Sustainable Assessment: Using Google Forms for Library Instruction

Shonn Haren
Instruction & Research Services Librarian
Wichita State University

Melissa Mallon
Director of Peabody Education Library/Director of Liaison & Instruction Services
Vanderbilt University

The Challenge

In order to avoid the printing of a large number of assessment sheets and then manually record the results, we created this Google form, which was then embedded directly into the LibGuide created for this course.

The Tool

Following instruction on how to determine if an article on Google Scholar was peer-reviewed, students were invited to find an article on the search engine and, following the prompts on the form, determine for themselves if the article was peer-reviewed.

The (Real Time) Raw Data

Students required very little explanation on how to use the form. Results were tabulated in real-time in the Google Spreadsheet shown below. While real-time analysis of the results was not necessary, and therefore not attempted in this course, the availability of this option may prove useful for situations in which real-time, interactive assessment is required.

The Results

Overall, students during both semesters were able to successfully identify peer-reviewed sources using the criteria they had been given during instruction, with relatively low numbers (8 in either semester) reporting uncertainty regarding the peer-reviewed nature of an article based on the available evidence.

While the overall results for determining whether or not a result on Google Scholar was peer-reviewed remained largely consistent across both semesters, the reasons cited for making that determination varied greatly from Fall 2014 to Spring 2015, with the later semester recording higher levels of responses for all criteria except “The Journal’s Website lists a review board”. As this question allowed for multiple answers, it appears that more students during the Spring Semester cited multiple criteria in justification for their determination of peer-review than their classmates in the Fall Semester.

The Benefits

The Suggested Guidelines

➔ Tie to learning outcomes for instruction session AND course outcomes
➔ Set clear expectations for the assessment (e.g. “find 3 peer-reviewed articles”) 
➔ Encourage critical thinking (e.g. “How can you tell that the article is peer-reviewed?”)
➔ Have students leave their contact information for following up after class
➔ Use data to guide changes for future classes

The Concerns

Lack of technology

Not using authentically

Ease of data collection & visualization ... Embed in CMS or LibGuides

... and assessment collaboration

Psychology 311 at Wichita State University:

- A required course for Psych majors in one of the largest undergraduate programs at WSU.
- Due to the size of enrollment for this class, students are broken up into multiple lab groups, which meet at various times during the week.
- Beginning in Fall Semester 2014, a librarian was invited to each of this course’s discussion sections to introduce students to databases in order to assist them in creating their literature reviews.
- The requested instruction would include tips for finding peer-reviewed articles in Google Scholar.
- So how do you provide assessment to a large number of students spread out among 7 lab groups, meeting at different times, collect and organize their answers and analyze the results without cutting down a forest in the process?

The Concerns

Lack of technology

Not using authentically

Ease of data collection & visualization ... Embed in CMS or LibGuides

... and assessment collaboration

Psychology 311 at Wichita State University:

- A required course for Psych majors in one of the largest undergraduate programs at WSU.
- Due to the size of enrollment for this class, students are broken up into multiple lab groups, which meet at various times during the week.
- Beginning in Fall Semester 2014, a librarian was invited to each of this course’s discussion sections to introduce students to databases in order to assist them in creating their literature reviews.
- The requested instruction would include tips for finding peer-reviewed articles in Google Scholar.
- So how do you provide assessment to a large number of students spread out among 7 lab groups, meeting at different times, collect and organize their answers and analyze the results without cutting down a forest in the process?