

**Fall 2004 First Year Seminar
Research Skills Survey:
Executive Summary**

The Trexler Library Fall 2004 First Year Seminar Survey is partially a response to the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools' call for information literacy. This short survey attempts to measure in a few specific ways just how familiar first year Muhlenberg College students are with libraries, research, and documentation. What library research experience did students have in high school? How well can they apply that experience to answering specific questions about research and documentation? The findings are supported by an exceptional response rate (75%) by students enrolled in the First Year Seminar in fall of 2004.

The survey results show that:

- A majority of students are “somewhat comfortable” with doing library research for an assignment
- A majority of students have been provided with a research class or library instruction session during high school.
- A majority of students have “often” written papers that required a bibliography or works cited page prior to coming to Muhlenberg College.

The survey also shows that:

- 43% of students answered incorrectly when asked which part of a journal citation was the journal title.
- A majority of students answered incorrectly when asked to identify a book chapter citation.
- 43% of students could not identify a scholarly journal citation.
- Nearly half of students did not identify *Newsweek* as a popular periodical
- Most students agree that it is necessary to cite the source when directly quoting an entire paragraph, but 44% of students said it is not necessary to cite a source when paraphrasing.
- 61% of students said that teachers and librarians in their educational experience prior to college did not discuss how to critically evaluate a website.

The survey shows that most students have some acquaintance with libraries and research from their pre-college experience. At the same time, about half of students were unable to correctly answer questions common to academic research. There is a call for introduction and reinforcement at the college level of basic research concepts that will help move students toward the goal of information literacy.

The Trexler Library Fall 2005 First Year Seminar Survey provides library staff and administrators with an understanding of research skills first year students bring with them to college. More detailed results of the survey can be found at <http://www.muhlenberg.edu/library/about/assessment> .