

What are they saying about the Library?

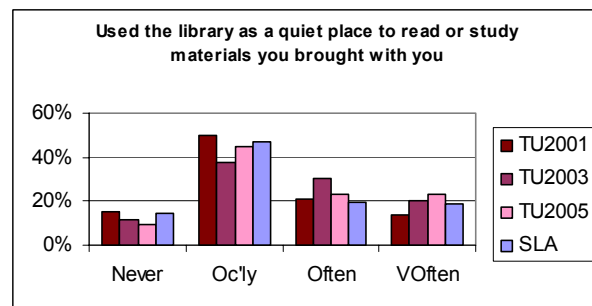
Diane Saphire, Institutional Research

In this article Diane Saphire shares the results of a recent survey of graduating seniors, and puts their responses in context with those from other institutions.

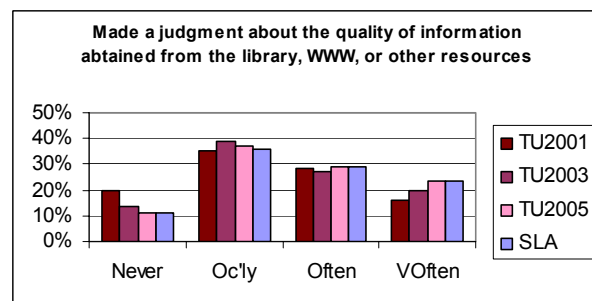
Each spring, the Office of Institutional Research surveys graduating seniors about their college experiences, and the Coates Library staff are always among the first to inquire about what those seniors had to say!

The survey we conduct in odd-numbered years, the College Student Experience Questionnaire (CSEQ), has an entire section on the library and we now have three years of data from our graduates: 2001 (n=260), 2003 (n=181), and 2005 (n=165), providing us with a longitudinal look at our students' library experiences. To gather this data, we obtain the permission of the instructors of classes that consist predominantly of seniors to come to one class meeting during the spring and administer the survey. In addition to the three years of Trinity data, we also have the national norms from a group of baccalaureate liberal arts colleges, designated by the Center for Postsecondary Research, Policy, and Planning of Indiana University Bloomington.* In the charts and graphs below we refer to this comparison group as Selective Liberal Arts colleges, SLA. (Only one set of norms has been published, so we do not have separate comparison values for the various years.)

One of the items for which we have observed significant change since 2001 is "During the current school year, how often have you used the library as a quiet place to read or study materials you brought with you?" The graph below shows that the percentage of our graduating seniors who say that they very often used the library as a quiet place to read or study has steadily increased from 2001 through 2005 and now exceeds the corresponding percentage for the selective liberal arts comparison group. The percentage of TU seniors who indicate that they never do so has steadily declined.



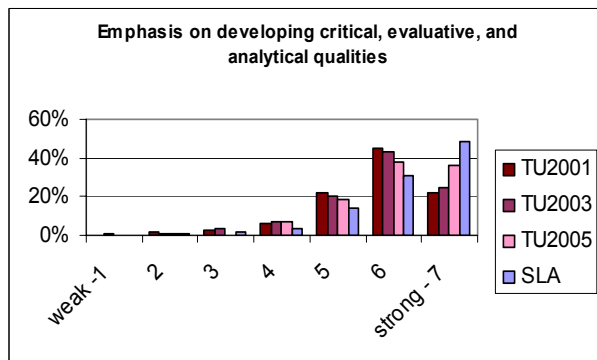
We also observe encouraging trends among responses to "How often have you made a judgment about the quality of information obtained from the library, World Wide Web, or other resources?" The percentage of Trinity seniors indicating that they very often made such judgments has increased significantly from 2001 to 2005 and now is virtually identical to the corresponding percentage among the selective liberal arts institutions. The percentage of Trinity seniors who never did so has declined.



*Adrian, Alma, Barnard, Bridgewater, Carleton, Concordia College Moorhead, DePauw, Goshen, Hampshire, Hanover, Millsaps, Mount Holyoke, Oberlin, Smith, Swarthmore, Tougaloo, U. Hawaii Hilo, Wellesley,

What are they saying...continued

Another CSEQ item asks students to what extent they feel that Trinity emphasized developing critical, evaluative, and analytical qualities. Students respond with a rating, where 1 represents weak and 7 represents strong. The percentage of Trinity students indicating a strong (7) emphasis has been steadily increasing. While it hasn't yet reached the level of the selective liberal arts group, the average Trinity rating has increased significantly since 2001.



Among our 2004 Trinity senior respondents (n=162), 91% said that they were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the library facilities, compared to 67% for the comparison group of private 4-year institutions.

Comparing the Trinity library satisfaction ratings for the 2002 seniors (n=153) with the 2004 seniors, we see that there was a substantial shift from the “satisfied” category to the “very satisfied” category. Way to go librarians!

—Diane Saphire, Institutional Research

In even-numbered years we administer the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) survey conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. One of the items on this survey asks the students to rate their satisfaction with a variety of campus services and facilities as “dissatisfied”, “neutral”, “satisfied” or “very satisfied”. Among our 2004 Trinity senior respondents (n=162), 91% said that they were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the library facilities, compared to 67% for the comparison group of private 4-year institutions. This Trinity library satisfaction rating exceeded the rating for the private 4-year comparison institutions by a larger amount than did the Trinity rating for any of the other 27 services or facilities on the survey.

