

# Resistance to Information Literacy: potential causes for undergraduate university students

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## HAVE YOU HEARD THIS BEFORE:

**“I HAVE NO IDEA WHY I HAVE TO TAKE A RESEARCH COURSE. I KNOW THIS STUFF ALREADY.”**

### WHAT WE KNOW

#### BACKGROUND

American Library Association (ALA) definition of information literacy (IL): to be information literate, a person must be **able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.**

Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education.

The ACRL stated that all information literate students should:

1. Determines the nature and extent of the information needed.
2. Accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.
3. Evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.
4. Individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.
5. Understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

CAUL (Council of Australian University Librarians) added that student should recognize IL as a **lifelong learning skill.**

#### PREVIOUS RESEARCH

- Students improve when taught IL (Chevilotte 2010)
- Students resist IL instruction:
  - Observations
  - IL literature Badke (2010); Ivanitskaya, DuFord, Craig & Casey (2008); Gross & Latham (2009)
  - Students themselves
- Students perceive themselves to be good at research however they barely rate as **beginner.** Gross & Latham (2007); Mittermeyer (2005); Maughan (2001); Kruger & Dunning (1999)

### WHAT WE THINK

Because they grew up with a computer students are technologically savvy and therefore think they are good at research



I grew up with a piano which means I am a virtuoso!

#### PREVIOUS ASSUMPTIONS

- In the face of students confidence in their own ability we have been tempted to believe our students when they say “we already know how to do research!”
- Students simply need to be “better” motivated
- Students refuse to go further once they reach a “knowledge plateau”
- Students do not understand the term IL and cannot decode it once faced with it.

### WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW

Take a step back



#### KEY QUESTIONS

1. What are the cognitive factors for students’ resistance to information literacy?
2. Is the most frequent cognitive factors found linked to demographical factors, like students age, gender and status (returning or new students and international or Canadian students)?

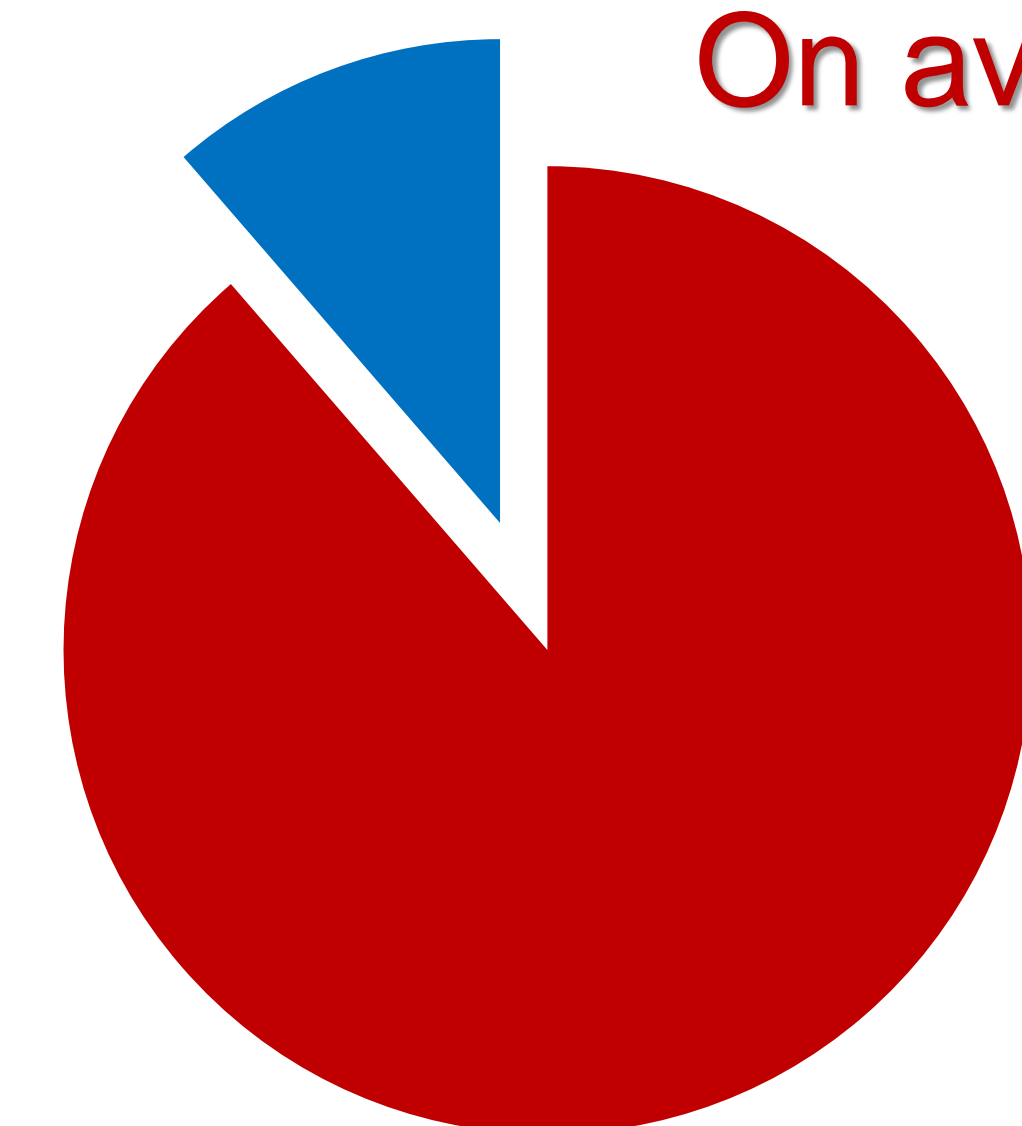
#### FRAMEWORK

We know that students resist IL teaching, but we are still lacking the reasons behind this refusal. The cognitivist paradigm states that human actions are a consequence of thinking i.e. when we do something we know why we are doing it. We need to find out these reasons to create effective IL instruction.

#### METHODOLOGY

To answer these questions the author has broken this project in 5 phases.

- Phase 1:** systematic literature review
- Phase 2:** Conduct semi-structure interviews to obtain an exhaustive list of cognitive factors for students’ resistance to IL with librarians and professors teaching IL and volunteer undergraduate students randomly selected from McGill Faculty of Education.
- Phase 3:** Analyse the answers of phase 2 to create a questionnaire to answer question 2.
- Phase 4:** Distribute questionnaire to a randomly selected large number of undergraduate students at McGill University.
- Phase 5:** Analyse data and write.



**On average 75% of first year undergraduate students failed IL competencies evaluation**

The research question: When entering the first year of undergraduate study, how information literate are the students?

Over 3,000 participants returned a mail questionnaire representing a response rate of 56.9%.

The results: for 11 of the 20 variables under study, the highest rate of correct answers provided was less than 36%. For these variables, the rate of correct responses ranged from 12.7% to 35.8%.

Mittermeyer (2005)



#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Once we recognize and classify these barriers we could try to find appropriate solution to counteract them. These findings would improve the design of our learning interventions and contribute to an increase in students’ participation and motivation in IL instruction. More research on IL needs to be done to inform the creation of tools, programs and techniques, applied by teachers and librarians to increase the number of students who will enter the workforce equipped with the lifelong learning skills of information literacy.