

Toward an Information Literate Society

Results from a 2016 ProQuest Survey



“We’re doing the best we can, but we always aspire to do more,”

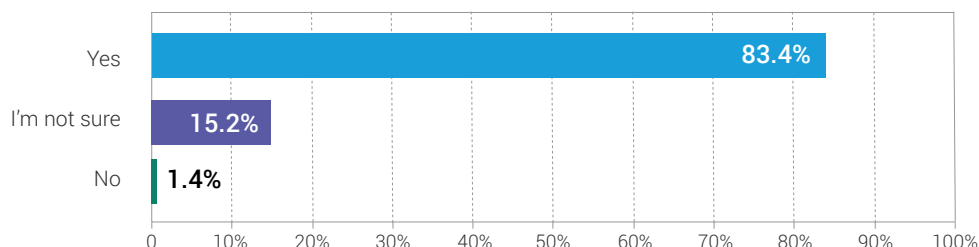
shares one librarian, discussing the information literacy instruction provided by the library to its users. While librarians seem to widely share this “do more” attitude regarding information literacy instruction, it’s clear that teaching library users about information literacy and its importance is not always easy or successful. This survey, featuring insights from 217 librarians from university, community college, high school and public libraries in North America, explores:

- The perceived importance of information literacy among librarians and their users
- Current methods utilized by librarians to help their users gain information literacy skills
- Ways in which librarians feel they could improve their information literacy instruction

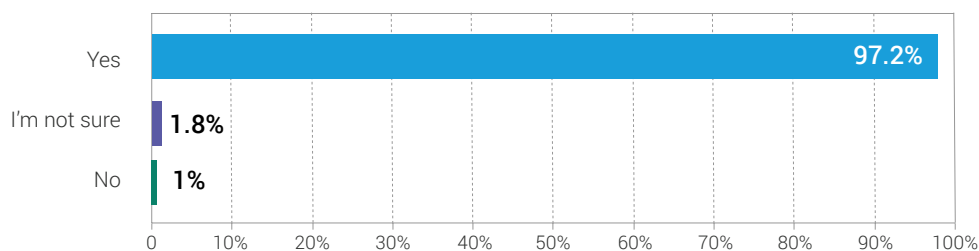
Information Literacy and Student Success

Librarians surveyed recognize that information literacy is important to the future successes of their users. *“I see students with low information literacy struggling to understand and complete assignments,”* shares one librarian. *“Students who possess [information literacy] skills approach these assignments with more confidence and creativity and achieve more success.”* 83.4% of those surveyed believe that information literacy affects college graduation rates, and a tremendous 97.2% believe that information literacy contributes to success in the workforce. *“No matter which field you enter,”* explains one respondent, *“you have to be able to discern reliable versus unreliable sources to do your work [and] be able to evaluate content you come across in order to deem whether or not it’s important.”*

Do you believe that information literacy affects college graduation rates?

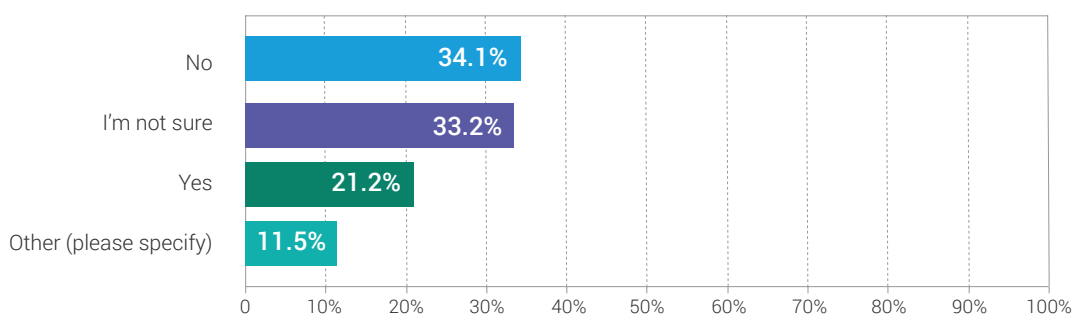


Do you believe that information literacy contributes to success in the workforce?



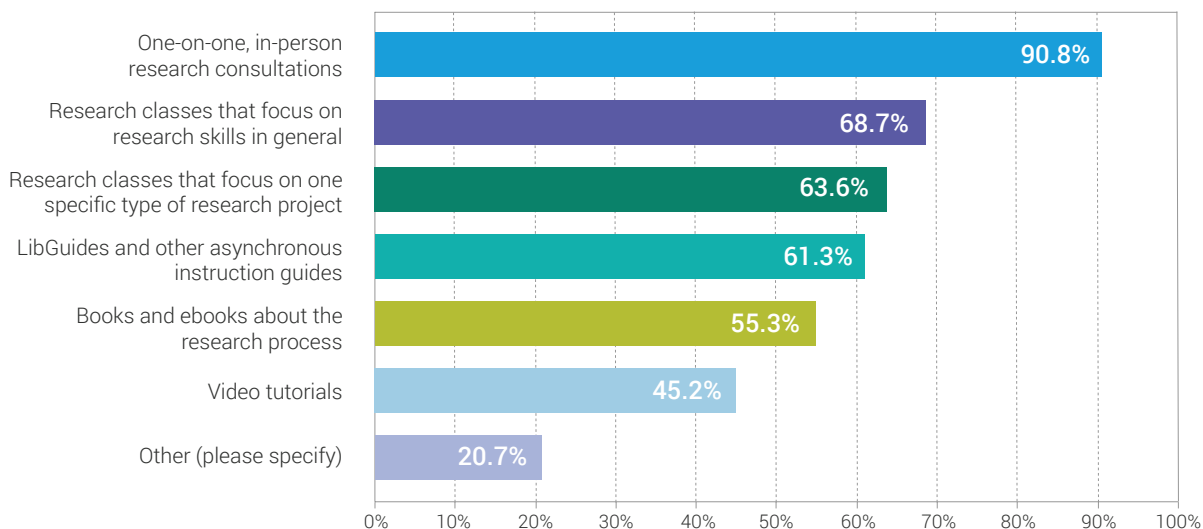
Yet these same librarians do not believe this recognition of the value of information literacy extends to their users – only 21.2% of librarians surveyed believe that their users recognize information literacy’s effect on lifelong success. To combat this perceived lack of recognition among users that information literacy impacts lifelong success, librarians engage in a number of techniques to help their users gain or improve their existing information literacy skills. 90.8% of librarians surveyed rely on one-on-one, in-person research consultations to reinforce information literacy skills. Other methods and tools include research classes that focus on general research skills (68.7%) or a specific type of research (63.5%), LibGuides and other asynchronous instruction guides (61.3%), books and ebooks about the research process (55.3%), and video tutorials (45.2%).

In your opinion, do your users recognize information literacy’s effect on lifelong success?



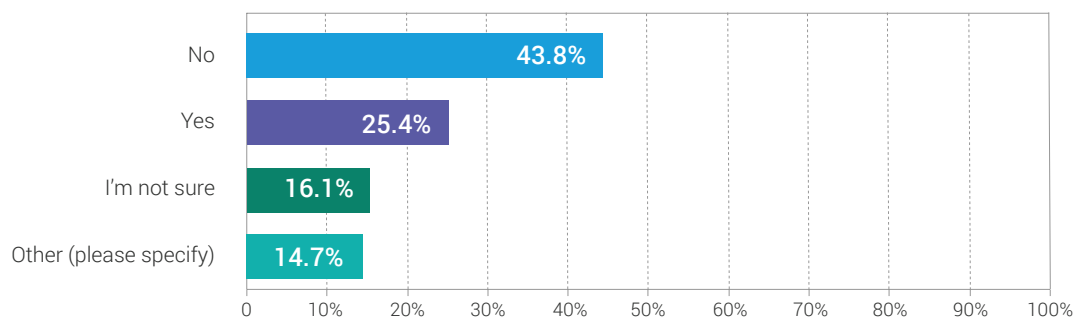
How does your library help users gain information literacy skills?

Select all that apply.

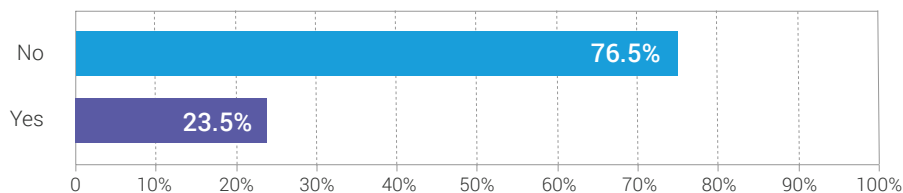


Despite these attempts to improve the information literacy of their users, only 25.4% of librarians surveyed feel that their library supports users' information literacy instruction needs as much as it should. 76.5% of the librarians surveyed work in libraries that do not offer a specific information literacy platform to their users, and only 26.3% feel that their library's reference collection plays a large role in supporting information literacy instruction. This is interesting in that authoritative content from the library has been seen as one way to drive students away from open web information that lacks credibility. The librarians surveyed seem to be moving away from this approach as a key way to teach students how to evaluate information, one of the core information literacy skills. *"Ideally, we'd be provided with additional time for genuine collaboration on research skills and projects with discipline specific teachers,"* said one librarian when asked about how he would like to augment his library's information literacy instruction.

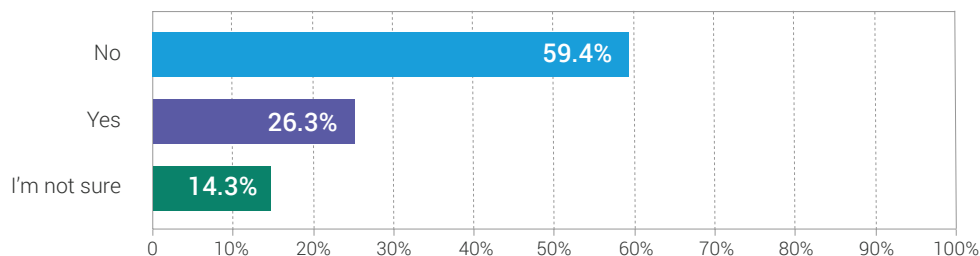
Do you feel that your library supports users' information literacy instruction needs as much as it should?



Do you offer a specific information literacy-promoting platform to your users?

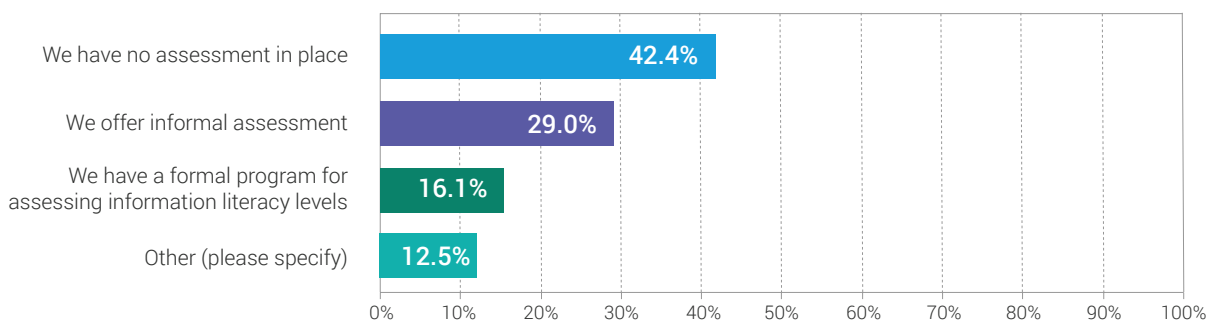


Do you feel that your library's reference collection plays a large role in supporting information literacy instruction?



Librarians' concerns over how to best support their users' information literacy needs are exacerbated by their inability to accurately assess their users' levels of information literacy; only 16.1% of librarians surveyed have a formal program for assessing information literacy levels, and 42.4% have no assessment in place. Discussing a need for more assessment and data, one librarian feels *"there are some needs that don't get met, because we don't know about them or don't understand them very well from a student perspective."*

How do you assess your users' levels of information literacy?



While a number of respondents believe implementing or improving assessment tools could allow their libraries to better meet users' information literacy instruction needs, those surveyed already have a number of other ideas on how to achieve this aim. For one, many librarians believe that by better integrating information literacy within and across existing curricula would boost their users' information literacy skills. Similarly, many respondents feel that the answer lies in working more closely with faculty and other instructors - learning about their needs, educating them on the importance of information literacy and the resources the library offers, and encouraging them to include more research-based projects in their coursework. *"We are badly in need of an integrated presence in the curriculum,"* explains one respondent. Another believes that *"partnering with faculty – and showing faculty the need for [information literacy] – is the number one thing we need to change. If faculty are on board, they will bring their students – we have evidence of this."* Yet another respondent feels the library needs to *"encourage faculty to create assignments that specifically address the need for information literacy skills."* Other ideas for how to better meet the information literacy instruction needs of library users include: developing an information literacy curriculum; adding or improving existing online tutorials and resources; integrating information literacy instruction into the library's strategic plan; increasing the number of librarians and library staff; increasing face to face instruction; and increasing user access to computers, E readers, tablets, and other electronic devices.

The results from this 2016 survey share insight into how individual libraries are making the case for information literacy at their institutions, but they also highlight the overarching approach that will help us move closer to becoming a more information literate society as a whole: integrating information literacy instruction beyond the library, a task that requires the support of faculty members, teachers and others that students and researchers of all levels interact with on a daily basis. A majority of librarians surveyed stated that their library's accrediting agency or governing body covers information literacy in their standards, making information literacy a key goal for librarians. But librarians can only do so much alone.

How ProQuest Supports Information Literacy Instruction

ProQuest's ebook subscriptions, specifically its Academic Complete, College Complete, Public Libraries Complete and Schools & Educators Complete as well as its Reference Ebooks Subscriptions, were developed specifically to drive the development of information literacy skills. These collections provide unlimited access to reliable, scholarly sources so authoritative content is as convenient to find and use as information openly available on the web.

Librarians need more than just quality resources to teach researchers how to find, evaluate and use authoritative information, though, as emphasized by the surprising finding that reference content is not a main part of their approach to teaching information literacy. That's why along with offering the largest and most diverse selection of digitized content — from journals to videos and newspapers to working papers — we offer **Research Companion**, our award-winning cloud-based information literacy solution for researchers and educators. Aligned both to ACRL Information Literacy and Common Core English Language Arts standards, Research Companion provides a framework and foundation for information literacy instruction.

Featuring more than 80 short videos that are organized into nine Learning Modules, Research Companion addresses questions like, *"How do I choose a topic?"* and *"How do I evaluate sources?"* And, various levels of "pre" and "post" assessment questions make the overall experience more interactive. Research Companion was built to help students do more effective scholarly research while allowing educators to measure learning and identify gaps in comprehension. Research Companion can be effortlessly incorporated into the researcher's workflow to get to answers and context quickly—and it provides librarians and educators the tools and resources to:

- Prepare high school and community college students for university-level research
- Help undergrad and graduate students produce better papers faster

[Check out this video](#) for a quick overview of the power of offering your researchers a research companion and contact your ProQuest representative to learn more about how ProQuest can help support your information literacy instruction.