Information Behavior of University Students: From Today’s Information and Communication Student Towards Excellent Tomorrow’s Information Specialist

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Methodology

• The **purpose** of the research presented is to analyze *Vilnius University Faculty of Communication information and communication students’* information behavior and information literacy skills.

• The main **tasks** of the research were to reveal IL skills of LIS bachelor students and to test PIL survey instrument.

• **PIL survey instrument** for analysis of IL skills of LIS students was used.

• Research was performed in the frame of *international IL initiative, under guidance of Prof. Serap Kurbanoglu* (Haccettepe University, Turkey).

• Acknowledgements – Vilnius University Faculty of Communication students and administration.
Research Activities

• 2012-2013 study year

• **Research object** – bachelor students at the Vilnius University Faculty of Communication (FC)

• **Surveying** – 86 students from 100 were surveyed
**Demographic characteristic of respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic characteristics</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>77 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>60 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>33-35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 33-35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GPA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current status as a student</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First year</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>40 % (82 % from first year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second year</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10 % (90 % from second year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third year</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12 % (77 % from third year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth year</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>38 % (65 % from fourth year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents (n=86)
Study programs analysed in the research

- *Library Science and Information*, 3rd and 4th study year;
- *Information and Library Services*, 2nd study year;
- *Culture Information and Communication*, 1st study year.
Limitations of the research

- study programs dealing with LIS specifics were selected for the research (from all running at the FC)
- each of the study program was running adequately its 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th study year
- bachelor students were surveyed at this stage (master level programs dealing with LIS at the moment are not running at the FC)
- 92 % of the total amount of bachelor students were investigated (86 students from the total 100)
Let me remind research instrument structure -

- **PIL survey**, consisting from 2 sections, including 17 questions:
  - A. Demographic information
  - B. Research experience, information behavior and information literacy skills
Results

• Detailed and numerous results and findings were received according to the survey, illustrating the situation.

• The most interesting and obvious ones illustrating situation and the main trends are presented further and discussed in this presentation.
Data analysis Criteria

• **content** (according to the subject of questions)

  3 aspects:

  1) *priorities for using information sources and tools for preparing course-related assignments*,
  2) *information seeking and assessing*,
  3) *students opinion and problems in preparation of course-related assignments*

• **results analysis according to the study year.**
Results: 1 aspect: Priorities for using information sources and tools for information for preparing course-related assignments in current degree studies:

- **Consulted for providing information:**
  - **Often/Almost always** 50% – search engines (Google, Yahoo!, Ask.com); next - course readings, libr. Catalogs (3rd year stud.)
  - **Never** - gray literature, social networking sites (4th year stud.)

- **Preparing, sharing, communicating with teacher, mentor, librarian:**
  - **Often/Very often** – presentation tools (Power Point, Prezi), spell checkers, video sharing tools (YouTube, TeacherTube) (1st year stud.), e-mail
  - **Never use** 57% - microblogs (Twitter) (4th year stud.), citation-making programs 32% (22% never heard about this tool), social networking 29% (23% never heard about it)

- **Technical equipment for assessing information**
  - **Often/Almost always** - laptops 66%
  - **Never** – tablets 60%

  20% 1st year students use landline telephone 
Fig. 1. How often respondents use sources and tools for providing information during their course-related assignments

Never | Rarely | Occasionally | Often | Almost
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---

- Course readings
- Search engines (e.g., Google, Bing, Yahoo!, Ask.com)
- Library catalogs
- Encyclopedias (e.g., Britannica, either online or print)
- Governmental Web sites (.gov sites)
- Research databases through the library Web site (e.g., LISA, WoS, EBSCO, JSTOR)
- Gray literature (thesis, reports, unpublished papers, etc.)
- Blogs
- Wikipedia
- Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)
- Video sharing sites (e.g., YouTube, TeacherTube, etc.)
- Slide sharing sites (e.g., Slideshare)
- Online forums
- Your personal collection (materials you already own or buy - either print or online)
- Library shelves
Fig. 2. Use of different tools for preparing and sharing course-related assignments
Results: 2nd aspect: Information seeking and assessment

• **Consulting different people to get and validate information**
  - *Often* – instructors, 63 % (of 4th year stud.), classmates
  - *Sometimes/Rarely* - librarians (4th year stud.)

• **What was considered when a source found through the library:**
  - *Often* - instructor’s positive role and opinion, 64 %
  - *Often* - language of the source:
    • 57 % priority to native language (but 1st year students didn’t consider language ☺)
  - *Never* - author’s credentials (where the author works) 38 %
  - *Never consider* - publisher of the source:
    • 54 % (76 % - 4th year stud.)
  - *Never* - how current the source was:
    • 78 % (3rd and 4th year stud.)
Fig. 3. **People groups consulted** by students preparing course-related assignments
Results: 3rd aspect: Students opinions and problems in preparation of course-related assignments

• Kinds of assignments students had during their degree studies:
  – Very often – oral presentations, oral presentations and accompanying papers that present an argument about an issue
    • 87% oral presentations
  – Never/Rarely: quantitative and qualitative research:
    • 80% - 1st year stud.; 94% - 2nd year stud.

• Different statements about starting and searching for information:
  – Agreed – getting started on assignment was difficult 51%
  – Strongly disagreed - 33%

• Use of different study practices:
  – Almost always/Often - develop an outline or an overall research plan
    • most students
  – Never/Rarely - start over with a brand new topic, if they don’t find anything during one or two searches
  – Never/Rarely – interlibrary loan or document delivery services

• Getting a good grade from the instructor:
  – Very important/Important
    • 86%
  – Not important/Of little importance: impressing parents and friends
    • Mostly 4th year students
Conclusions

• PIL survey **instrument has proven to be an adequate tool** for students’ IL research
• PIL survey instrument enabled to illustrate current situation of LIS students **IL literacy in very detailed way,**
• research results **reveals positive and negative aspects** of current situation of LIS students’ IL skills,
• negative aspects of current LIS students’ IL skills indicates correlation with **gaps in study plans and quality of teaching,**
• assumption should be done that some deviation in drawing final conclusions should be allowed because of **gaps in students’ knowledge and understanding of concepts** used in PIL survey instrument,
• IL research gave a mandate to faculty studies administration about **rethinking teaching and learning methods** seeking to improve LIS students’ IL skills.