

Beyond the Doldrums: An Understanding of HWC's SAILS Performance

Submitted by Jashed Fakhrid-Deen and David Richardson

Doldrums: (dol'dremz) or equatorial belt of calms, area around the earth centered slightly north of the equator between the two belts of trade winds... (marked by) the rising of warm, moist air; low air pressure; cloudiness; high humidity; light, variable winds; and various forms of severe weather, such as thunderstorms and squalls. Hurricanes originate in this region. The doldrums are also noted for calms, periods when the winds disappear, trapping sailing vessels for days or weeks.

INTRODUCTION

In the Fall of 2004, Harold Washington College (HWC) participated in Project SAILS (Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills, a joint project of Kent State University and the Association of Research Libraries. This report is essentially an analysis of the reported results provided by the testing agents and will be concerned with explicating three areas of interest:

- The Nature and Validity of the Sample
- The Nature and Information Provided by the Comparatives Provided
- The Nature of HWC Student Performance on Individual Standards and Skill Sets

THE SAMPLE

The table below provides a comparison of HWC credit student demographic profile with that of the 777 students who took the SAILS exam. The sample appears to be consistent with HWC's credit population in regard to the measurements taken.

CHARACTERISTIC	HWC SAILS PARTICIPANTS	HWC CREDIT STUDENTS
Sex		
Female	64.7 %	63%
Male	30.1 %	37%
Not reported	5.1 %	
Ethnicity		
African-American	43.8 %	46%
American Indian	.6 %	-
Hispanic	23.4 %	20%
Pacific Islander and Asian	10.7 %	10%
White	14.9 %	21%
Not reported	6.6 %	3%
Class Standing		
Freshman	62.9 %	60%
Sophomore	30.6 %	40%*
Not reported	6.4 %	
Student G.P.A.		
<=1.5	5.5 %	24.3%
1.51-2.00	8.4 %	24.2%
2.01-2.50	16.1 %	13.1%
2.51-3.00	17.6 %	15.9%
3.01-3.50	13.0 %	11.5%
3.51-4.00	11.6 %	11%
Not reported	27.8 %	--

***12+ Credit Hours**

THE COMPARATIVES

The data received includes a benchmark based on the average score across all of the 43 participating institutions thus far. Of those institutions, only two others are community colleges and neither of those is urban or statistically comparable. Consequently, it would seem that the all institutional benchmark is only potentially useful as a broad-based indicator of the average American college student, though even that is dubious given that there is no overall demographical data provided.

Both HWC student performance and the institutional average are placed in reference to a norm of difficulty established by the testing agents, vis-à-vis unknown means. Without a better understanding of the basis of the norm established, it is difficult to say much about it with any confidence. Nonetheless, it would seem that Harold Washington College performed in line with their expectations for an average performing college, scoring within, in every instance, one standard deviation of the predicted mean on standards and skill sets. Furthermore, the "probability scale" or norm would seem to be reliable given that the all-institutional average was also within one standard deviation from the predicted mean.

PERFORMANCE

In short, based on the above and student performance, we may conclude from the data that HWC students display an "average" understanding of Information Literacy and an "average" ability to meet the four standards and perform the 12 skill sets assessed by this exam. Detailed definitions of both standards and skill sets, as well as more specific performance related information is provided below.

STANDARDS

First the standard is defined and then contributing skill sets are enumerated with indicators that describe the performance of HWC students compared to the all-institutional average (↑ = Outperformed; ↓ = Under-performed; ↔ = Equivalent). A brief description of HWC students total performance on the standard then follows.

The information literate student:

Standard I: Determines the nature and extent of the information needed.

Skill Set(s) Utilized include:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • #2: Understands scholarly communication and discipline structure(s) | ↑ |
| • #3: Identifies and distinguishes among types of sources | ↓ |
| • #9: Retrieves sources | ↓ |

HWC students performed in line, though slightly (one percentile) below, the all-institutional average in terms of both the scoring and score distribution. Please see individual skill set reports for more detailed information.

Standard II: Accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.

Skill Set(s) Utilized include:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| • #1: Develops a research strategy | ↓ |
| • #4: Selects finding tools | ↓ |
| • #5: Selects search terms | ↑ |
| • #6: Constructs the search | ↓ |
| • #7: Understands information retrieval systems | ↓ |
| • #8: Evaluates and revises search results* | N/A * |
| • #11: Documents sources | ↑ |

HWC students performed, again, slightly (1 percentile) below the all-institutional average, but demonstrated a narrower range of deviation/greater consistency among students than the all-institutional average and than on any other standard. Please see individual skill set reports for more detailed information.

*Skill set #8 currently contains too few items for meaningful analysis, according to the testing agents.

Standard III: Evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into her/his knowledge base and value system.

Skill Set(s) Utilized include:

- #10: Evaluating and selecting sources (which involves the following skills):
 - Distinguishes characteristics of information provided for different audiences
 - Selects appropriate information sources (i.e., primary, secondary or tertiary sources) and determines their relevance for the current information need
 - Recognizes the importance of timeliness or date of publication to the value of the source
 - Demonstrates an understanding that some information and sources may present a one-sided view and may express opinions rather than facts
 - Demonstrates an understanding that some information and sources may be designed to trigger emotions, conjure stereotypes, or promote support for a particular viewpoint or group
 - Searches for independent verification or corroboration of the accuracy and completeness of the data or representation of facts presented in an information source
 - Demonstrates an understanding that other sources may provide additional information to either confirm or question point of view or bias
 - Describes why not all information sources are appropriate for all purposes (e.g., the Web may not be appropriate for a local history topic)
 - Describes the difference between general and subject-specific information sources
 - Demonstrates how the format in which information appears may affect its usefulness for a particular information need
 - Identifies the intent or purpose of an information source (this may require use of additional sources in order to develop an appropriate context)
 - Demonstrates how the intended audience influences information choices
 - Demonstrates how the desired end product influences information choices (e.g., that visual aids or audio/visual material may be needed for an oral presentation)
 - Lists various criteria, such as currency, which influence information choices
 - Describes when different types of information (e.g., primary/secondary, background/specific) may be suitable for different purposes.
 - Evaluates the quality of the information retrieved using criteria such as authorship, point of view/bias, date written, citations, etc.
 - Determines the relevance of an item to the information need in terms of its depth of coverage, language, and time frame
 - Locates and examines critical reviews of information sources using available resources and technologies
 - Investigates an author's qualifications and reputation through reviews or biographical sources
 - Investigates validity and accuracy by consulting sources identified through bibliographic references
 - Investigates qualifications and reputation of the publisher or issuing agency by consulting other information resources
 - Determines when the information was published (or knows where to look for a source's publication date)
 - Determines if the information retrieved is sufficiently current for the information need
 - Demonstrates an understanding that information in any format reflects an author's, sponsor's, and/or publisher's point of view
 - Describes how the age of a source or the qualities characteristic of the time in which it was created may impact its value
 - Describes how the purpose for which information was created affects its usefulness
 - Describes how cultural, geographic, or temporal contexts may unintentionally bias information
 - Uses consciously selected criteria to determine whether the information contradicts or verifies information used from other source
 - Compares new information with own knowledge and other sources considered authoritative to determine if conclusions are reasonable
 - Describes how the reputation of the publisher affects the quality of the information source
 - Distinguishes among various information sources in terms of established evaluation criteria (e.g., content, authority, currency)
 - Applies established evaluation criteria to decide which information sources are most appropriate

HWC students scored equal to the all-institutional average on this standard but displayed a wider range of deviation/greater lack of consistency of understanding than both the all institutional average and on any other standard. Please see individual skill set report for more detailed information.

Standard V: Understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

Skill Set(s) Utilized include:

- #12: Understands economic legal and social issues (which involves the following skills): ↓
 - Identifies and discusses issues related to privacy and security in both the print and electronic environments
 - Describes the differences between the results of a search using a general Web search engine (e.g., Yahoo) and a library-provided tool (e.g., Web-based article index, full-text electronic journal, Web-based library)
 - Identifies and discusses issues related to censorship and freedom of speech
 - Demonstrates an understanding of intellectual property, copyright, and fair use of copyrighted material
 - Participates in electronic discussions following accepted practices (e.g. "Netiquette")
 - Legally obtains, stores, and disseminates text, data, images, or sounds
 - Demonstrates an understanding of what constitutes plagiarism and does not represent work attributable to others as his/her own
 - Demonstrates an understanding of institutional policies related to human subjects research
 - Demonstrates an understanding that not all information on the Web is free, i.e., some Web-based databases require users to pay a fee or to subscribe in order to retrieve full text or other content
 - Demonstrates awareness that the library pays for access to databases, information tools, full-text resources, etc., and may use the Web to deliver them to its clientele
 - Describes how the terms of subscriptions or licenses may limit their use to a particular clientele or location

HWC students scored slightly (2 percentile points) below the all institutional average on this standard but demonstrated a noticeably narrower deviation/greater consistency of scoring. Please see individual skill set report for more detailed information.

SKILL SETS

First the skill set as a whole is defined and then individual skills of the set are enumerated. A brief description of HWC performance follows along with five exam questions associated with this skill set including a very difficult question, an easy question, and three questions from within one standard deviation of the average HWC students performance, one right at the level of understanding of the average student, one slightly above and one slightly below. Correct answers are underlined. In some cases, questions allow for more than one answer, and so the difficulty may lie in choosing (or not choosing) a particular possibility.

Though more detailed performance information, separated by class standing and ethnicity, was provided, analyses are not included here as there was not a consistent, nor statistically significant, discernible pattern of over or under-performance by any of the specified groups. One general difference, however, is that on seven of the 11 analyzed skill sets, the all-institutional average was higher for sophomores versus freshmen, whereas for HWC students only three sets demonstrated a similar positive differential (#2, 4, 10). Two showed no difference (#5, 6), but on six (# 1, 3, 7, 9, 11, 12), sophomores actually scored lower than freshmen.

Set #1: Develops a research strategy

- Uses background information sources effectively to gain an initial understanding of the topic.
- Describes a general process for searching for information
- Identifies the appropriate service point or resource for the particular information need
- Confers with instructors and participates in class discussions, peer workgroups, and electronic discussions to identify a research topic, or other information need
- Develops a thesis statement and formulates questions based on the information need
- Identifies an initial question that might be too broad or narrow, as well as one that is probably manageable
- Explains his/her reasoning regarding the manageability of a topic with reference to available information sources
- Narrows a broad topic and broadens a narrow one by modifying the scope or direction of the question
- Demonstrates an understanding of how the desired end product (i.e., the required depth of investigation and analysis) will play a role in determining the need for information
- Consults with the course instructor and librarians to develop a manageable focus for the topic
- Decides when a research topic has multiple facets or may need to be put into a broader context
- Realizes that information may need to be constructed with raw data from primary sources
- Searches for and gathers information based on an informal, flexible plan
- Identifies a research topic that may require revision, based on the amount of information found (or not found)
- Identifies a topic that may need to be modified, based on the content of information found
- Decides when it is and is not necessary to abandon a topic depending on the success (or failure) of an initial search
- Gathers and evaluates information and appropriately modifies the research plan as new insights are gained

- Uses the Web site of an institution, library, organization or community to locate information about specific services
- Selects among various technologies the most appropriate one for the task of extracting the needed information (e.g., copy/paste software functions, photocopier, scanner, audio/visual equipment, or exploratory instruments)
- Uses various technologies to manage the information selected and organized
- Determines whether information satisfies the research or other information need

HWC students slightly (2 percentile points) under-performed the all-institutional average on this skill set.

- ✓ Difficult Question for HWC Student
It's the second week of the term. Your professor gives you an assignment to write a 10-page paper on a topic you know little about. The paper is due during finals week. If you decided to go to the library, which of the following would be an efficient way to start?

CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY.

- (1) Ask for help
- (2) Browse the bookshelves
- (3) Find the journals and start looking through them
- (4) Use a database to find journal articles
- (5) Use library catalog to find books

(Average student has a low probability of NOT choosing #2 *and* of choosing #1)

- ✓ Slightly Above Average Question for HWC Student
What services do most college libraries offer to students?
CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY.

- (1) Advice on how to find information
- (2) Check out books
- (3) Conduct your research for you
- (4) Help in focusing topic
- (5) Help in the writing process for term papers
- (6) Obtain materials not owned by the library
- (7) Proofreading of papers
- (8) Tutorials on using library resources

(Average student has slightly less than 50% probability of including #4)

- ✓ Average Question for HWC Student
Same as above
(Average student has 50% probability of choosing #6)

- ✓ Slightly Below Average Question
Same as above
(Average student has slightly higher than 50% probability of NOT including #5)

- ✓ Easy Question for HWC Student
What services do most university libraries offer to students?
CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY.

- (1) Advice on how to find information
- (2) Check out books
- (3) Conduct your research for you
- (4) Help in focusing topic
- (5) Help in the writing process for term papers
- (6) Obtain materials not owned by the library
- (7) Proofreading of papers
- (8) Tutorials on using library resources

(Average student has high probability of choosing #1, 2, 8)

Set #2: Understands scholarly communication and disciplinary structure

- Defines the "invisible college" (e.g., personal contacts, listservs specific to a discipline or subject) and describes its value.
- Names the three major disciplines of knowledge (humanities, social sciences, sciences) and some subject fields that comprise each discipline.
- Describes how the publication cycle in a particular discipline or subject field affects the researcher's access to information.
- Describes the publication cycle appropriate to the discipline of a research topic.

HWC students slightly (+2 percentile points) outperformed the all-institutional average on this skill set.

✓ Difficult Question for HWC Student

What is the "invisible college"?

CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.

- (1) All the information sources that students don't know about
- (2) Collections of resources, such as archives, that are not open to the public
- (3) Method for taking classes through distance learning
- (4) Term used to describe all the ways that students learn outside the classroom
- (5) Unpublished communication among faculty, such as personal contacts, listservs, email

(Average student has low probability of choosing #5)

✓ Slightly Above Average Question for HWC Student

Which of the following subject fields belong to the humanities discipline?

CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY.

- (1) Art history
- (2) Biology
- (3) Chemistry
- (4) English
- (5) Philosophy

(Average student has slightly lower than 50% probability of including #4)

✓ Average Question for HWC Student

Which of the following subject fields belong to the social sciences discipline?

CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY.

- (1) Anthropology
- (2) English
- (3) French
- (4) Psychology
- (5) Sociology

(Average student has 50% probability of including #1)

✓ Slightly Below Average Question

Which of the following subject fields belong to the humanities discipline?

CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY.

- (1) Art history
- (2) Biology
- (3) Chemistry
- (4) English
- (5) Philosophy

(Average student has slightly better than 50% probability of including #1)

✓ Easy Question for HWC Student

Same as above

(Average student has high probability of NOT including #3)

Set #3: Identifies and distinguishes among types of sources

- Identifies various formats in which information is available.
- Describes how various fields of study define primary and secondary sources differently.
- Identifies characteristics of information that make an item a primary or secondary source in a given field.
- Identifies keywords that describe an information source (e.g., book, journal article, magazine article, Web site).

HWC students slightly (3 percentile points) under-performed the all-institutional average.

- ✓ Difficult Question for HWC Student
Which of the following best identifies a "publication issued periodically, usually weekly or monthly, containing articles, stories, photographs and advertisements?"
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Journal
(2) Magazine (4) Newspaper
(3) Newsletter (5) Trade journal

(Average student has low probability of choosing #2)
- ✓ Slightly Above Average Question for HWC Student
The following definition describes which type of resource in the social sciences and sciences? Identifies, selects, and digests pertinent information from all of a discipline's literature. Bibliographies, indexes, abstracts, catalogs, directories, handbooks, and yearbooks should be considered in this category.
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Primary
(2) Secondary
(3) Tertiary

(Average student has slightly lower than 50% probability of choosing #2)
- ✓ Average Question for HWC Student
What term is defined as material that interprets or analyzes sources and events? Examples include monographs, edited books, essays, journal and newspaper articles, and most reference materials (dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc.).
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Primary source (3) Secondary source
(2) Reliable source (4) Tertiary source

(Average student has 50% probability of choosing #3)
- ✓ Slightly Below Average Question
What term is defined as material produced by or about the subject of investigation during the time period in which the subject lived or the event took place? Examples include: initial reports of scientific research, legal documents, speeches, correspondence, diaries, interviews, oral histories, newspaper and journal articles, and works of art.
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Primary source
(2) Reliable source (4) Tertiary source
(3) Secondary source (5) Unedited source

(Average student has slightly better than 50% probability of choosing #1)
- ✓ Easy Question for HWC Student
The following definition of a primary source is applied in which discipline?
Visual works.
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Art (3) History
(2) English (4) Social Sciences

(Average student has high probability of choosing #1)

Set #4: Selects finding tools

- Demonstrates when it is appropriate to use a general and subject-specific information source (e.g., to provide an overview, to give ideas on terminology).
- Investigates the scope, content, and organization of information retrieval systems
- Distinguishes among indexes, online databases, and collections of online databases, as well as gateways to different databases and collections.
- Selects appropriate tools (e.g., indexes, online databases) for research on a particular topic.
- Identifies the differences between freely available Internet search tools and subscription or fee-based databases.
- Explains the difference between the library catalog and a periodical index.
- Determines when some topics may be too recent to be covered by some standard tools (e.g., a periodicals index) and when information on the topic retrieved by less authoritative tools (e.g., a Web search engine) may not be reliable.
- Determines the period of time covered by a particular source.
- Identifies the types of sources that are indexed in a particular database or index (e.g., an index that covers newspapers or popular periodicals versus a more specialized index to find scholarly literature).
- Demonstrates when it is appropriate to use a single tool (e.g., using only a periodical index when only periodical articles are required).
- Locates major print bibliographic and reference sources appropriate to the discipline of a research topic.
- Locates and uses a specialized dictionary, encyclopedia, bibliography, or other common reference tool in print format for a given topic.
- Identifies research sources, regardless of format, that are appropriate to a particular discipline or research need.
- Uses different research sources (e.g., catalogs and indexes) to find different types of information (e.g., books and periodical articles).
- Describes the different scopes of coverage found in different periodical indexes.
- Seeks expert opinion through a variety of mechanisms (e.g., interviews, email, listservs)

HWC slightly (two percentile points) under-performed the all-institutional average.

- ✓ Difficult Question for HWC Student
What is a list of books, journal articles, or other materials about a certain topic?
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Bibliography
(2) Keyword (4) Research database
(3) Library catalog (5) Subject heading

(Average student has low probability of choosing #1)

- ✓ Slightly Above Average Question for HWC Student
Academic libraries are generally thought of as collections of materials in print and electronic formats. Some of these materials are made available to users through the Web, but are not included in what we traditionally think of as the Web. The World Wide Web is a means of communication. Computers all over the world network with one another by using a common language. Given the preceding definitions, what can you say about the following statement?
Statement: Has material for everyone, including shoppers, support groups, fans, scholars, students, hobbyists, businesses.
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) This statement is true about the Web.
(2) This statement is true about the academic library.
(3) This statement is true about both the academic library and the Web.
(4) This statement is true of neither the academic library nor the Web.

(Average student has slightly lower than 50% probability of choosing #1)

- ✓ Average Question for HWC Student
Academic libraries are generally thought of as collections of materials in print and electronic formats. Some of these materials are made available to users through the Web, but are not included in what we traditionally think of as the Web. The World Wide Web is a means of communication. Computers all over the world network with one another by using a common language. Given the preceding definitions, what can you say about the following statement?
Statement: Has materials which have been purchased on behalf of students.
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) This statement is true about the Web.
(2) This statement is true about the academic library.
(3) This statement is true about both the academic library and the Web
(4) This statement is true of neither the academic library nor the Web.

(Average student has 50% probability of choosing #2)

- ✓ Slightly Below Average Question
What is a computer system that shows what journal articles have been published on a certain topic?
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Bibliography
(2) Keyword
(3) Library catalog
(4) Research database
(5) Subject heading

(Average student has slightly better than 50% probability of choosing #4)

- ✓ Easy Question for HWC Student
What is the term for an online resource that shows what materials a library owns?
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Bibliography
(2) Keyword
(3) Library catalog
(4) Research database
(6) Subject heading

(Average student has high probability of choosing #3)

Set #5 Selects search terms

- Lists terms that may be useful for locating information on a topic.
- Finds sources that provide relevant subject field- and discipline-related terminology.
- Explains what controlled vocabulary is and why it is used.
- Identifies when and where controlled vocabulary is used in a bibliographic record, and then successfully searches for additional information using that vocabulary.
- Determines when a single search strategy may not fit a topic precisely enough to retrieve sufficient relevant information.
- Identifies and uses appropriate general or subject-specific sources to discover terminology related to an information need.
- Identifies more specific concepts that comprise a research topic.
- Uses relevant subject- and discipline-related terminology in the information research process.
- Identifies keywords or phrases that represent a topic in general sources (e.g., library catalog, periodical index, online source) and in subject-specific sources.
- Demonstrates an understanding that different terminology may be used in general sources and subject-specific sources.
- Identifies alternate terminology, including synonyms, broader or narrower words and phrases that describe a topic.
- Uses background sources (e.g., encyclopedias, handbooks, dictionaries, thesauri, textbooks) to identify discipline-specific terminology that describes a given topic.
- Identifies search terms likely to be useful for a research topic in relevant controlled vocabulary lists.
- Identifies and selects keywords and phrases to use when searching each source, recognizing that different sources may use different terminology for similar concepts.

HWC outperformed (+ six percentile points) the all-institutional average on this skill set.

- ✓ Difficult Question for HWC Student
You have been assigned a research project for a sociology class that requires you to search in sociology indexes and databases. Which of the following sources would be the best to consult to find the correct terminology for your search?
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
- (1) Journal of Applied Sociology. Los Angeles: Southern California Sociological Society and the University of Southern California.
 - (2) Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus. Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1993.
 - (3) The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology: A User's Guide to Sociological Language. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995.
 - (4) The Comprehensive Guide to American English. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.
 - (5) The Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

(Average student has low probability of choosing #3)

- ✓ Slightly Above Average Question for HWC Student
If you are using a research database and search for articles using the term "skin cancer," why would you retrieve this article?
- Author Weinstock, Martin A
Title Early detection of **melanoma**
Appears In *JAMA*. v284n7 Aug 16, 2000. p.886-889
Abstract Weinstock argues that dermatologists, patients and their families, and primary care clinicians and their staff have the potential and responsibility to contribute to the reduction of melanoma mortality through early screening.
Subjects Melanoma
Medical screening
Preventive medicine
- CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
- (1) Mapping to subject headings
 - (2) Power search
 - (3) Relevancy ranking
 - (4) "Skin cancer" appears in the full text of the article.
 - (5) There were no articles on my topic so I got articles on a similar topic.

(Average student has slightly lower than 50% probability of choosing #1)

✓ Average Question for HWC Student
N/A--No items are located near the HWC performance line

✓ Slightly Below Average Question
You have to find articles on raising children. Which search is better?
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Keyword: raising children
(2) Subject heading: child rearing

(Average student has slightly better than 50% probability of choosing #2)

✓ Easy Question for HWC Student
Select the best set of key search terms below for the research question:
"Does incarceration have a negative influence on the offspring of female inmates in the penal system?"
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Children, negative, mothers
(2) Mothers, influence, crime
(3) Negative, influence, criminal justice system
(4) Prison, mothers, children
(5) United States, criminal justice system, children

(Average student has high probability of choosing #4)

Set #6: Constructs the search

- Demonstrates when it is appropriate to search a particular field (e.g., title, author, subject).
- Demonstrates an understanding of the concept of Boolean logic and constructs a search statement using Boolean operators.
- Demonstrates an understanding of the concept of proximity searching and constructs a search statement using proximity operators.
- Demonstrates an understanding of the concept of nesting and constructs a search using nested words or phrases.
- Demonstrates an understanding of the concept of keyword searching and uses it appropriately and effectively.
- Demonstrates an understanding of the concept of truncation and uses it appropriately and effectively.
- Demonstrates an understanding of the concept of browsing and uses an index that allows it.

HWC slightly (2 percentile points) underperformed the all-institutional average.

- ✓ Difficult Question for HWC Student
If you wanted to search for a topic that has several components, such as nutrition for pregnant women, which operator would you use?
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Adj
(2) And (4) Not
(3) Near (5) Or

(Average student has low probability of choosing #2)
- ✓ Slightly Above Average Question for HWC Student
What is a computer system that shows what journal articles have been published on a certain topic?
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Bibliography
(2) Keyword (4) Research database
(3) Library catalog (5) Subject heading

(Average student has slightly lower than 50% probability of choosing #4)
- ✓ Average Question for HWC Student
You're searching a database for a low-fat recipe for pasta with either shrimp or chicken. Which search demonstrates the proper use of nesting to get many search results that are very relevant?
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Noodles or (pasta and shrimp) or chicken and low-fat
(2) (Noodles or pasta) and (shrimp or chicken) and low-fat (4) (Noodles or pasta) and shrimp or (chicken and low-fat)
(3) Noodles or pasta and (shrimp or chicken) and low-fat (5) Noodles or pasta and shrimp or chicken and low-fat

(Average student has 50% probability of choosing #2)
- ✓ Slightly Below Average Question
A term used in the title or abstract of a book or journal article is what?
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Bibliography
(2) Keyword (4) Research database
(3) Library catalog (5) Subject heading

(Average student has slightly better than 50% probability of choosing #2)
- ✓ Easy Question for HWC Student
If you want to find books that Charlotte Brontë wrote, which search would you do?
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Author: brontë
(2) Subject: brontë
(3) Title: brontë

(Average student has high probability of choosing #1)

Set #7 Understands information retrieval systems

- Demonstrates an awareness of the fact that there may be separate interfaces for basic and advanced searching in retrieval systems.
- Uses effectively the organizational structure of a typical book (e.g., indexes, tables of contents, user's instructions, legends, cross-references) in order to locate pertinent information in it.
- Describes search functionality common to most databases regardless of differences in the search interface (e.g., Boolean logic capability, field structure, keyword searching, Relevancy ranking).
- Describes the structure and components of the system or tool being used, regardless of format (e.g., index, thesaurus, type of information retrieved by the system).
- Identifies the source of help within a given information retrieval system and uses it effectively.
- Identifies what types of information are contained in a particular system (e.g., all branch libraries are included in the catalog; not all databases are full text; catalogs, periodical databases, and Web sites may be included in a gateway).
- Identifies and uses search language and protocols (e.g., Boolean, adjacency) appropriate to the retrieval system.
- Distinguishes between full-text and bibliographic databases.
- Determines appropriate means for recording or saving the desired information (e.g., printing, saving to disc, photocopying, taking notes).
- Uses help screens and other user aids to understand the particular search structures and commands of an information retrieval system.
- Describes differences in searching for bibliographic records, abstracts, or full text in information sources.
- Demonstrates an understanding of the fact that items may be grouped together by subject in order to facilitate browsing.
- Uses effectively the organizational structure and access points of print research sources (e.g., indexes, bibliographies) to retrieve pertinent information from those sources.

HWC slightly (1 percentile point) under-performed the all-institutional average.

- ✓ Difficult Question for HWC Student
If you need to know what chapters are in a book , which part of the book provides the best information?
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Cover of the book
(2) Endnotes
(3) Glossary
(4) Introduction
(5) Table of contents
- (Average student had low probability of choosing #5)
- ✓ Slightly Above Average Question for HWC Student
You have been assigned a research project for a sociology class that requires you to search in sociology indexes and databases. Which of the following sources would be the best to consult to find the correct terminology for your search?
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Journal of Applied Sociology. Los Angeles: Southern California Sociological Society and the University of Southern California.
(2) Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus. Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1993.
(3) The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology: A User's Guide to Sociological Language. Cambridge, MA:Blackwell, 1995.
(4) The Comprehensive Guide to American English. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.
(5) The Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- (Average student has slightly lower than 50% probability of choosing #3)
- ✓ Average Question for HWC Student
N/A-- No items are located near the HWC performance line

- ✓ Slightly Below Average Question
In which part of a book would you be most likely to find its publication date?
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.

- (1) Bibliography
- (2) Index
- (3) Preface
- (4) Table of contents
- (5) Verso of title page

(Average student has slightly better than 50% probability of choosing #5)

- ✓ Easy Question for HWC Student
You're writing a paper on Indira Ghandi and your professor has told you that Ghandi is mentioned in a book that you have. What part of the book will direct you to the right pages for the passage(s) on Indira Ghandi?
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.

- (1) Bibliography
- (2) Footnotes
- (3) Index
- (4) Preface
- (5) Title page

(Average student has high probability of choosing #3)

Set #8: Evaluates and revises search

- Assesses the relevance of information found by examining elements of the citation such as title, abstract, subject headings, source, and date of publication.
- Analyzes and interprets the information collected using a growing awareness of key terms and concepts to decide whether to search for additional information or to identify more accurately when the information need has been met.
- Narrows or broadens questions and search terms to retrieve the appropriate quantity of information, using search techniques such as Boolean logic, limiting, and field searching.
- Determines if the quantity of citations retrieved is adequate, too extensive, or insufficient for the information need.
- Demonstrates how searches may be limited or expanded by modifying search terminology or logic.
- Examines footnotes and bibliographies from retrieved items to locate additional sources.
- Follows, retrieves and evaluates relevant online links to additional sources.
- Incorporates new knowledge as elements of revised search strategy to gather additional information.

No data was provided for this skill set.

Set #9: Retrieves sources

- Determines if material is available immediately.
- Uses available services appropriately to obtain desired materials or alternative sources.
- Demonstrates a general knowledge of how to obtain information that is not available immediately.
- Acts appropriately to obtain information within the time frame required.
- Describes some materials that are not available online or in digitized formats and must be accessed in print or other formats (e.g., microform, video, audio).
- Uses call number systems effectively (e.g., demonstrates how a call number assists in locating the corresponding item in the library).
- Retrieves a document in print or electronic form.
- Describes various retrieval methods for information not available locally.
- Initiates an interlibrary loan request by filling out and submitting a form either online or in person.

HWC slightly (1 percentile point) under-performed the all-institutional average.

- ✓ Difficult Question for HWC Student
It's the second week of the term. Your professor gives you an assignment to write a 10-page paper on a topic you know little about. The paper is due during finals week. Suppose you identify only one book that is perfect for your topic. What would you do if it was already checked out to someone else?

CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.

(1) Request the book you want from another library for use next week

(2) Search the Web

(3) Select another book that is available today

(Average student has low probability of choosing #1)

- ✓ Slightly Above Average Question for HWC Student
You have identified a periodical article that you would like to obtain immediately. Which of the following actions would allow you to determine whether that is possible?

CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.

(1) Consult a bibliography.

(2) Place an interlibrary loan request.

(3) Search the library catalog for the article title.

(4) Search the library catalog for the article's author.

(5) Search the library catalog for the journal title.

(Average student has slightly lower than 50% probability of choosing #5)

- ✓ Average Question for HWC Student
N/A--No items are located near the HWC performance line

- ✓ Slightly Below Average Question
All books in the library can be checked out

CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.

(1) True

(2) False

(Average student has slightly better than 50% probability of choosing #2)

- ✓ Easy Question for HWC Student
What services do most college libraries offer to students?
CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY.

(1) Advice on how to find information

(2) Check out books

(3) Conduct your research for you

(4) Help in focusing topic

(5) Help in the writing process for term papers

(6) Obtain materials not owned by the library

(7) Proofreading of papers

(8) Tutorials on using library resources

(Average student has high probability of choosing #1 and #2)

Set #10: Evaluates and selects sources

- Distinguishes characteristics of information provided for different audiences
- Selects appropriate information sources (i.e., primary, secondary or tertiary sources) and determines their relevance for the current information need
- Recognizes the importance of timeliness or date of publication to the value of the source
- Demonstrates an understanding that some information and sources may present a one-sided view and may express opinions rather than facts
- Demonstrates an understanding that some information and sources may be designed to trigger emotions, conjure stereotypes, or promote support for a particular viewpoint or group
- Searches for independent verification or corroboration of the accuracy and completeness of the data or representation of facts presented in an information source
- Demonstrates an understanding that other sources may provide additional information to either confirm or question point of view or bias
- Describes why not all information sources are appropriate for all purposes (e.g., the Web may not be appropriate for a local history topic)
- Describes the difference between general and subject-specific information sources
- Demonstrates how the format in which information appears may affect its usefulness for a particular information need
- Identifies the intent or purpose of an information source (this may require use of additional sources in order to develop an appropriate context)
- Demonstrates how the intended audience influences information choices
- Demonstrates how the desired end product influences information choices (e.g., that visual aids or audio/visual material may be needed for an oral presentation)
- Lists various criteria, such as currency, which influence information choices
- Describes when different types of information (e.g., primary/secondary, background/specific) may be suitable for different purposes.
- Evaluates the quality of the information retrieved using criteria such as authorship, point of view/bias, date written, citations, etc.
- Determines the relevance of an item to the information need in terms of its depth of coverage, language, and time frame
- Locates and examines critical reviews of information sources using available resources and technologies
- Investigates an author's qualifications and reputation through reviews or biographical sources
- Investigates validity and accuracy by consulting sources identified through bibliographic references
- Investigates qualifications and reputation of the publisher or issuing agency by consulting other information resources
- Determines when the information was published (or knows where to look for a source's publication date)
- Determines if the information retrieved is sufficiently current for the information need
- Demonstrates an understanding that information in any format reflects an author's, sponsor's, and/or publisher's point of view
- Describes how the age of a source or the qualities characteristic of the time in which it was created may impact its value
- Describes how the purpose for which information was created affects its usefulness
- Describes how cultural, geographic, or temporal contexts may unintentionally bias information
- Uses consciously selected criteria to determine whether the information contradicts or verifies information used from other source
- Compares new information with own knowledge and other sources considered authoritative to determine if conclusions are reasonable
- Describes how the reputation of the publisher affects the quality of the information source
- Distinguishes among various information sources in terms of established evaluation criteria (e.g., content, authority, currency)
- Applies established evaluation criteria to decide which information sources are most appropriate

HWC slightly (2 percentile points) under-performed the all-institutional average.

- ✓ Difficult Question for HWC Student
 You must write a paper on the environmental practices of Sony Corporation. Which of the following is most likely to provide balanced information?
 CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
 (1) Economic Development Board (www.edb.org)
 (2) Environmental Protection Agency Web site (www.epa.gov)
 (3) Free the Planet! (www.freetheplanet.org)
 (4) Greenpeace Web site (www.greenpeace.org)
 (5) Sony's Web site (www.sony.com)
- (Average student has low probability of choosing #2)
- ✓ Slightly Above Average Question for HWC Student
Mother Jones is published by the Foundation for National Progress. It is a progressive periodical featuring high quality investigative reporting, political commentary, and features. Recent article topics include terrorism and government response, urban renewal, police brutality, and labor unions. Published every other month.
 What type of publication is this?
 CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
 (1) Book
 (2) Government document
 (3) Popular periodical
 (4) Professional/trade periodical
 (5) Scholarly periodical
- (Average student has slightly lower than 50% probability of choosing #3)
- ✓ Average Question for HWC Student
Quill is the official publication of the Society of American Journalists. It publishes reports and short news items on the activities of the organization and its membership. Longer articles deal with developments in print and electronic journalism, for example, discussions of technology, laws and regulations, freedom of information, occupational standards, and education. Published monthly.
 What type of publication is this?
 CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
 (1) Book
 (2) Government document
 (3) Popular periodical
 (4) Professional/trade periodical
 (5) Scholarly periodical
- (Average student has 50% probability of choosing #4)
- ✓ Slightly Below Average Question
 If you are writing a persuasive research paper, you should:
 CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
 (1) Rely solely upon your own opinion.
 (2) Search for diverse information that both supports and contradicts your opinions on the topic.
 (3) Search for information that contradicts your opinion on the topic.
 (4) Search for information that supports your opinion on the topic.
 (5) Search only for information that is neutral on your topic.
- (Average student has slightly better than 50% probability of choosing #2)
- ✓ Easy Question for HWC Student
 If you are required to write a paper on teenage pregnancy, which of the following types of databases might have articles on this topic?
 CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY.
 (1) Architecture database
 (2) Education database
 (3) Health database
 (4) Mathematics database
 (5) Physics database
 (6) Psychology database
- (Average student has high probability of NOT choosing #1, 4 & 5 and choosing #3)

Set #11: Documents sources

- Recognizes the format of an information source (e.g., book, chapter in a book, periodical article) from its citation.
- Distinguishes among citations to identify various types of materials (e.g., books, periodical articles, essays in anthologies).
- Recognizes that consistency of citation format is important, especially if a course instructor has not required a particular style. Demonstrates an understanding that different disciplines may use different citation styles.
- Identifies citation elements for information sources in different formats (e.g., book, article, television program, Web page, interview).
- Demonstrates an understanding that there are different documentation styles, published or accepted by various groups.
- Describes when the format of the source cited may dictate a certain citation style.
- Locates information about documentation styles either in print or electronically, e.g., through the library's Web site.

HWC outperformed (+8 percentile points) the all-institutional average on this skill set.

✓ Difficult Question for HWC Student

The citation below refers to what?

Gertz , Bill. Business Cycles in the United States Economy. New York: Viking, 1999.

CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.

(1) Book

(2) Chapter within a book

(4) Newspaper article

(3) Encyclopedia article

(5) Periodical article

(Average student has low probability of choosing #1)

✓ Slightly Above Average Question for HWC Student

The citation below refers to what?

Gertz , Bill. (2001). "Depressions, Recessions, and Inflation." Business Cycles, 24 (1): 28-30.

CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.

(1) Book

(2) Chapter within a book

(4) Newspaper article

(3) Encyclopedia article

(5) Periodical article

(Average student has slightly lower than 50% probability of choosing #5)

✓ Average Question for HWC Student

You looked for literary criticism on Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales and retrieved the record below from a research database. What is the next step for locating the entire article?

Author Gittes, Katharine S.

Title Chaucer and the medieval frame narrative.

Journal Speculum

Appears In v. 69 (Apr. '94) p. 481-2

Abstract Gittes contends that the literary frame narrative began in the Near East with the Panchatantra in the eighth century and declined in the West soon after Chaucer's time. During its adaptation by European writers, and under the pressure of Western cultural preferences for order, unity, closure, and developed characterization, the genre lost its natural Arabic features and eventually disappeared.

CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.

(1) Search the library catalog for books written by Katharine S. Gittes.

(2) Search the library catalog for books written by Geoffrey Chaucer.

(3) Search the library catalog for the article title, "Chaucer and the medieval frame narrative."

(4) Search the library catalog for books about Chaucer.

(5) Search the library catalog to see if the library has a subscription to Speculum.

(Average student has 50% probability of choosing #5)

- ✓ Slightly Below Average Question
Generally, books in academic libraries are arranged in a classification scheme. This classification scheme is
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.

- (1) Created by your university library
- (2) Developed by the Library of Congress
- (3) Developed on the World Wide Web
- (4) Produced by book publishers

(Average student has slightly better than 50% probability of choosing #2)

- ✓ Easy Question for HWC Student
The citation below refers to what?
Gertz , Bill. "Depressions, Recessions, and Inflation." The Ledger. August 13, 2001, Section: Business, Pg. D7
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.

- (1) Book
- (2) Chapter within a book
- (3) Encyclopedia article
- (4) Newspaper article
- (5) Periodical article

(Average student has high probability of choosing #4)

Set #12: Understands economic, legal, and social issues

- Identifies and discusses issues related to privacy and security in both the print and electronic environments
- Describes the differences between the results of a search using a general Web search engine (e.g., Yahoo) and a library-provided tool (e.g., Web-based article index, full-text electronic journal, Web-based library)
- Identifies and discusses issues related to censorship and freedom of speech
- Demonstrates an understanding of intellectual property, copyright, and fair use of copyrighted material
- Participates in electronic discussions following accepted practices (e.g. "Netiquette")
- Legally obtains, stores, and disseminates text, data, images, or sounds
- Demonstrates an understanding of what constitutes plagiarism and does not represent work attributable to others as his/her own
- Demonstrates an understanding of institutional policies related to human subjects research
- Demonstrates an understanding that not all information on the Web is free, i.e., some Web-based databases require users to pay a fee or to subscribe in order to retrieve full text or other content
- Demonstrates awareness that the library pays for access to databases, information tools, full-text resources, etc., and may use the Web to deliver them to its clientele
- Describes how the terms of subscriptions or licenses may limit their use to a particular clientele or location

HWC slightly (2 percentile points) under-performed the all-institutional average.

- ✓ **Difficult Question for HWC Student**
You are assigned a project in a basic psychology course that requires you to conduct a student survey on an issue of your choice and report your results to the class. Which of the following statements is true?
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Approval is never required for student research.
(2) I need to get approval from my institution's human subjects review board.
(3) I need to get the approval of the State Board of Research.
(4) I only need to get approval if I am using students' names.
(5) I only need to get approval if the study will be made publicly available.

(Average student has low probability of choosing #2)
- ✓ **Slightly Above Average Question for HWC Student**
Which of the following concepts makes it ethically wrong to use the ideas of another person without giving them credit?
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Copyright
(2) Fair use
(3) Freedom of information
(4) Intellectual property
(5) Right to privacy

(Average student has slightly lower than 50% probability of choosing #4)
- ✓ **Average Question for HWC Student**
If you write a research paper, do the original ideas in the paper belong to you?
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Yes, but only if you obtain copyright.
(2) Yes, the ideas are your intellectual property.
(3) Yes, but only if the paper is published.
(4) No, student papers are not protected works.
(5) No, they belong to the instructor for whom you wrote the paper.

(Average student has 50% probability of choosing #2)
- ✓ **Slightly Below Average Question**
Which of the following best identifies a "legal right, which the creator of an original work has, to only allow reproduction of the work with permission and sometimes on payment of royalties or fees?"
CHOOSE ONLY ONE ANSWER.
(1) Branding
(2) Copyright
(3) Patent
(4) Trade name
(5) Trademark

(Average student has slightly better than 50% probability of choosing #2)

✓

Easy Question for HWC Student

Is it legal to download a song from the internet?

CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY.

(1) Yes, if you purchase it from a licensed vendor.

(2) Yes, it is always legal if you get it through a peer-to-peer file sharing service, such as Kazaa or Morpheus.

(3) Yes, if the copyright owner has made it available or the copyright has expired.

(4) Yes, if you cannot afford to purchase the CD.

(5) No, it is never legal to download a song from the internet.

(Average student has high probability of NOT choosing #4)