

NSSE Experiences with Information Literacy - Key Takeaways

Introduction A group of 98 seniors at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) took the NSSE Experiences with Information Literacy Topical Module. This module, updated for NSSE 2024, was developed in collaboration with college and university librarians from the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL). Items focus on students' use of information sources, research-based inquiry, and experiences traditionally associated with research libraries. The survey was administered through Qualtrics and consisted of questions related to students' experiences with information literacy during the current school year. Participation was solicited via an email campaign to a sample of 500 students, and the sample was representative of the Spring 2024 LMU full-time, degree-seeking senior population by race/ethnicity and gender. The sample represents students with a class level of senior and is not differentiated by those who began as first-time first-year students and transfer students.

Figure 1: Demographic Breakdown of Students Taking NSSE Survey

WHAT IS YOUR SCHOOL/COLLEGE?

College of Business 19
College of Communication & Fine Arts 11
School of Film & Television 14
College of Liberal Arts 23
College of Science & Engineering 14
Other 4

WHAT IS YOUR RACE/ETHNICITY?

American Indian or Alaska Native 0
Asian 14
Black or African American 4
Hispanic or Latino 17
Multi-Race (Two or More Races) 9
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander 0
U.S. Nonresident 0
White 38
Race and Ethnicity Unknown 3
Other 0

WHAT IS YOUR GENDER IDENTITY?

Male 24
Female 57
Non-binary/ third gender 3
Transgender 0
Other 1

Survey Results

During the current school year, students reported the following:

- 58.16% of students often or very often completed an assignment using an information source other than required course readings.
- 58.16% of students often or very often completed an assignment using a library's physical or digital collection of articles, books, or journals.
- 50% of students often or very often looked for an information source that was cited in something they read.
- 42.70% of students often or very often evaluated an information source by conducting additional research.
- 36.73% of students often or very often changed the focus of a paper or project based on information found while researching the topic.
- 32.59% of students often or very often identified information that was biased, misleading, or deceptive.
- 31.46% of students often or very often decided not to use an information source in a course assignment due to its questionable quality.
- 19.10% of students often or very often coached or mentored a classmate or peer with research for their course assignment.
- 16.85% of students often or very often consulted with an expert as an information source (on campus, in community).
- 12.24% of students often or very often received help from the library.
- 11.24% of students often or very often referred to an information source found on social media for an assignment.

Students reported the following when asked about their plans before graduation:

- 60.23% of students plan to or have used library resources for a non-academic task.
- 40.91% of students plan to or have presented, published, or publicly shared the results of their research, scholarly activity, or creative work to an audience beyond their classmates.
- 36.36% of students plan to or have attended a campus-sponsored session about conducting research.

Students reported their institution contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas:

- 69.77% of students felt their institution contributed quite a bit or very much to keeping an open mind when encountering opposing perspectives during their research.
- 60.46% of students felt their institution contributed quite a bit or very much to their understanding of the research and writing styles or practices of their major or field of study.
- 51.17% of students felt their institution contributed quite a bit or very much to developing information and research management strategies.
- 50% of students felt their institution contributed quite a bit or very much to developing their research skills to identify information for personal reasons.

Statistical Significance: LMU Demographics

- An independent samples t-test revealed students who took a Rhetorical Arts course consulted with an expert as an information source (on campus, in community) less frequently ($M = 1.69$, $SD = .786$) than those who did not take a Rhetorical Arts course ($M=2.13$, $SD = .741$, $t(84) = -2.358$, $p = .022$).
- An independent samples t-test revealed students who took a Rhetorical Arts course used library resources for a non-academic task (leisure reading, researching jobs, watching films, etc.) more frequently ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.095$) than those who did not take a Rhetorical Arts course ($M=3.29$, $SD = 1.398$, $t(84) = 2.378$, $p = .010$).
- Furthermore, non-transfer students ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.088$) reported using library resources for non-academic tasks more frequently than transfer students ($M=3.05$, $SD = 1.393$), $t(84) = 3.076$, $p = .003$. The majority of transfer students in the survey (58%) have not taken the First Year Seminar (FFYS) course, and 84% have not taken the Rhetorical Arts course, suggesting they may be missing opportunities to develop information literacy skills through these courses. The transfer student population in the survey was diverse, with significant representation from Asian (37%), white (26%), and Hispanic/Latino (26%) students, highlighting the need for culturally responsive approaches to support their information literacy development. Notably, 26% of transfer students are also first-generation students, and 42% of first-generation students are transfer students, indicating a potential overlap in the support needs of these two groups. While lower participation rates in FFYS and Rhetorical Arts courses may partly contribute to transfer students' lower performance on certain information literacy measures, other factors, such as the unique challenges they face in transitioning to university-level research and navigating academic expectations, likely play a role as well.

Recommendations for the Future

1. Promote library services, such as the research chat service, more actively to students, emphasizing their value in supporting information literacy and research needs. While students may not require library assistance for every class or assignment, it is crucial to ensure they are aware of the support available to them when they do engage in research-intensive tasks.
2. Provide more opportunities for students to present, publish, or publicly share the results of their research, scholarly activity, or creative work to an audience beyond their classmates, as only 40.91% of students reported having done or planning to do so.
3. Continue to require Rhetorical Arts courses and encourage partnerships with the library, as students who took these courses used library resources for non-academic tasks more frequently than those who did not take the course. However, also investigate why students who took Rhetorical Arts courses consulted with experts as an information source less frequently than those who did not take the course.

4. Provide targeted support for transfer students to encourage their use of library resources for non-academic tasks, as they reported doing this less frequently than non-transfer students.
5. Encourage a culture of peer mentorship and collaboration in research by providing opportunities for students to share their knowledge and skills with classmates. While 19.10% of students reported coaching or mentoring a peer with research often or very often, there is potential to further enhance this aspect of the research experience.
6. Promote the value of consulting with experts as part of the research process, highlighting the insights and perspectives they can offer. With 16.85% of students reporting that they often or very often sought expert advice, there is an opportunity to further emphasize the benefits of engaging with knowledgeable individuals on campus and in the community.