Online Instruction for Curriculum-Associated Classes: An Assessment of Fall 2020 Library Instruction

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Introduction

During the summer of 2020, the Instruction Steering Committee convened an Instruction Assessment Task Force charged to design and administer the following two assessments during the 2020/2021 academic year.
- Assess curriculum-related library sessions conducted online during Fall 2020.
- Assess student learning during consultations related to 300 and 400 level courses.

A more complete description of the Instruction Assessment Task Force's work can be found in this slide presentation from the January 2021 Public Services Communication Forum. A record of the Task Force's work can be found on its Staff Intranet page. The Task Force divided into two subgroups assigned separately to each of the above assessment goals. This report has been completed by the Fall 2020 Curriculum-Related Online Instruction Subgroup.

These assessment results include information from two populations -- course instructors and library instructors -- who were involved in the curriculum-related library sessions conducted online during Fall 2020. The subgroup used the library's Scheduling Application for Library Instruction (SALI) to gather information about university course instructors and library instructors who participated in online library instruction relating to courses taught at University of Michigan in the Fall 2020 semester. We also were able to retrieve data regarding the course and library instructors' defined roles at the university through a U-M Data Warehouse query that was conducted by the Library's assessment specialist.

Finally, the Task Force wishes to remind readers that our work is not designed to report comprehensively on library instruction during Fall 2020. The results of this assessment work to provide only a snapshot of that instruction. While the Task Force was pleased with the 36% response rate to the course instructor survey, many course instructors did not complete it. Fifty-five percent of library instructors invited to participate in the assessment did not complete the survey. Together, this assessment does not represent a majority of the instructors involved in library instruction in the fall of 2020. In addition, several Fall 2020 events such as unrest due to the 2020 Presidential election, the COVID pandemic, new learning modes in an online environment, library instructor shifts in pedagogical approaches, and an instructor strike were very likely to impact student learning on the University of Michigan campus. **We ask that readers be cautious in drawing conclusions about Fall 2020 curriculum-related online**

library instruction based on this report due to the extraordinary circumstances of the Fall 2020 semester.

Course Instructor Survey Results

Introduction

The Fall 2020 Curriculum-Related Online Instruction Subgroup of the Instruction Assessment Task Force conducted a survey from January 18-January 31, 2021. This survey was completed by course instructors that had library instruction during the Fall 2020 semester. We received 64 responses out of 176 invitations (36% response rate).

The goal of this survey was to assess perceptions of student learning for these course workshops. We also wanted to assess the perception of the effectiveness of our online instruction tools. The survey asked course instructors about the library instruction in one particular course. A PDF copy of the survey is available [online](#) and by request.

The results below will describe the survey in more detail. While the survey did include multiple choice questions, there were also open-ended questions that were analyzed by more than one subgroup member. That analysis was grounded in an approach that began with the data provided by the course instructors. Subgroup members did not analyze qualitative data with a predetermined set of codes. While the survey was designed to solicit both positive and negative feedback, results proved overwhelmingly positive.

Course Instructor/Library Instructor Information

There were 64 responses to the course instructor survey. Through an analysis of course instructor and library instructor information based on data assembled by the library's Assessment Specialist, the data below describes broad characteristics of those 64 respondents and the library instructors that taught those workshops. Any role that was represented by a single person was combined with other low represented categories, especially in the School/College chart. Due to concerns in how the university records demographic data such as race and gender, the subgroup decided to not include that data in this report.

Course Instructor Role Defined by University

| Role	Count
Assistant Professor	2
Associate Professor	8
Professor	17
Clinical Instructor/Associate Professor/Professor	5
Grad Student Instructor	16
LEO I-V Lecturer	13
Temporary Instructor	3
Grand Total	**64**

School/College of Course Instructor

School	Count
HS-STEM Schools & Colleges	14
College of Lit, Science & Arts	41
School of Information	3
School of Music, Theatre & Dance	3
Other Schools/Colleges	3
Grand Total	**64**

Library Instructor by Division

Division	Count
Collections	6
Learning & Teaching	19
Research	39
Grand Total	**64**

Fall 2020 Online Library Instruction Associated With Assignments

Assignment Associated With the Instruction

No
12.7%

Yes
87.3%

Question: Did your students have an assignment/project related to your library instruction request?
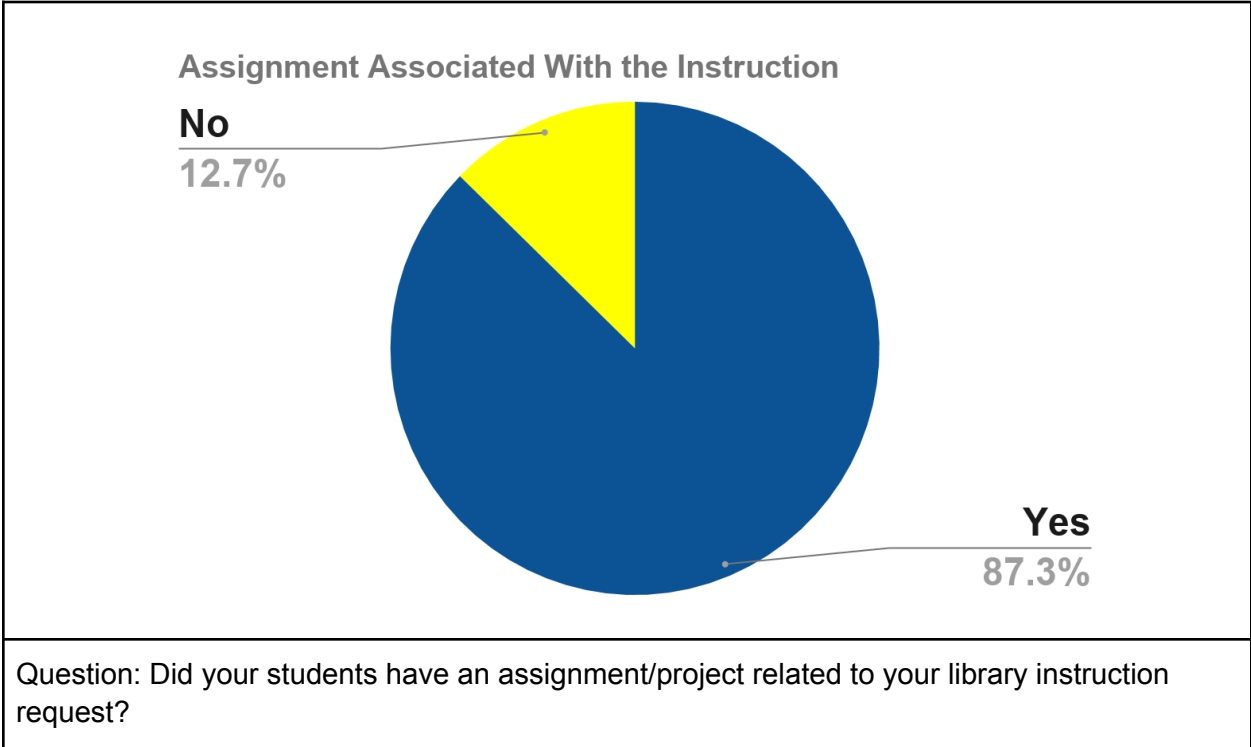
Most of the Fall 2020 online instruction involved teaching to an assignment or project (87.3%). In addition, the committee asked whether the instruction assisted students in completing that assignment/project. All of the respondents who answered that the instruction addressed an assignment/project replied that the library instruction assisted students with this work.

Learning Goals

Horizontal bar chart titled "Learning Goals" showing:
- General Overview: 29
- Finding & Using Sources: 65
- Digital Scholarship: 10

(x-axis from 0 to 70)
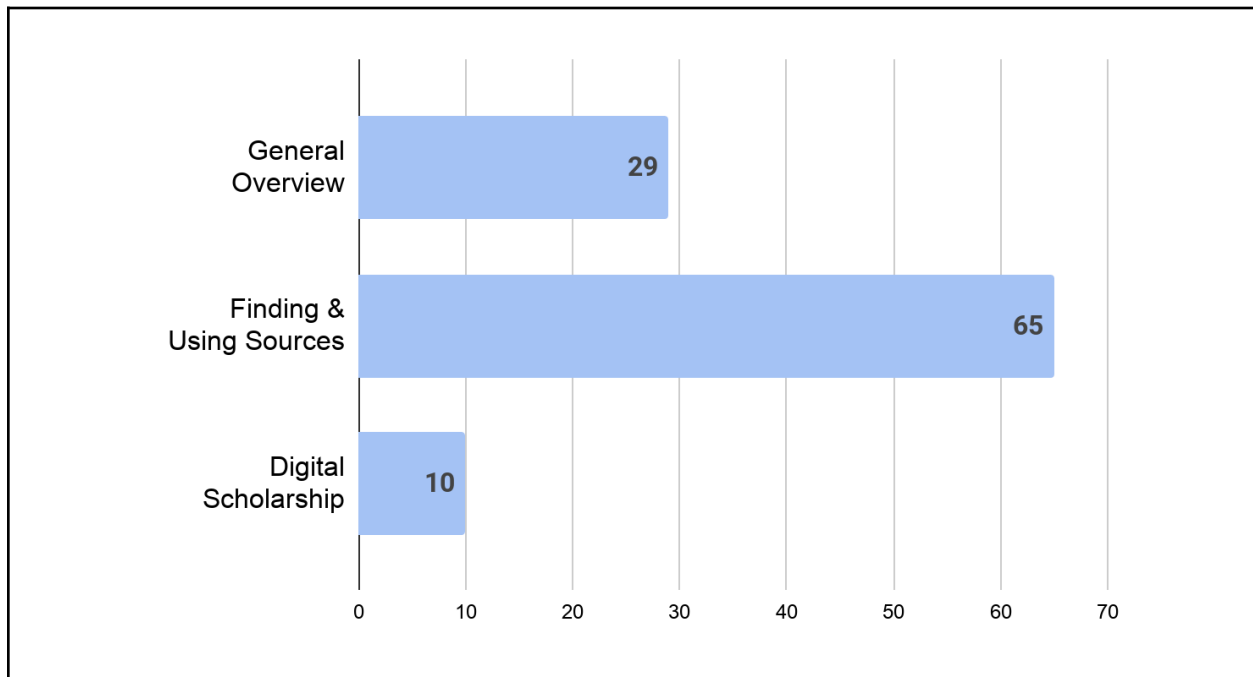
Question

What did you want your students to learn from this session? Check all that apply.
- Twenty-nine respondents indicated that they asked for a general overview of the library (e.g., library website, Ask a Librarian, library tours, etc)
- Sixty five respondents indicated that they asked for instruction about finding and using sources (e.g., using the catalog and/or databases, locating/requesting materials, citation management, academic integrity, etc.)
- Ten respondents asked for digital scholarship and software instruction (e.g., instruction on specific software, multimedia projects, web design, visualization and mapping, Wikipedia, introductions to digital scholarship, etc.)
- Eleven respondents asked for instruction that they identified as "other" instruction

Most Fall 2020 online course instructors requested instruction designed to find and use sources. When the 11 responses in the "Other" category were analyzed, the subgroup discovered that those responses fit into the prior three categories. Some examples of those "Other" responses include advanced searching techniques, how to search PubMed, finding and using archival materials, and the role of academic librarians at University of Michigan.

Course Instructors: What Worked Well

One of the most important questions that the subgroup asked course instructors was what worked well in their library instruction workshops. The subgroup coded this open-ended question and reports five of the major themes below. There were 49 responses to this question.

- One of the most common responses received in this section of the survey (n=15) were general positive comments about the session (i.e. "It was FABULOUS").
- The four most common themes of what course instructors felt worked well can be characterized in the following way.
    - Library instructors made good use of instructional technology or research guides (n=19).
    - Library instructors did a good job of demonstrating a topic or tool, e.g. database, website, resource, citation management tool, plagiarism, research process, source evaluation (n=14)
    - There was good student engagement in the session or an engaging activity was conducted (n=11)
    - The library instructor was approachable (n=8).

Other Information From the Course Instructor Survey

- Very few course instructors (n=2) reported technical difficulties such as internet connectivity issues, Zoom problems, student access issues, library website availability, etc. in their sessions
- Only one response included information about what didn't work well in the session. This response mentioned that the course instructor did not schedule the session at the best time in the semester. The course instructor also responded that the students reported that the session was too long.
- A vast majority of respondents (n=60) reported that they would recommend library instruction to another instructor. Only one person replied "other" to this question. This instructor responded that the recommendation would depend on course needs
- The last question of the survey asked, "Please add any other information that you would like the library to know regarding library instruction." The top three categories of these final comments were expressions of thanks/gratitude/praise/trust for the library or library instructors or the session; positive words about the session itself; and praise/thanks for specific library instructors.

Library Instructor Survey Results

The Fall 2020 Curriculum-Related Online Instruction Subgroup of the Instruction Assessment Task Force conducted a survey from February 22nd-March 15th, 2021. This survey was completed by library instructors that conducted instruction during the Fall 2020 semester. We received 25 responses out of 56 invitations (45% response rate).

The goal of this survey was to capture a reflection of online library instruction for these course workshops. We also wanted to provide an opportunity to improve online library instruction by gathering ideas from library instructors and communicating those ideas throughout the library. The survey asked library instructors about their instructional experience overall. A PDF copy of the survey is available [online](#) and by request.

The results below will describe the survey in more detail. The survey consisted of mostly open-ended questions which were analyzed by multiple subgroup members. Our analysis was grounded in an approach that began with the data provided by the library instructors. Subgroup members did not analyze qualitative data with a predetermined set of codes. In addition, library instruction is usually driven by unique course objectives that require tailored instructional approaches. Be advised that some responses within the report may seem conflicting because an educational approach that may work in one course context would not work as well in another. Finally, many of the ideas described by library instruction colleagues are applicable to any mode of library instruction regardless of whether that instruction is conducted online.

Library Instructors: What Worked Well

The survey began with questions to confirm that the person completing the survey taught or co-taught an online library instruction session for a curriculum-related course during the Fall 2020 semester. It then moved to a question about what worked well in the library instruction.

In your Fall 2020 online instruction, what seemed to work well? Please feel free to share anything related to technology, instructional design, "classroom" engagement, etc.

The subgroup analyzed responses to this question and determined that the following instructional actions worked well for library instruction. Each of the instructional approaches is followed by a summary of ideas recommended by library instructors.

- **Using features in video conferencing software and additional apps to expand opportunities for student participation.**
  - Asking the students to respond or ask questions in the chat box / provide multiple ways to participate / letting students share or not share their screens
  - Breakout rooms for small group discussions
  - Using Google Docs/Google Slides/JamBoard/Padlet for activities and small group share outs
- **Using features in video conferencing software for screen sharing**

- ○ Sharing screens make it easier for students to follow along
  - ○ Moving between screen sharing and discussion and changing the structure of a session to minimize switching
- **Making time for discussion and asking questions or using polling to stimulate conversation and to check on comprehension**
  - ○ Moving between screen sharing and discussion and changing structure of session to minimize switching
  - ○ Asking more questions / using polling questions during the session
  - ○ Live discussion
  - ○ Short breaks / checking in with students to see if they were following
- **Being mindful of not going too fast**
  - ○ Short breaks / checking in with students to see if they were following
  - ○ Slowing the pace of the session
- **Using prepared materials/resources and/or pre-session activities to boost content delivery and to reduce Zoom fatigue**
  - ○ Providing pre-session activities and then discussing those in the session / sharing slides before
  - ○ Providing Canvas modules / modules with video/text/tasks / moving some live instruction to Canvas to reduce Zoom fatigue
  - ○ Pre-recording videos for session / ease of making videos using Kaltura/Zoom
- **Doing prep work, attending carefully to presentation set-up, planning for 'classroom' management issues**
  - ○ Thinking about computer management, i.e. where to put windows and changing the screen resolution so it's easier for students to see
  - ○ Having a second instructor/PIC student to help with logistics and atmosphere
  - ○ Participating with course instructor / working more closely with course instructor to figure out mode / communicating with the instructor before the session
  - ○ Having help from the Library and campus IT / E-Learning meetups
- **Putting thought into the intro and follow-up**
  - ○ Introducing yourself
  - ○ Sharing a summary with students after class via email / making content available online after the session / including intro and follow-up slides during the session
  - ○ Met with students after the session

Recommended Tools

The survey asked library instructors for the name or description of an instructional tool that they may have used in the session. We also asked if the library instructor could describe how they used that tool. We received the following responses.

- **Zoom**: It remembers breakout rooms but this can also backfire. It will be a nice option even once we're in person as backup and for consultations
- **Sli.do**: Use for asking questions
- **Camtasia:** It is good for screenshare videos. It can annotate and zoom in
- **Google Jamboard**

- **Google Slides**: The preview mode removes the floating toolbar. Also animations in slides when using presenter mode
- **Google Docs**: Use for working on shared docs in real time
- **Canvas modules with exercises/quizzes**: Use instead of small group work

Library Instructors: What Didn't Work Well

The survey asked the following question.

What didn't work as well as you hoped in your online instruction? Please feel free to share approaches that you used with technology, instructional design, "classroom" engagement, etc.

The subgroup analyzed responses to this question and found the following concerns. Each of the concerns is followed by a summary of library instructor responses. In this question, library instructors wrote about both the challenges they faced last semester in addition to the specifics of what did not work well in their online instruction.

Almost Everyone Mentioned Student Engagement
- Monitoring student engagement was difficult.
    - The library instructor was unsure how engaged the students actually were / It was hard to gauge body language / Library instructor couldn't walk around and look at screens or check in / Library instructor can't "read the class"
    - It is hard to teach when the student cameras are off, and it can feel like teaching to an empty room
    - It is hard to present and monitor reactions of students at the same time

- Students face more challenges regarding participation in the online environment.
    - Students have to take initiative to ask questions so has to be easy for them to do so
    - Students may be hesitant to interrupt or ask questions in chat
    - Hands-on application exercises are more challenging for the students

- Using too many technology tools or features at the same time can be overwhelming for students.
    - Did not want to throw too much new tech at students during this time / too many different tech tools may be difficult for students to absorb
    - Using more than 1 or 2 extra tech things make for too many transitions which make the instruction hard to follow

Video Conference Problems
- Zoom problems
- Zoom poll feature did not work well
- Faculty sharing Zoom links at the last minute
- Tech problems with Zoom, e.g not being made a co-host
- Don't want too long of a Zoom session

- Breakout rooms can be complicated / dropping into breakout rooms is weird
- Screen share/Google Slides brings up toolbar that can make it harder to navigate websites / hard to track chat questions when screen sharing
- Too many options before we settled on Zoom (e.g. BlueJeans, Meet, etc.)

Online Modules
- Created Canvas module and videos but not sure how or if they were used / did not get feedback
- It can be difficult to monitor student progress with asynchronous instruction in Canvas

Library instructor capacity
- Online instruction takes more time
- Hands-on portions were reduced for various reasons including the need for a roving or second instructor in this environment.
- Offered a very short portion of class

Future Library Instructor Needs

The survey asked participants what they might need in order to conduct future library instruction online.

As of right now, campus plans for the spring, summer, and fall semesters are unclear. In this context, what would help you prepare for and conduct instruction?

The subgroup identified who could best address these needs and grouped them accordingly.

From the Library (E-Learning, Instructor College, etc)
- Help with and tools for interactivity/engagement/inclusivity during classes - E-Learning sessions helpful for this and for continuing ed around online instruction
- Increased tech support - hardware, software, better internet
- Hearing about what worked well for others
- Support network, documentation, clear expectations around developing and introducing Canvas modules to faculty
- Updated library website/research guides/promotional branded videos

From the University
- Clear and definite plans for fall semester sooner rather than later both from the university and library - will the library continue online instruction to minimize contact?
- Getting instruction requests from faculty earlier

From the Universe and Each Other
- If in-person, vaccinations and safety first
- Childcare
- Patience and flexibility

Final Comments

The survey ended with a question asking if the participant would like to share anything else. These final comments are included below in a reworded manner.

- Premade Canvas modules were very helpful - Thanks to those who made them
- Library should make sure every instructor has two monitors
- Group consultations have worked well
- Thanks to the assessment group!
- This has been hard on students
- We should think about reaching out to second year students whose first year at U-M was so awful
- Instruction has felt very isolating this year so it was nice to have this survey to share experiences

Student Feedback Information

In early March 2021 the Task Force and the Instruction Steering Committee discussed an assessment of Fall 2020 students involved in these curriculum-related sessions. The Task Force and Instruction Steering considered the following factors.

- *Fall 2020 U-M Student Mental Health*: A February 25, 2021 article in the *University Record* entitled "[Students Saw Record Levels of Anxiety, Depression Last Fall](#)" describes the significant mental health issues that students experienced last fall. The Task Force felt that student anxiety and depression during the time of the library instruction would influence the results of any assessment in a way that the Task Force could not address.
- *Pandemic and Memory Research*: A February 24, 2021 *New York Times* article entitled "[Why Your Brain Feels Broken: Pandemic Stress and Multitasking Can Affect Memory In a Real Way](#)" describes how the pandemic is affecting memory. Students may not be able to recall their experience with library instruction because of the extraordinary circumstances in which the instruction was conducted.
- *Current Experience With Student Unwillingness to Fill Out Surveys*: Task Force members have recently experienced student unwillingness to fill out surveys during the pandemic regardless of whether credit was attached to the completion of the survey.
- *Task Force Member Commitment To Not Increasing Student Anxiety*: Task Force members did not wish to increase student anxiety, stress, or workload by asking them to fill out a survey.

The Task Force and Instruction Steering had a conversation regarding the following three questions based on the above factors.

- Should the Task Force survey students who completed library online instruction in the Fall 2020 semester?
- Are students over-surveyed this year?
- Would the Task Force receive valuable information if we completed a "sampling" assessment from students in Winter 2021 in a focus group, and would that add to student stress?

Following this conversation, the Task Force and Instruction Steering Committee determined that a student assessment would not be conducted at this time. We encourage members of the library community to read the [U-M Student Experiences During the Fall 2020 Public Health-Informed Semester](#) report completed by the university's Student Life and Assessment Research team for more information about students' educational experiences during the Fall 2020 semester.