

# Graduate Occupational Therapy Students & Information Literacy: Does a Research Consultation Increase Information



## Literacy While Lowering Library Anxiety?

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### Introduction

In today's academic environment, students equipped with self-regulated learning and information literacy skills have an excellent opportunity for professional success, given our current information-based practices in health care. Information literacy is about the ability to know when there is a need for information as well as possessing the ability to identify, locate, evaluate and effectively use this information (Durando, 2005). Along with information literacy issues, library anxiety has been identified in the literature as a contributing factor to poor academic performance in students. Library anxiety is defined as an uncomfortable feeling, characterized by tension, fear and mental disorganization when in, or contemplating a visit to the library (McPherson, 2015).

Faculty/librarian collaboration can develop students' research skills/habits early in their academic career in order to influence the quality of research conducted the rest of their professional lives. For this study, library anxiety and information literacy were addressed by having students connect in pairs with a librarian for a one-hour research consultation. This study took place strategically at the beginning of the students' professional program to better prepare them for their scholarship project.

### Background

While help seeking is very basic to most initial and ongoing library interactions, library anxiety can effectively block help-seeking behaviors. As Brinkman (2012) reports, one blocking factor is that many students perceive the library staff as too busy so students are uncomfortable asking for assistance.

Students beginning a graduate program come to the program with different levels of research skills. It is important for students to have the ability to navigate the plethora of information bombarding them and this requires strong information literacy skills (Robertson, 2015). Graduate OT students in the United Kingdom identified these specific training needs in regards to information literacy:

- Developing search strategies
- Formulating searchable questions
- Choosing relevant databases
- Using database limits
- Locating full-text articles
- Improving info-seeking confidence (Morgan-Daniel, 2017).

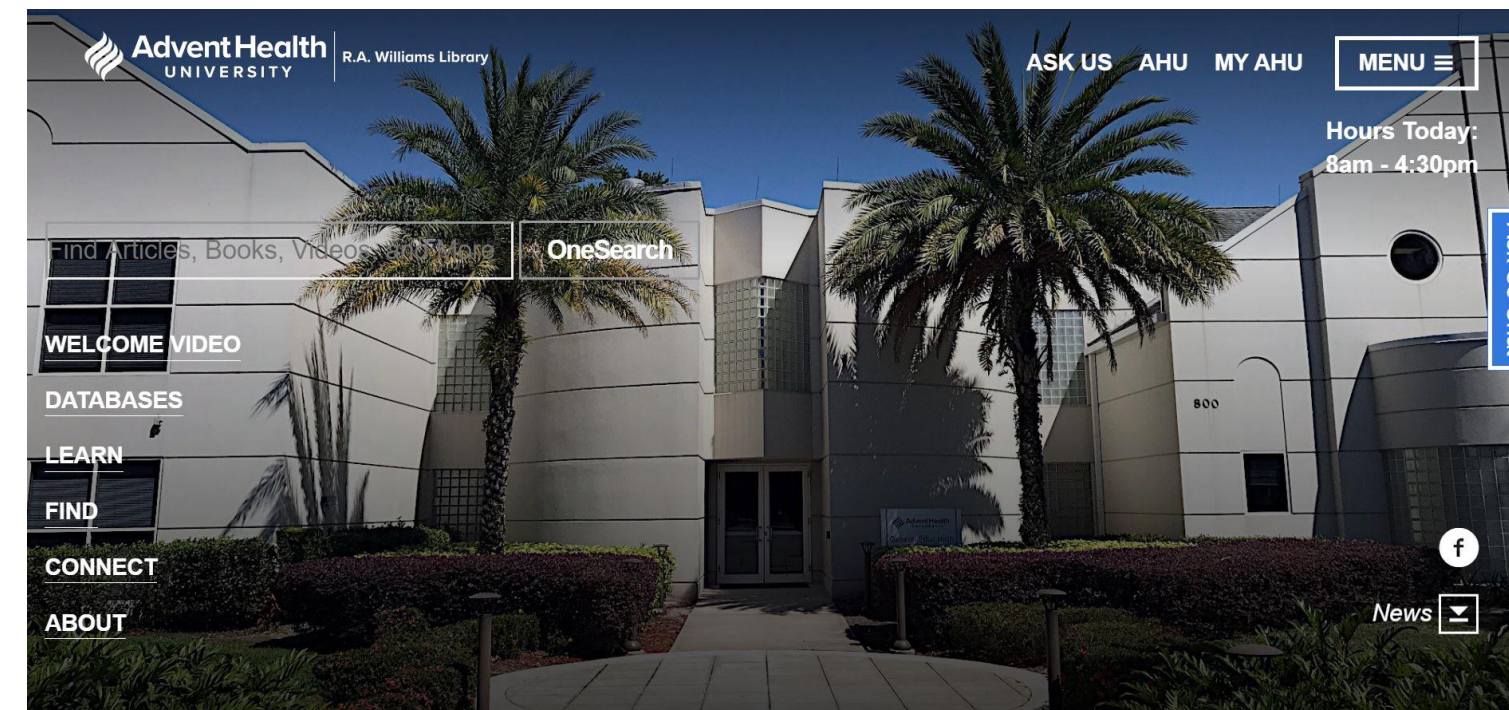
Teaching faculty are essential in guiding graduate students in their use or non-use of the university library (Kayongo, 2010). Educators need to understand also that students may feel highly confident about their informational literacy skills and so they may not ask for assistance when faced with difficulty in any of the information literacy tasks (Robertson, 2014). Research consultations can be described as a library service that pairs a student with a librarian for a one-on-one meeting. Watts & Mahfood (2015) mention that students found they were better able to find journal articles after individualized instruction.

### Methodology

This study was a collaboration between the MOT department and the university librarian. We used a mixed-method approach: Quantitative questions with a Likert Scale of 1-4; qualitative approach was 3 open-ended questions.

The sampling method was a convenience one -- MOT students newly admitted in our Fall 2018 and Fall 2019 cohorts taking Foundations of Occupational Therapy course. All students had an annotated bibliography assignment which required a 1:1 research consultation with a university librarian for education of databases/resources.

Students willing to participate in this study completed a background experience form, a pre-survey prior to the consultation, and a post survey at the end of the fall trimester.



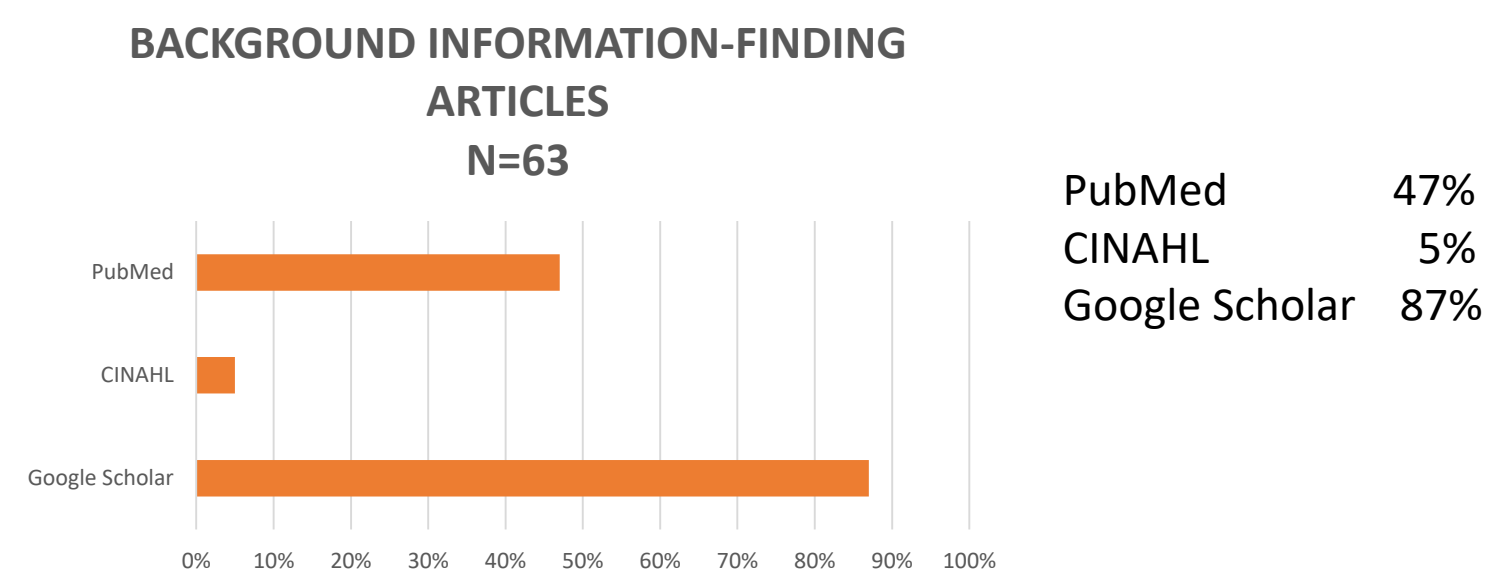
### OUTLINE OF THE INDIVIDUAL SESSION WITH LIBRARIAN (60 minutes)

- Meet & Greet (get to know student)
- Ask for Background Experience Questionnaire
- Share Library Homepage (suggest bookmark)
- Locate Databases – share specific ones
  - Mention truncation and subject headings
  - EBSCO Databases – CINAHL
  - PubMed
  - Google Scholar / how AHU links to articles
  - OneSearch and how to cite article/title article
- Annotated bibliography guide
- Occupational Therapy guide
- Academic Writer (APA tool) – sign-up
- Share RefWorks/sign-up for an account
- Remind/Share about ASK US/Chat/ ILL

### Results

	Pre (N=47)	Post (N=44)	P value
<b>Confidence</b>			<b>&lt;0.0001</b>
Mean ± SD	20.02 ± 3.44	24.55 ± 2.68	
<b>Comfort in Library Usage</b>			<b>0.0018</b>
Mean ± SD	25.17 ± 2.76	23.25 ± 2.59	

The Mann-Whitney U test (non-parametric test) was utilized to compare the students' confidence in research tool knowledge as well as comfort in usage of library resources, in pre and post surveys. The results show that there's a significant difference between the mean value of pre and post for confidence (P<0.0001). The same result is found in comfort of library usage, with significant difference between the mean value of pre and post. (P=0.0018)



**Qualitative Themes (3) that emerged from the open-ended questions were: Beneficial, Efficient and Comfortable.** It was valuable to meet with a librarian.

#### Beneficial statements:

*"It was useful to refresh my memory of how to do things. It is easier to talk to people in the library."*

*"1:1 really was helpful and helped to clarify any misconceptions I had."*

*"Yes, very helpful in finding/using tools throughout the semester."*

#### Efficient Statements:

*"It took less time to put together citations and formatting papers is easier."*

*"I learned new sites to find research articles."*

*"I used tools that I would not have used otherwise."*

*"I learned a lot more ways of searching for information that I needed."*

#### Comfortable Statements:

*"I feel more comfortable looking up research"*

*"This was useful because we could ask questions"*

*"the librarians are very nice and approachable"*

### Discussion

This study's first aim was to help MOT students increase their comfort and confidence levels when utilizing university library resources. To accomplish this the study facilitated contact with the university librarian, mandating a 1:1 meeting in hopes of highlighting how librarians can assist the students in their research work. McPherson (2015) offers that while the students may not have outright identified they had library anxiety, the absence of information literacy skills may contribute to anxiety, as well as limited exposure to sophisticated library environments.

Leading into our second aim of the study, Brinkman (2012) offers that the negative emotions associated with library anxiety can interfere with the students' research process and development of information literacy. In regards to information literacy, this study concluded that while students may start a graduate program with some research skills, most are not familiar with basic resources available to them such as databases, interlibrary loan and citation managers (e.g. RefWorks). While there is now technology present that facilitates library research without the need for human contact, face-to-face interactions are the most effective mode of communication for questions that are involved and complex such as graduate students' scholarly projects (Kayongo, 2010).

Finally, the study informed the librarian and faculty on what resources (research databases) to recommend and share with students to ensure student success not only in continued library utilization but also in the students scholarly work in the MOT program and hopefully for their entire career.

### References

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See the LibGuide for more references.  
<https://libguides.ahu.edu/TLGSCPoster>

