Rebecca Davis

Factors Affect University Students' Information Literacy Competency

When undergraduate and graduate students are assigned academic assignments, there are numerous sources available for them to use. Often, the sources are chosen because they are easy to find or have been used in the past. The Principle of Least Effort states that people will naturally choose the path that requires minimum effort. That is, information seeking stops as soon as the minimally acceptable results are found. Students are likely to use Web resources more often because they are easier to use than library databases.

The purpose of this study is two-fold: to investigate the status of information literacy competency of university students; to identify factors affecting information literacy competencies. This study will be conducted at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville where the researcher is a doctoral student in information science.

There are numerous pieces of literature available about information literacy and university students. Most of the literature searches for ways to improve information literacy competency among students by evaluating student searching habits on the web. The library is often seen as the place the bridge the gap between students and information literacy.

Learning styles may be another factor that affects information literacy competency. There could be some students that learn more by working collaboratively in groups. Some students may learn more by using the cognitive constructivist approach and others may learn more by using the zone of proximal development (ZPD) which is tied to collaborative learning. Because there are so many different types of learning styles this could have a major impact on a students' information literacy competency.

This study will address the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent, do students' demographics affect their information literacy competencies?

Q1a. To what extent, does educational level affect information literacy competencies?

Q1b. Does gender affect information literacy competencies?

Q1c. To what extent, does age affect information literacy competencies?

RQ2. How do students' perceptions of library importance affect their level of information literacy?

RQ3: How does learning style affect information literacy competency?

This study will adopt a survey method to collect data online. A call for participation will be emailed to both undergraduate and graduate students through student listservs. Students will be invited to fill out an online survey voluntarily. The preliminary questionnaire is designed and will be tested before data collection. A Form A IRB will be submitted for approval prior to data collection.

The first few questions are about demographics such as age, status, and gender. The Likert scale questions were developed because this is the best way to measure the response to those questions. The rest of the questions are asking about whether or not students know what a journal is, what a journal citation is and what web resources they use along with if they find the library to be useful. These are all multiple choice questions and there is only one right answer. After students have completed the survey they will receive a number. This number will be

needed for a drawing because they will be eligible to win a gift card for $40, $35, $30, $25, $20, $15 and $10 from Starbucks.