How Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of Academic Librarians Can Inform Innovative Teaching

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How Undergraduate Students’ Perceptions of Academic Librarians Can Inform Innovative Teaching
by Jody Fagan, Hillary Ostermiller, Elizabeth Price, and Lara Sapp

Who Students Think Librarians Are

Purpose: To better understand how undergraduate students perceive librarians at James Madison University. Of the 19,549 full-time students enrolled Fall 2017, 513 responded. Survey consisted of 6 open-ended questions and 20 closed-ended questions

- The duties students think we perform most frequently:
  - Giving general directional help
  - Lending books, films, and equipment to users
  - Helping users to find books

- When asked if they could tell which workers in JMU Libraries are librarians, 47% said Yes, 30% said No, and 23% said Not Sure

- 65% said they never ask to speak to a librarian

How Often Respondents Consulted Their School / College Librarian

- Over 40% of students reported “never” consulting their college librarian

Skills Students Perceive as Valuable to Them or to the University

- Why Students Think We Became Librarians (n=440)

- Humanities & Social Sciences

- Business

- Health Sciences

- STEM

- Resources and other things academic librarians do in K-5

- Why Students Ask Librarians for Help

- Other Things to Keep in Mind

Survey data suggests that students think:

- You only have a bachelor’s degree.
- Your education focused on English, Literature, and History classes.
- You are an expert in citation styles and formatting.
- Books are central to your work, but you aren’t a total luddite because technology plays a role in the modern library.
- The Dewey Decimal System is the only classification system.

Tip: Consider preparing an elevator speech to help students understand what you do and how you can assist them. See handout for examples.