



Serials & E-Resources News

Report on the ER&L Session:

How Do Students Do Research? The Student Research Process as Seen in Student Drawings

Presenter: Molly Beisler, University of Nevada, Reno
Reported by Dejah Rubel, Ferris State University

Molly Beisler collaborated with the campus writing center to learn how students perceive the research and writing process. In this study, 222 students drew their process for a recent writing assignment in approximately 15-20 minutes. They also answered two questions: which step was the most challenging and what would have made the process easier? Then Beisler interviewed nine of these students to discuss what they had drawn. Her student population was approximately 60% seniors, 18% juniors, 18% sophomores, and 4% freshmen.

One finding Beisler found interesting was how often topics had to be revised to fit the course or the sources discovered during the research process. Another interesting finding was that students consider databases almost equivalent to the discovery layer. Students often referred to the library's discovery layer as the "online library resource database." Students also showed a lack of awareness regarding source quality, which was discouraging because many of them were upperclassmen. Most students stated that the most challenging part of the process was doing the research, especially when they had to find scholarly, relevant resources. Therefore, most also stated that what would make the research process easier would be to make finding good sources easier. Only 5% or less of the students thought that getting help or more instruction would improve their research process even though 100% of the students reported getting some kind of

help during the process that they drew. Most help was obtained via peers or their family, then the writing center or the instructor, and then the library. Those who did not depict getting help were four times more likely to depict procrastination in their drawing. One-shot instruction sessions were also shown to have an impact, but topic formation may be another area where librarians can help students. For those interested in additional details, Beisler published an article on this research in 2016 in *Journal of Academic Librarianship* (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2016.04.010>).