We consider the effect of personal research sessions and research method instruction in the library on undergraduate success. Put differently, do library interventions lead to higher grade point averages or to higher retention and graduation rates in first-generation students? Based on our experiences and case studies from the literature, we present examples of collaboration between offices of student support and the Office of Institutional Research.

**Annotated List of Case Studies:**

- **College of the Holy Cross – holycross.edu**
  Information from https://apply.ala.org/aia/docs/project/13787
  First year students & source selection: Assessing personal research sessions in Montserrat

Because Montserrat is the beginning of a rigorous writing component of a Holy Cross education, we wanted to determine if the libraries’ Personal Research Sessions (PRS) are a part of students’ success in this area. The Director of Assessment was enthusiastic to help both team librarians with forming the research question, crafting the rubric, and analyzing the data. The Director of Montserrat was key in identifying faculty appropriate for participating in our project. Our close collaboration culminated in a successful project both in results and in organization and teamwork. We created a sustainable program of personal research sessions contributing positively to student writing projects, strengthened relationships with Assessment and Montserrat, and developed a structure with which to assess next steps with other research and instruction programs and with other groups (i.e. upperclassmen).

We learned that our personal research sessions (PRS) do have a statistically significant positive impact on student research papers. We also learned that it is hard for librarians to contribute to our campus’ assessment efforts. But, with new relationships – Assessment and Montserrat – and clear results to share, we are poised to change that.

- **Swarthmore College - swarthmore.edu**
  Information from https://apply.ala.org/aia/docs/project/13933
  Finding the Zones: Communicating Source-Based Evidence in Undergraduate Research

By exploring how undergraduate students communicate evidence in written work, this project aims to identify productive zones of intervention in which librarians and faculty might focus their teaching efforts. In partnership with the Sociology/Anthropology and Educational Studies departments, the
AiA team conducted a rubric-based evaluation of senior theses and group projects. Possible zones of intervention suggested by this analysis include the contextualization of evidence and maintaining student voice while discussing ideas from outside sources.

Our assessment points in the direction of focusing on specific zones of intervention when advising students during the research process. Students find and cite a variety of sources but struggle with how to use them. By framing source use with Joseph Bizup’s BEAM method, one can help students move away from accumulating sources to the point of using sources intentionally, successfully positioning their argument within the framework of existing scholarship.

Arizona State University created a new Critical Thinking course for at-risk freshmen in 2010. We collaborated successfully to build information literacy skills into the course curriculum as well as many levels of student learning assessment. We sought to demonstrate, with data, how the library’s involvement was contributing to the course learning objectives, and whether students who completed the course persisted at a higher rate than their at-risk peers.

The data collected and analyzed for this project show that at-risk students who successfully complete this critical thinking course with an integrated information literacy component: demonstrate increased knowledge of and confidence in their information literacy skills; recognize the value of those particular skills to their current and future academic work; and persist at a higher rate than those who do not take the course.

Eastern Mennonite University

Our project aligns with institutional priorities and needs because increasing retention is listed as a goal in the current strategic plan for the University. Our rationale was that making tutoring more accessible by having it available without an appointment and on the main floor of the library would positively impact student grades and retention.

The library will change as a result of this project by continuing to provide drop-in tutoring services and by exploring new partnerships with student support departments. This project contributes to future assessment activities on campus by laying the foundation for collaborative assessment of new student services. It demonstrates the value of the creative use of library space and will further a culture of assessment in the library.

Illinois Institute of Technology's Paul V. Galvin Library partnered with the Chair of the Retention Task Force, the Director of Housing, and the University’s Director of Assessment to examine whether intensity of library usage affects student success and persistence. The study gathered data generated internally and externally in order to anticipate student expectations, expand services, and develop
collections and access. The study identified library users both physically and online by scanning the campus ID card of users entering the building, as well as those who received instruction, visited the Research Help Office or checked out resources such as laptops or study rooms. We also used server data to view usage of online resources.

It was found that library usage was always accompanied by higher GPA achievement, although reference questions, instruction, and interlibrary loan usage was slight. The surprising overlap of instruction to electronic resource usage deserves further investigation. There is more research to be done, but a lot has been learned about how to improve efforts in doing this type of research.

Murray State University - murraystate.edu
Information from https://apply.ala.org/aia/docs/project/5461
The Relationship between Known Library Use and Student Retention at a Regional Public University

This project was born out of a number of initiatives at Murray State. One of these was the newly established President’s Commission on Retention, tasked with studying the causes of reduced retention rates and recommending solutions. The Libraries built a massive dataset of library use, indicated by: circulations, lab and proxy logins, interlibrary loan, participation in IL instruction, enrollment in an IL course, and visits to the on-site Writing and Comm centers. Controlling for certain demographic data, we then looked for relationships between these indicators of library use and whether students were retained.

Because of this project, we now have a better understanding of how students use our resources. Prior to this project, we were making decisions about collections and instruction based on tally marks of use, and not knowing the depth or breadth of use that was represented. Now we know that we discovered that students who used the library in some way were nearly twice as likely to be retained from one semester to the next than students who didn’t use the library at all.

York University - www.yorku.ca
Information from https://apply.ala.org/aia/docs/project/5309
Impact of Library Usage on Student Success: Exploring New Territories

After reading about university of Wollongong’s project “Discovering the Impact of Library Use and Student Performance”, York University was inspired to conduct a similar project in which we sought to determine whether there is a correlation between library usage and student success. This project was an opportunity to explore new territory in seeking to discover what we could learn about the impact of the library on undergraduate students at York.

The Impact of Library Usage on Student Success project found that there is a positive correlation between library eResource usage and GPA. While the project did not result in data from which we would make changes to library or institutional practices, it does give the library a new way to communicate value. The data from our project offers a new way to illustrate quantitatively how collections contribute to student success, beyond usage numbers which illustrate that what was invested in is being used. Realistically however, more assessment work must be done to uncover other factors that are contributing to student success including other measures of library usage.

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