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Openness in Teaching and Research Best Practices: Initiative Incorporating Information & Digital Literacies in a First Year Composition Syllabus at American University of Nigeria

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Introduction:

Knowledge acquisition, skills building and research are integral parts of academia

DIL should be introduced early to first year composition students to broaden the scope of instruction and prepare them for the rigors of ethical research across disciplines.

Rationale for the collaboration

i. Misconceptions about academic integrity in information usage
ii. Over-reliance of students on the Internet instead of available credible sources at the library
iii. Instruction for first year programs is not research intensive
iv. Student misunderstandings about the research process
v. Weak student reading culture

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DIL Skills Integrated into the First Year Composition Class

Highlights:

i. Understanding the writing process
ii. Integrating library services in academics
iii. Accessing sources
iv. Narrowing the subject matter
v. Retrieving relevant sources
vi. Evaluating sources
vii. Using sources ethically

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Excerpts from a Pretest Survey

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Choose from the best option that fits into the following question

1. Have ever used or have an electronic library in your high school?
   (a). Yes (b). No (c). Not sure
2. Do you think library sources are important to learning and research?
   (a). Yes (b) No (c) Not Sure
3. Where do you start searching for sources for your research paper?
   (a) Google (b) My books (c) Library (d) Ask my friends
4. Which of the following do you use for research in the Library?
   (a) OPAC (b) Databases (c) Open access (d) Library shelf
5. How would you rate your library usage skills?
   (a) High (b). Medium (c). Low (d). Poor
6. In using electronic library for research, I understand the importance keyword search?
   (a) Yes (b) No (c) Not sure
7. Which of the following do you consider a priority when writing a paper?
   (a) Books (b) Journal article (c) Encyclopedia (d) online Wikipedia
8. I assess the quality of any material before I use them for my research paper?
   (a) Yes (b) No (c) Not sure
9. I know that every source I use for my research paper is someone else's intellectual property?
   (a) Yes (b) No (c) Not sure
10. I can cite sources I use for my research papers properly?
    (a) Yes (b) No (c) Not sure

Needs Assessment Survey and Findings

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Have you ever used e-library in high school

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
Yes	1	14	28.57	28.57	28.57
No	2	34	69.39	69.39	97.96
Not sure	3	1	2.04	2.04	100.00
	Total	49	100.0	100.0	

Can you cite sources properly?

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
Yes	1	7	14.29	14.29	14.29
No	2	30	61.22	61.22	75.51
Not sure	3	12	24.49	24.49	100.00
	Total	49	100.0	100.0	

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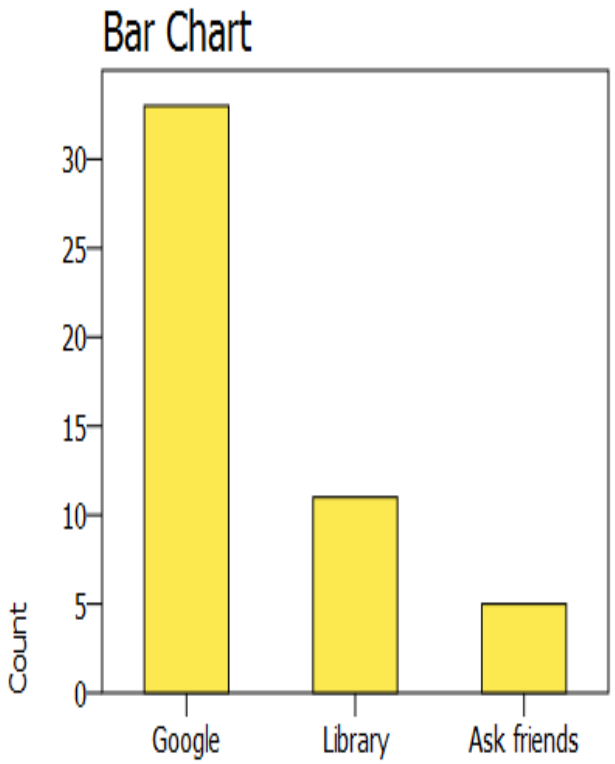
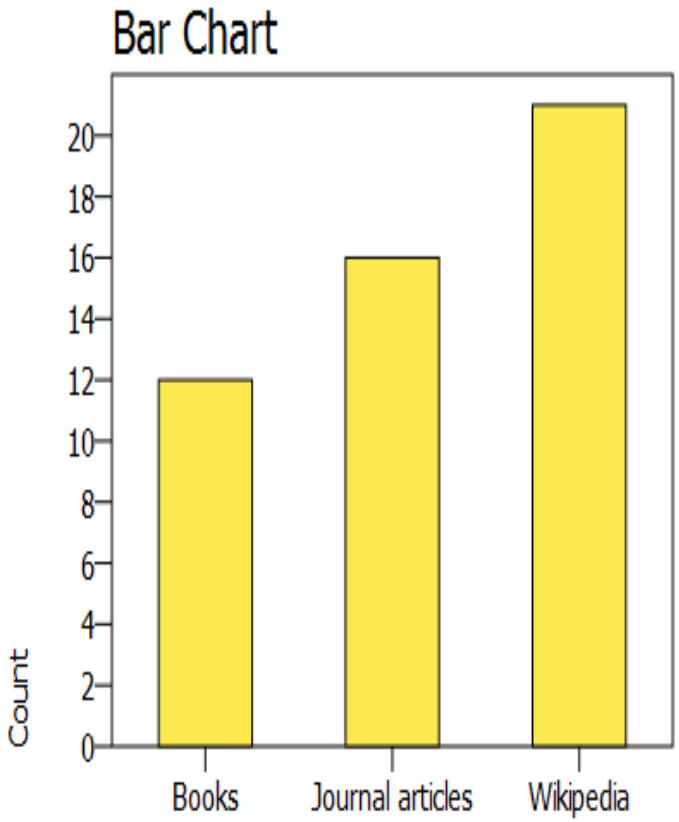
Where do you start searching for sources?

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
Google	1	33	67.35	67.35	67.35
Library	2	11	22.45	22.45	89.80
Ask friends	3	5	10.20	10.20	100.00
	Total	49	100.0	100.0	



Prioritize the follwing research sources?

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
Books	1	12	24.49	24.49	24.49
Journal articles	2	16	32.65	32.65	57.14
Wikipedia	3	21	42.86	42.86	100.00
	Total	49	100.0	100.0	



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Implications of the Pre-Survey

- ✓ 69% of new students do not have prior knowledge of the e-library and this contributes to the under-usage of library resources
- ✓ Consequently, 67% of students surveyed start their search for sources using Google
- ✓ 43% prioritize Wikipedia articles for research
- ✓ 61% have no knowledge of citation styles or how to use sources ethically

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Expected Benefits of DIL integration in the First Year Writing Curriculum

- ✓ Students get lifelong transferable learning skills in DIL
- ✓ Students enhance their research skills as they practice
- ✓ It a win-win for the library and first year writing classes, and it enhances the collaboration between both departments
- ✓ It will hopefully be the beginning of DIL integration in all syllabi at the American University of Nigeria

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Collaborations from AMICAL member institutions and suggestions for the way forward

- Many of the institutions represented integrate DIL in the curricula
- Faculty were encouraged to support the initiative as it prepares students early for academic writing

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