b. Wonder how you might use this knowledge in another class or project
- c. Discuss what you learned with family and friends
- d. Continue to follow information about this topic or otherwise remain interested

**13. Do you know enough about plagiarism that you are confident you can avoid it?**

- a. Yes
- b. Mostly
- c. A little
- d. No
- e. I don't know

**14. Do you take measures to keep your personal information private online?**

- a. No -- online privacy is not important to me
- b. No -- I don't think my personal information is valuable to others
- c. No -- I don't think I'm giving my personal information to anyone
- d. Somewhat -- I don't put anything online that could affect future job or educational prospects
- e. Yes -- I limit what I put online including photos and personal information, on both websites and social media and my social media accounts are not completely public
- f. Yes -- I avoid putting **any** personal information online including photos, filling out online forms etc.

**15. What kinds of information do you think advertisers collect through your online activity and use of electronic devices?**

**16. Do you believe it's possible to find information created by individuals from all communities or backgrounds?**

- a. Yes -- everyone has an equal ability to create and share information
- b. No -- information created by certain individuals or communities is difficult to find
  - i. comments

**17. Is the community or background you identify with most portrayed fairly and accurately in news and other media?**

- a. Yes
- b. Sometimes
- c. No

Comments

**18. What do you believe the library can do to help you become more knowledgeable about something you care about?**

**19. Do you believe the Oakton library will prepare you for your future at your career, in your life, or at another school?**

- a. Yes
- b. Maybe
- c. No
- d. I don't know

**20. Are you concerned that you might accidentally plagiarize by either failing to cite properly or not quoting properly?**

- a. Yes, I'm not sure what the rules are
- b. Yes, if I were in a hurry I might make a mistake
- c. Yes, I don't really understand what counts as plagiarism
- d. Yes, worrying about plagiarism causes me to feel anxious
- e. Maybe, I know when to quote but not how to cite properly
- f. Maybe, I think I can generally change enough words that I'm not plagiarizing
- g. No, I have a solid grasp of when to quote, cite and paraphrase
- h. Other?