

*Library Instruction Services for
International Students in
New Zealand's Tertiary Libraries
: a survey*

by

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Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Contents	3
Abstract	4
Introduction	5
Problem Statement	5
Literature Review	6
Study objectives and research questions	10
Methodology	11
Results	13
Programmes for international students	13
Type of instruction offered	14
Table 1. Type of instruction offered in general library orientations	15
Table 2. Type of instruction offered in programmes designed for international students	15
International students' difficulty in using the library	16
Figure 1. General level of difficulty for international students	16
Figure 2. What aspect of the library do you believe international Students have the most difficulty with?	17
Table 3. Mean importance rank for barriers to use of Library	18
Comparison of University and Polytechnic Libraries	18
Successfulness of instruction programmes for International students	19
Figure 3. Successfulness of library instruction programme for International students	20
How library instruction is offered	21
Figure 4. Departments worked with in the institution	22
Figure 5. Timing of library instruction	23
Analysis and Discussion	24
Conclusions and Summary	33
Bibliography	36
Appendix 1. Questionnaire	
Appendix 2. Covering letter and consent	

Abstract

Keywords: *international students : library instruction : academic libraries : survey*

This research project examines the issue of library instruction services for international students studying at New Zealand tertiary institutions. The aim of the project was to ascertain the measures that New Zealand academic librarians are taking to meet the needs of international students, and how well this compares with tertiary libraries in other countries. The data was gathered by mailed questionnaire to tertiary libraries with over 1% international student population. The findings of the survey indicate that there is a lack of awareness of the issues faced by international students and highlights the need for further research in this country.

Introduction

This research project aims to ascertain what library instruction services are currently offered to international students in New Zealand and the perceptions and beliefs of New Zealand academic librarians as to the successfulness of the services they offer international students. It will also provide a general picture of library instruction in New Zealand academic libraries.

Problem Statement

The numbers of international students studying at New Zealand tertiary institutions is increasing yearly. In 1996 over 7000 students studying at New Zealand tertiary institutions were international students [Ministry of Education, 1997], and the increase in the number of international students studying in New Zealand from 1995 to 1996 was a phenomenal 27.6% [Ministry of Education, 1997]. Although these students now comprise a significant percentage of an academic library's clientele very little is known about their usage of the library and how well the library is serving their needs. The purpose of this research is to ascertain what measures New Zealand tertiary libraries are taking to help international students come to terms with study in a foreign environment. For the purposes of this study international students are taken to be any student who is not a New Zealand citizen and who is in New Zealand primarily to study. Tertiary institutions for the purposes of this study are universities and polytechnics.

Research in this area has been carried out in other countries (most notably in the United States) over the last 15 years but there has been very little research carried out on

international students in New Zealand. The influx of international students to New Zealand's academic institutions is a relatively recent phenomenon and this could account for the lack of research. Research in New Zealand in library and information studies in general has been minimal so the current study will add to the body of knowledge available. By gaining an insight into the steps that libraries are currently taking, it will be possible to see where the profession must go next in its bid to provide a relevant and useful service to all the members of its clientele. The current study will provide a knowledge base in order that we may improve the service that we offer to international students.

The study will also gather information on New Zealand academic librarian's perceptions of the difficulties faced by international students and whether they believe these difficulties can be overcome by having separate library instruction programmes for international students. It will also gauge librarian's satisfaction levels with the services they currently offer to international students. Universities and polytechnics will be compared to see if there is any significant difference in their services they offer to international students.

Literature Review

Much has been written in the last 15 years about the international student's plight in the academic library. Many of these studies give ideas and guidelines for how library staff should interact with international students, but the research behind these studies is conspicuously absent. Some, like Sarkodie-Mensah [1992] speak from personal

experience as an international student, but many don't seem to have any significant empirical background to their statements.

User surveys of international students are few and far between. Mary-Beth Allen [1993] carried out one such survey, which attempted to determine the characteristics of an international student population and to determine their patterns of library use. One of the focuses of the survey was the amount of prior computer experience the students had and the effect that this had on their experience of using the library. Allen found that for over 60% of the international students surveyed, computer database searching was a new experience. Over 50% of the students also stated that interlibrary loan and online catalogs were new to them [p.327]. Some of these results could reflect that automation of library systems was not as universal four years ago as it is now, but this does not account for the results fully. User surveys are important as they give librarians a picture of the clientele that they are trying to reach, and give them an idea of the background of experience the students have, in order that they may better meet the students' needs. International students are intensive users of library services, so although their numbers may be small their demand is relatively high [McSwiney, 1994]. This makes them an important group to take into consideration when planning library instruction services.

Much of the literature comes to the same conclusions about how libraries can offer a better service to their international students. The importance of recognising cultural differences [Wayman, 1984] and understanding the background of the students [Jacobson, 1988 and Ball, 1987] are often cited as being crucial to improving the service that is offered to international students. The current study will ascertain whether these

issues are considered important by New Zealand librarians. MacDonald [1988] suggests the use of extended library instruction sessions in conjunction with ESL classes and Kflu [1990] recommends the use of handouts, overheads and blackboards during library instruction sessions.

Writers on library anxiety include international students as being part of the 'at-risk' group [Jiao, 1996]. Constance Mellon, an authority in this field states the major causes of library anxiety as being a feeling that the individual alone is incompetent, that this incompetence is shameful and that by asking questions they reveal incompetence [Mellon, 1988]. This is particularly relevant in the case of international students from Asian countries where 'saving face' is of crucial importance. To admit that they don't know how to use the catalogue is incredibly difficult for them and librarians need to come up with strategies to help these students feel comfortable in asking for assistance.

Several libraries have published information about workshops that they run for their staff on how to help international students. Greenfield [1986] outlines a workshop that uses cross-cultural simulations and role-plays to equip staff with a greater understanding of the importance of how they behave towards international students. Vilkins [1993] outlines a course run for Australian librarians in inter-cultural communication. The study by Vilkins included a panel interview for library staff with a group of international students. This allowed the librarians to interact more closely with the students and gave the students a forum for voicing their concerns and suggestions.

The purpose of this study is to ascertain what, if any, steps are being taken by New Zealand academic libraries to aid international students. The above literature review outlines some of the concerns regarding international students but there are very few studies that show how much is actually being done for these students. Kline [1984] carried out a survey of academic libraries and international student offices. The aim of her research was to ascertain what was being done for international students and who was primarily responsible for doing it. Her findings reveal that 98% of the International Student offices offered an orientation to the campus while only 56% of the libraries offered an orientation to the library specifically for international students. Goudy and Moushey [1984] carried out a similar study of forty-four academic libraries in the United States. All of the libraries that responded to this survey answered that they thought that international students had significant difficulties in using the library. In the Goudy and Moushey [1984] study 83% of responding libraries offered separate library instruction classes for international students which were of varying degrees of thoroughness. A recent study of user education in New Zealand tertiary libraries by Heidi Julien [1997] gives an indication of the situation currently in New Zealand but does not focus on services to international students.

The current study was designed to gauge what services are offered to international students in this country. It will also ascertain which of the possible services for international students discussed in the literature above are being offered by New Zealand libraries. The earlier surveys by Kline [1984], and Goudy and Moushey [1984] offer some guidelines as to the responses that can be expected from various questions and some of the questions from these studies have been adopted for the current study. Their

studies give evidence that a mailed survey provided a reasonable response rate. The research by Julien [1997] shows what services are offered in general in New Zealand academic libraries, and some of the classes for types of instruction from this survey have also been used in the current study. Many of the studies such as MacDonald [1988], Wayman [1984] and Jacobson [1988] give examples of the kind of services that can be offered to international students, and of the issues that international students face. The current study will show which of these services and training programmes are being undertaken by New Zealand academic libraries. The current study will also provide a picture of New Zealand academic librarians' perceptions of the needs of international students and how well they feel they are meeting those needs.

Study Objectives and Research Questions

The study objectives of this research are:

- To determine if library instruction services are offered specifically for international students.
- To determine the level of instruction offered to international students by New Zealand academic libraries
- To determine if academic librarians believe that international students have difficulty using the library
- To determine to what extent librarians consider language to be the greatest barrier for international students.
- To compare universities and polytechnics with regard to the services that they offer to international students.

- To ascertain New Zealand academic librarian's level of satisfaction with the library instruction services they offer to international students.
- To ascertain New Zealand academic librarians over-all satisfaction with library instruction programmes and facilities in place in their libraries.

The following research questions were posed:

1. Do New Zealand tertiary libraries offer library instruction classes specifically for international students?
2. What is included in library instruction classes for international students?
3. To what extent do librarians believe that international students have difficulty using the library?
4. To what extent do librarians believe that language is the primary barrier to international students' effective use of the library?
5. Is there a difference in the service offered to international students at universities or polytechnics?
6. Are New Zealand academic librarians satisfied with the library instruction services they offer to international students?
7. Are New Zealand academic librarians satisfied in general with the library instruction services that their library offers?

Methodology

The research project was designed to provide an overall view of the current situation for international students, particularly in terms of library instruction, in New Zealand

academic libraries. To gain the information required a mailed questionnaire was sent to a sample of library managers/head librarians in New Zealand academic libraries.

The sample for the survey was based on the criteria of all institutions with an international student population that is greater than 1 % of the total student population at that institution. The statistics for gathering the sample were obtained from the Ministry of Education booklet *Tertiary Education Statistics 1996* [Ministry of Education, 1996]. It is recognised that the numbers of international students at each institution are changing very rapidly but these were the most recent verified statistics available. The figures are based on students enrolled in formal programmes of study. This means any programme of study that has been approved by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). Only universities and polytechnics have been included in the sample as they are the major providers of education for international students.

The sample for the survey was 22 libraries. This is 69% of all polytechnics and universities in New Zealand.

Included with the survey was a covering letter, outlining the research project and asking that the survey be filled in by the person with responsibility for the user education programme within that library. The survey was distributed at the end of the academic year, this is a less busy time of year for some librarians and may have helped towards the good response rate.

18 responses were received in time to be included in the study giving a response rate of 82%. This is consistent with the response rate from the Kline [1984], and Goudy & Moushey [1984] studies (93% and 70% respectively).

The survey was pre-tested on staff at a polytechnic library to ensure that the questionnaire was clear and unambiguous. This was also a check on the reliability of the questionnaire. As a result of the pre-test some minor changes were made to the survey. The internal validity of the survey was checked by comparing results with the results of the Kline [1984], Goudy & Moushey [1984] and Julien [1997] studies. These comparisons will be discussed in the results/discussion section following. External validity was reasonably assured as the questionnaire was addressed to a high proportion (69%) of the total population. This ensures that the results are highly generalizable for the situation in New Zealand.

Results

Programmes for International Students

Of the 18 libraries that responded to the survey all (100%) offered some sort of introductory library instruction for their students. Only 10 (54%) offered a separate programme designed specifically for international students. Compared with the Goudy & Moushey [1984] study which gave results of 83% offering a separate instruction programme for international students, this seems quite low. However, the Kline [1984]

study had similar responses to the current study with 56% of respondents stating that they ran a separate programme for international students.

Type of Instruction offered

Librarians were asked to indicate what sort of instruction is included in the general instruction programme they offer. The results were varied but had a clear leaning towards a practical 'need-to-know' focus, with more advanced instruction offered on an 'as requested' basis.

All of the respondents (100% n=18) offered handouts and printed guides and instruction in the use of the catalogue. A tour was included for 94% (n=17) of the libraries and 83% (n=15) taught students about the classification system. The lowest result was for the use of video-tape presentations. Only 4 libraries (22%) responded that they used a video presentation as part of their library instruction. It is difficult to know whether this low result is because of the cost in time and money in producing these videos, or whether they are considered ineffective. One library did comment that they would like to have a video presentation for their library instruction programme.

Table 1. Type of instruction offered in general library orientations

Type of Instruction	Number of responses	Percentage %
Handouts & printed guides	18	100
Catalogue instruction	18	100
Library Tour	17	94
Classification instruction	15	83
CD-ROM instruction	13	72
Hands-on exercises	13	72
Individualised instruction	12	67
Print reference tools	11	61
Computer-assisted instruction	8	44
Videotape presentation	4	22

Of the 10 libraries that responded that they offered a separate programme for international students, the majority offer a library tour, handouts & printed guides, and instruction in the use of the catalogue. Only one library offered a video-tape presentation to international students (it was not stated if this was the same video as the one used for general orientations or whether it was a different one designed specifically for international students).

Table 2. Type of instruction offered in programmes designed for International Students

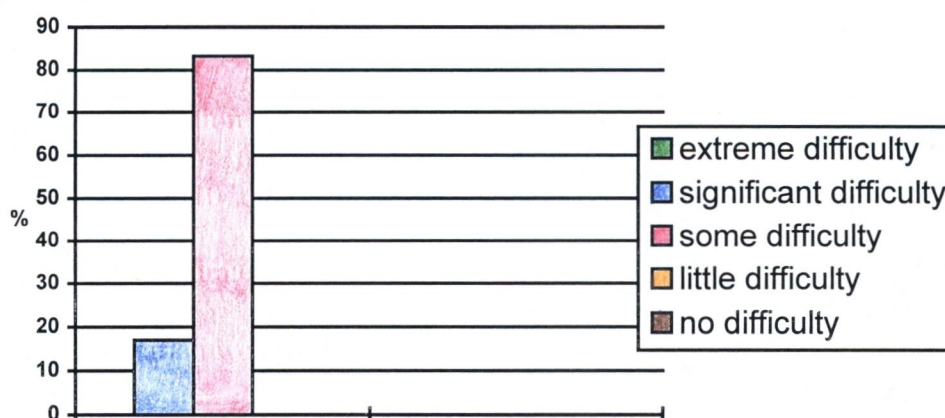
Type of instruction	Number of responses	Percentage %
Library tour	10	100
Handouts & printed guides	8	80
Catalogue instruction	8	80
Classification instruction	6	60
CD-ROM instruction	6	60
Print reference tools	5	50
Individualised instruction	4	40
Hands-on exercises	3	30
Computer-assisted instruction	1	10
Videotape presentation	1	10

Although it was recommended in some previous studies [Lopez,1983 and Wayman 1984], only two respondents (11%) responded that their library had considered offering instruction in the native language of the students. There were many reasons given as to why this was not practical, the most common being lack of speakers of the required language and the range of languages that would need to be offered. Five of the respondents commented that they had staff members with foreign language skills available 'if needed'. One institution had offered instruction in Mandarin but the offer was not taken up by the students.

International Students' difficulty in using the library

All of the respondents to the questionnaire believe that international students have at least some difficulty using their library with the responses varying from 'some difficulty' to 'significant difficulty'. None of the respondents felt that international students experienced extreme difficulty.

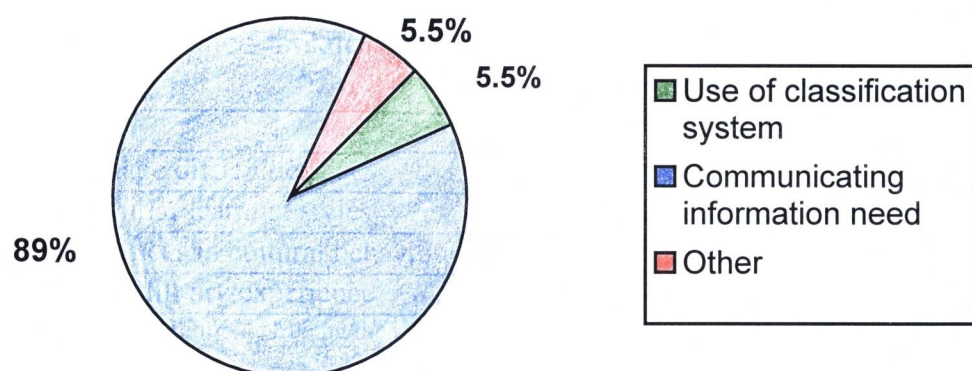
Figure 1. What level of difficulty do you believe international students in general have using your library?



There were several comments that all students face difficulty using the library and that this is not restricted to international students.

The majority of the respondents (89% n=16) believe that the aspect of library use that international students have the most difficulty with is communicating an information need to library staff.

Figure 2. What aspect of the library do you believe international students have the most difficulty with?



Sixteen of the respondents (89%) believe that international students would benefit from having library instruction services specifically designed with their needs in mind, even though only 56% (n=10) of respondents actually offer separate programmes. The reasons given as to why a separate programme would be helpful were varied, the most popular being that the librarian would be able to speak more slowly and clearly, using simpler language than they perhaps normally do (38% n=6). Other reasons given why this would be helpful for the students were that librarians could spend more time to make the

students comfortable with asking questions, they could adapt the sessions to the students' cultural needs and would be able to work with smaller groups. Many of these improvements are reliant on increased levels of resourcing for library instruction. The reasons for not offering separate programmes even though they believe they would be helpful were not given, but the author believes that this is most probably due to levels of staffing and funding for user education.

When asked to rank several factors according to their degree of importance as barriers to international students use of the library, the majority of respondents stated that language is the major barrier that they face.

Table 3. Mean importance rank for barriers to use of Library

Barrier	Mean Rank
Language difficulties	1.2
Unfamiliar learning styles	2.2
Differences in cultural behaviour	2.8
Lack of library experience	3.6

(ranked from 1-4, 1 being the most important)

Comparison of University and Polytechnic Libraries

Because of the size of the sample it was not possible to use any statistical tests to check for differences between university and polytechnic libraries. There are, however, some trends which are worthwhile pointing out. 86% (n=6) of the universities offer separate programmes for international students compared with 45% (n=5) of the polytechnics. Other noticeable differences were in the kind of instruction offered in library orientations. While 100% (n=7) of the university libraries offer hands-on exercises for

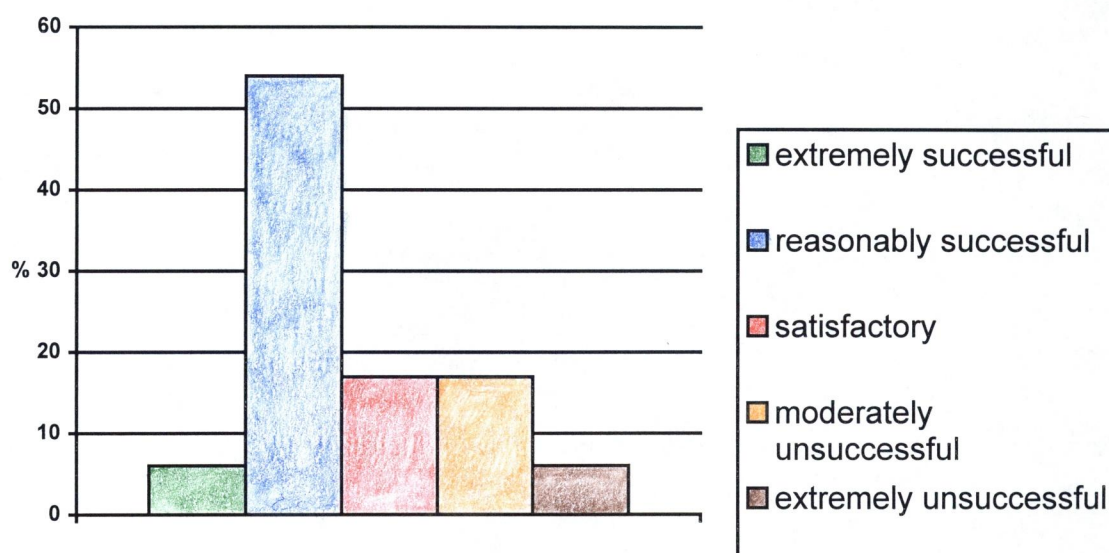
students to complete only 55% (n=6) of polytechnic libraries do. One hundred percent (n=11) of polytechnic libraries carry out library tours whereas only 86% (n=6) of university libraries do.

In programmes designed specifically for international students the most notable differences were that while 100% (n=5) of polytechnic libraries that have separate programmes for international students, offer instruction in the use of the catalogue during the introductory library session only 66% (n=4) of university libraries do. One hundred percent (n=5) of polytechnic libraries with separate programmes, offer instruction in the use of CD-ROM indexes, while only 50% (n=3) of university libraries do.

Successfulness of Instruction programmes for International Students

The respondents were asked to rate how successful they thought the programme that they offered to international students was. Answers to this ranged from extremely successful (6% n=1) to extremely unsuccessful (6% n=1), with the majority believing their programme was reasonably successful (56% n=10).

Figure 3. Successfulness of library instruction programme for International students.



Participants in the questionnaire were asked to list the “greatest improvement that could be made to the library instruction programme” that they offered. The responses to this question were varied and interesting. Many of the improvements were dependant on having more resources, either in time, staffing or funding.

Many wanted library instruction integrated into the academic curriculum as an ongoing process rather than a one-off session at the beginning of the year. This was part of a noticeable movement towards teaching information literacy, with 33% (n=6) of respondents answers being in line with information literacy theories. The underlying theory of information literacy is that 'library skills' are just a small part of the entire research process and that libraries should be taking a much larger part in the teaching of generic information skills. It has been defined as "the ability to access, evaluate, and use information from a variety of sources" [California media and library educators association 1994, p.2]. Another underlying characteristic of teaching information literacy

is that it is an ongoing process that is integrated into the general curriculum, as compared to a single bibliographic instruction session. For further detail on information literacy theories, Christine Bruce's book "The seven faces of information literacy" [1997] provides a good overview.

Two libraries wanted to improve their services for Asian language speakers, with one waiting for their OPAC catalogue to have the function of providing for Asian languages, and the other looking at guides and signage in Asian languages. Several mentioned offering more "hands-on" instruction, which is encouraging as this should work well for international students.

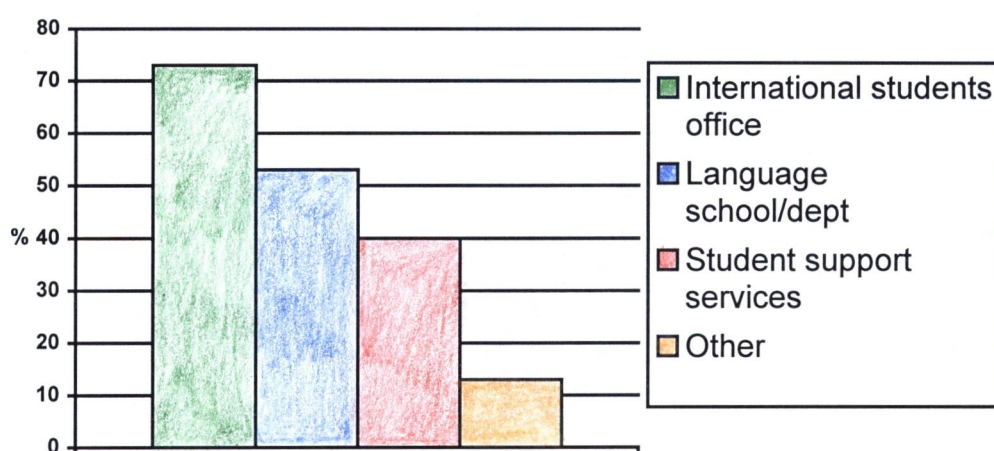
How library instruction is offered

Participants in the survey were asked a range of questions in order to get an overall picture of how library instruction was offered in their institution and any problems or issues that they face.

Forty-four percent (n=8) of the respondents said that library instruction was a compulsory part of the curriculum for at least some of their students while 56% (n=10) said it was not compulsory for any of their students. For one institution library instruction was compulsory for all under-graduate students, and for another all full-time students were required to attend a library instruction session. Many of the other respondents said that it was compulsory for some subjects. The issue of who gets library instruction and who doesn't seems to be a subjective decision that depends of the tutor's relationship with the library, and probably the tutor's own level of information literacy.

Eighty-three percent (n=15) of respondents work with other staff in the organisation to offer library instruction to international students. Some work with more than one department.

Figure 4. Departments worked with in the institution

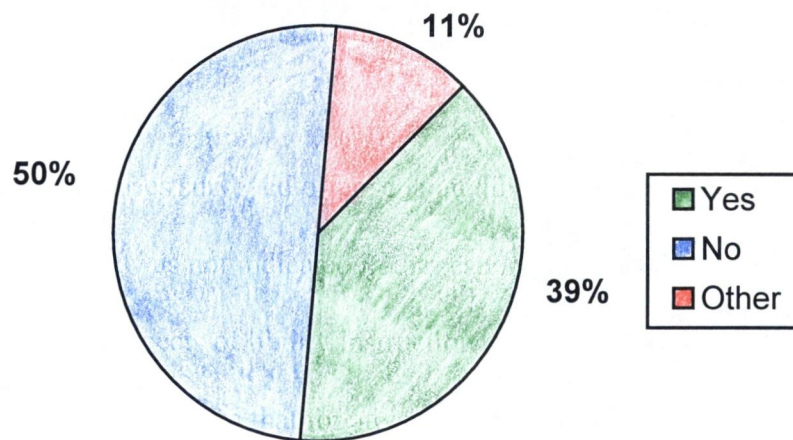


One respondent stated that the tutors of English language classes attend the library instruction sessions with the students in order to help overcome any language difficulties that may arise.

Sixty-seven percent (n=12) of respondents replied that they found it difficult to be allotted adequate time from the academic curriculum for library instruction and a further 17% (n=3) replied that this is sometimes a problem depending on the course and the tutor involved. This is again indicative of the tenuous relationship between academic and library staff. One respondent commented that “some tutors think we can teach all the ‘library stuff’ during the ½ hour, first day orientation”.

Sixty-one percent (n=11) of respondents carry out their initial library instruction within the first two weeks of the students' arrival on campus with another 11% (n=2) carrying it out within the first four weeks. Participants were then asked if they felt that the timing of initial library instruction was optimal for the students' learning.

Figure 5. Do you feel that the timing of your library instruction programme is optimal to students' learning?



Several of the respondents commented on the need for library instruction to occur at the point of need rather than at the beginning of the year when students are absorbing a lot of other new information. Respondents that answered "other" said that it depends on the individual students involved how well they learn at which particular times.

Participants were then asked what times they thought would be more suitable for initial library instruction. Ten respondents answered this question. Fifty percent (n=5) felt that initial library instruction would be best immediately prior to the students' first major assignment, with a further 33% (n=3) stating that library instruction should be an integrated ongoing process that is carried out year-round. One respondent answered that it would be best immediately after the first assignment in order that the students have a context to put the learning in.

Analysis and Discussion

The response rate and level of comment from participants in the survey indicates a high level of interest in user education, and particularly for international students from New Zealand's academic librarians. With the increasing numbers of international students in New Zealand libraries their needs are becoming more apparent and the pressures that they place on user education librarians are increasing.

Just over half of the libraries surveyed offer separate library instruction programmes for international students. It was not indicated in the responses whether these separate programmes include all aspects of library instruction or are just an introductory session. Some of the respondents indicated that for advanced instruction such as CD-ROM training, the students must request training individually. For the international students at institutions where separate programmes are not offered they must make the most of the general sessions, which are undoubtedly difficult for them to understand and often assume a knowledge of Western style academic libraries.

The number of libraries offering handouts and printed guides is encouraging as this is one of the strategies for helping international students that the Kflu [1990] article recommends. By providing written material the library gives the student something to take away from the session and absorb in their own time. The use of computer-assisted instruction in general is low (44% n=8), and in programmes specifically for international students is even lower (10% n=1). This result is surprising as this seems an ideal tool for students from non-English speaking backgrounds. Computer assisted learning packages would allow them to work through a problem at their own speed and to learn by 'doing'.

The low usage of computer-assisted learning could be due to a shortage of terminals available in libraries for teaching. Computer-assisted learning is also a relatively new concept and packages might, therefore, have not been developed yet. The response rate for libraries offering computer assisted instruction are consistent with the results from the Julien [1997] study (43%). The use of hands-on exercises is also surprisingly low (30% n=3) for international students. This was mentioned by several libraries as an improvement they would like to make to their programmes, but it is dependant on more staff and funding for library instruction.

The type of instruction offered in the sessions designed specifically for international students is generally of a less detailed type than that offered in the general sessions. While 72% (n=13) of libraries offer hands-on exercises in the general library instruction sessions only 30% (n=3) of libraries offer hands-on exercises in the sessions for international students. There seems to be more of a focus on making the students comfortable in the library, with all respondents offering a library tour for international students. This is a commendable philosophy to have, provided it is backed up by the technical training at a later stage. International students need the same level of library skills as New Zealand students and it is to be hoped that this training is not being neglected for the sake of making the students comfortable in the library - and that this is not as far as library instruction for international students goes. By providing advanced training on an 'as requested' basis this could make it difficult for international students to get the training that they need. It puts the onus on them to admit that they are having difficulty, and as

Mellon [1988] states this causes library anxiety. International students are often extremely busy, doing more papers than New Zealand students, and just finding the time for further library instruction can be difficult.

There is a commonly held belief that international students experience difficulty in using the library, but also some feeling that this difficulty is no worse than that experienced by any new student to the institution. Comparing the results with the Goudy & Moushey [1984] study (from which this question was adapted) it appears that New Zealand librarians do not perceive international students as having as great a difficulty as their American counterparts do. Thirty-five percent of the respondents in the Goudy & Moushey [1984] study believe that international students have significant difficulty using the library compared to only 17% (n=3) of the respondents in the current study. It is hard to believe that the difficulty faced by international students has decreased, rather, this difference is probably indicative of a lack of awareness of the issues for international students in this country.

There is a prevailing belief that the greatest problem faced by international students is language-based. This is evidenced not only in the ranking of barriers faced by international students (see Table 3), but also in the reasons given why a separate instruction programme for international students would be useful. The majority responded that this would be useful because the librarian would talk more slowly and use simple language. The low ranking of lack of library experience as a barrier was surprising to the author as several authors in this field comment on the differences between Western and non-Western academic libraries [for example Jacobson 1988,

Wayman 1984 and Helms 1995]. Many of the international students who study in New Zealand come from completely different educational backgrounds than that to which New Zealand librarians are accustomed. Many of the students from Asia and other non-Western nations such as Arabian countries are used to closed stacks in libraries. That is, they are not used to the concept of browsing and evaluating information sources. Rather they are accustomed to being told what to read by their tutors and having that material available on 'restricted loan' or 'closed stacks' or similar systems. The responses to this question again highlight a lack of awareness and knowledge by academic librarians in this country. One respondent went so far as to say "... a library is a library ... no matter what the country". This is disconcerting and highlights the need for continued research in this area so that professionals working in the industry may become better informed about the clientele they are working with. There was some knowledge (notably among the responses from university librarians) of differences between academic libraries, but not enough to result in lack of New Zealand library experience being considered a major barrier.

Many of the articles mentioned in the literature review cited an awareness of the student's cultural background as being crucial to helping international students use the library successfully [Jacobson 1988, Ball 1987]. This awareness seems to be seriously lacking in many New Zealand academic libraries. Because language difficulties are a very 'visible' barrier to library staff working with international students it could be that they are given greater importance than they perhaps deserve, with the less visible problems, such as library anxiety and cultural behaviour difficulties not being noted or dealt with. There were some comments on the survey responses about gender barriers

felt by some Asian male students. Comment was made to the effect that they find it difficult to accept help from a female librarian. These sorts of differences in cultural background can prove just as daunting as language difficulties. This is why much of the research in this area concludes that it is crucial for librarians to recognise and attempt to understand the different cultural backgrounds that the students are coming from in order that they may empathise with the issues that the students are facing [Wayman, 1984; Jacobson, 1988; Ball, 1987; Sarkodie-Mensah, 1992].

Although some previous research [Lopez, 1983; Wayman, 1984] included giving library instruction in the students' native language as an effective strategy for international students, none of the libraries surveyed actually offered this service. It had been contemplated by 2 respondents but practical matters stopped this from going ahead. A surprising number of libraries however, had foreign language speakers available if needed. Which languages they spoke and whether their services were often used was not indicated. It would be interesting to know if their availability was publicised at all.

The question about offering library instruction in the students' native language highlighted some interesting differences in the philosophies of the libraries in the way that international students are treated. Several commented that the students were studying here to improve their English and therefore it would not help them to give library instruction in their own language. In contrast, others had contemplated translations of printed guides, and instructional audiotapes in different languages in order that the students might successfully use the library with minimum frustration for all parties. It is debatable whether making the students learn about the library in English is

helpful to them or a hindrance. There exists a potential conflict in role for the academic library in this area. Whether it is the library's role to help in the teaching of English, or whether it is the library's role to help the students find the information they need to complete their studies seems to be a point of contention, and one that some libraries voiced strong opinions on.

The issue of whether international students should do all the adapting to their new environment, or whether the institution needs to meet them part of the way is one that has not been fully investigated. In a time of low resources and high demand for academic libraries, it would seem easier to demand that the students 'sink or swim' with existing library services, but this hardly seems fair for the students who are paying extremely high fees to study in this country and should therefore be able to expect a reasonable level of service.

Sarkodie-Mensah [1992] recommends that library staff learn a foreign language, not necessarily to use it in their work, but just to give them an awareness of the issues faced by non-English speakers. Although the practicalities of offering instruction for in the students' native language, such as the range of languages needed and having fluent speakers available, makes this improbable, there are simple steps that can be taken such as translating of guides and signage into major languages, and generally raising awareness of the issues faced by students for whom language causes difficulties.

Despite the fact that most of the respondents believe that international students do have difficulty using the library, most of them also state that their programmes are successful for the students. With 78% (n=14) of respondents indicating that they were satisfied with

the successfulness of their programmes for international students, it would be interesting to know how they came by those opinions. Some of the respondents commented that their instruction programmes were not formally evaluated and this was obviously causing some concern for it to be mentioned. The Julien study [1997] showed that very little formal evaluation was carried out by New Zealand user education librarians with the majority of evaluation being informal. From both the Julien [1997] study and the current project there appears to be a need for increased formal evaluation of library instruction programmes in New Zealand's academic libraries. It is impossible to know if the programmes are relevant or efficient without carrying out some form of evaluation, and trying to match the programme to the client group's needs. In order to ascertain what the students' needs are, the students need to have some form of input into the programmes. The workshop described by Vilkins [1993], outlined a process of panel interviews between librarians and international students. This seems like a simple, effective way of getting feedback from the students as to what they find useful and what is not useful. Only one of the survey respondents commented that their staff regularly attend cultural workshops. The same respondent also indicated that an ethnic balance is sought when employing student helpers. It is these sorts of proactive measures that are the difference between offering a satisfactory service to international students, and providing an extremely successful one. The rating of the library instruction programmes for international students as being successful, is solely from the librarian's point of view and it would make interesting further research to ask the same question of the students at these institutions.

There are no statistically proven differences between the service offered by university and polytechnic libraries, but there does seem to be a different focus between the two types of library. The polytechnic libraries seem to teach more practical hands-on skills during initial library instruction than the universities. The universities, whether by design or accident, offer more of an 'orientation' than an 'instruction' session. In general the university user education librarians seemed to be more aware of the differences between Western academic libraries and other styles with several respondents mentioning that international students are accustomed to 'closed stacks'. This could be indicative of a higher level of professional reading and research carried out in university libraries. A greater percentage of university libraries offer separate programmes for international students than do polytechnic libraries. This could be due to the numbers of international students studying at universities putting more pressure on the library to provide separate programmes than at the polytechnics. University libraries are also larger than most of the polytechnic libraries and would therefore have greater resources on call to provide such a service.

Most of the libraries surveyed seek assistance from other areas in the institution when offering services to international students, the majority working with the international students office/department. This is similar to the results of the Goudy & Moushey [1984] study. Where libraries are not sufficiently staffed to offer particular services to international students the use of other staff members throughout the institution makes sense. It was not indicated what sort of assistance is sought from the other departments used or how successful these partnerships were. The use of the language school or department at the institution is less than the use of the international students office, but

this is probably due to the fact that not all international students are studying language, with many students here to complete business and other degrees.

The majority of libraries find it difficult to be allocated adequate time to carry out library instruction, and the time allocated seems to be dependant on the library's relationship with tutors. This is of concern as it is apparent that some students may be coming through New Zealand's tertiary education system with little to no library skills at all. Many of the respondents called for integrating library instruction into the curriculum for all courses to avoid this subjectivity in deciding which students get library instruction. The increasing push towards information literacy and the teaching of "information skills" as generic tools should help to encourage a change of the attitude of academic staff to the value of library education. Increased recognition of academic librarians as professionals, with valuable and specific skills and abilities, by tutorial staff would also help to build stronger relationships between the two groups, so that they could work in closer partnership to supply an effective education to students.

Although 50% (n=9) of respondents were not satisfied with the timing of library instruction, comments indicated that the libraries did not have a lot of choice in when the instruction is offered. These decisions are made by the course supervisors, and the libraries are required to slot in to whatever time is made available to them. This is again indicative of the poor working relationship between libraries and tutorial staff in general. Some respondents made comment that a lot of material is given to new students in their first two weeks on campus and this is not the ideal time for library instruction. This is particularly hard for international students who have probably just arrived in the country,

and so are still acclimatising to a new country as well. As library instruction is not immediately relevant to the student much is forgotten by the time the student actually needs to use the library to complete their first assignment. The integration of information literacy training into the academic curriculum as an ongoing process would be an effective way of overcoming this loss of information that is not immediately relevant.

Conclusions & Summary

From the number and depth of responses it is apparent that services for international students are a matter of importance to many New Zealand academic librarians.

The rapid increase in the numbers of international students studying in New Zealand has left academic libraries unprepared and under-resourced to deal with the increased demand and pressure placed on them by these students.

The state of such services for international students in New Zealand is at an embryonic stage and the development of improvements in these services is being hindered by a lack of knowledge and research into the needs of these students.

There is an ignorance of the issues faced by students in a foreign country acclimatising to alien cultural backgrounds and educational styles. Although a lot of previous research states the importance of understanding differing cultural backgrounds there seems to be a feeling that the students must do all the adapting to New Zealand culture, instead of

meeting the students halfway and trying to make their time studying here as easy as possible. International students studying in New Zealand usually pay full tuition fees or very close to it and therefore should be able to expect to receive excellent and relevant service from all aspects of the institution at which they choose to study.

In order for the institution to be able to provide a relevant service it is vital that the needs of the students are understood, and the only way to do this is to ask the students what services they need, and how satisfactory and effective the service they are currently receiving is. There is a desperate need for user satisfaction research to be carried out for international students in order that the services provided by libraries in New Zealand have a strong factual foundation on which to be built. Although the majority of librarians surveyed believed their programmes were successful for international students there is little indication that these beliefs are based on factual evaluation of the service.

The overall picture in New Zealand at the moment equates closely with results from research carried out in the United States over ten years ago. This is a relatively new area for New Zealand libraries and there is room for much more research to be carried out on this topic. The most urgent area for further research is the satisfaction level of international students so that this can be compared with the services that are offered currently in order that the 'gaps' can be identified and the situation remedied.

Promotion of the issues faced by international students needs to be carried out and a general awareness-raising campaign would prove useful. The implementation of staff workshops such as those outlined by Vilkins [1993] and Greenfield [1986], and tapping

into the resources of other departments in the institution who may be better trained to deal with international students would be a positive step forward.

It would be interesting to gain more details about the reasons behind decisions made in New Zealand academic libraries regarding provision of library instruction services, and the degree to which these decisions are based on monetary factors, or whether there are deeper philosophical reasons behind them.

It would perhaps have been useful to survey more librarians from each institution particularly for the questions regarding their perceptions and beliefs regarding the library instruction services in their institution. This would have given a wider sample and helped to avoid the imbalance of analysing the perceptions of only one staff member from each institution.

New Zealand has a long way to go in terms of offering a relevant service to its international students, this project provides a step in the right direction.

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LIBRARY INSTRUCTION SERVICES FOR INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS IN NEW ZEALAND ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Questionnaire

1. Does your library offer an orientation or introductory library instruction program?

☐ Yes

☐ No (*go to Question 13*)

2. What is included in the program?
(*tick all appropriate boxes*)

☐ Library Tour

☐ Individualised Instruction

☐ Computer-assisted instruction (i.e. online tutorials, Powerpoint programs etc)

☐ Video-tape presentation

☐ Handouts/printed guides

☐ Instruction in the use of the catalogue

☐ Instruction in the library classification system

☐ Instruction in the use of CD-ROM indexes

☐ Instruction in the use of basic print reference tools

☐ Hands-on exercises for students to complete

Comments :

.....

.....

3. Does your library offer a separate library instruction program for international students as a standard procedure?

☐ Yes

☐ No (Go to Question 5)

4. What is included in the program?
(tick all appropriate boxes)

☐ Library tour

☐ Individualised instruction

☐ Computer-assisted instruction (i.e. online tutorials, Powerpoint programs etc)

☐ Video-tape presentation

☐ Handouts/printed guides

☐ Instruction in the use of catalogue

☐ Instruction in the library classification system

☐ Instruction in the use of CD-ROM indexes

☐ Instruction in the use of basic print reference tools

☐ Hands-on exercises for students to complete

Comments:

.....

.....

5. Is library instruction a compulsory part of course curriculum in your institution?

☐ Yes, for all students

☐ Yes, for some courses

List faculties or courses:

.....

☐ No

6. Do you work in conjunction with any other department/faculty of your institution in the offering of library instruction services to international students?

☐ Yes

☐ No (go to question 7)

If you answered Yes, which departments do you work with?
(tick all appropriate boxes)

☐ international students office/department

☐ language school/department

☐ student support services

Other/comments:

.....

7. Do you find it difficult to be allotted adequate time from the academic curriculum to carry out library instruction?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Comments:

.....

8. At what point during the course do you carry out initial library instruction or orientations?

☐ Within two weeks of the student's arrival at your institution

☐ Immediately prior to the student's first major assignment

Other/comments:

.....

9. Do you feel that the current timing of your library instruction programme is optimal to students' learning?

☐ Yes (*go to question 10*)

☐ No

If you answered No, what time during their study do you think would be better?

.....

.....

.....

10. To what degree do you believe that the library instruction programme in place in your library is successful for international students?
(*tick one box*)

☐ extremely successful

☐ reasonably successful

☐ satisfactory

☐ moderately unsuccessful

☐ extremely unsuccessful

Comments:

.....

.....

11. What would you consider to be the greatest improvement that could be made to the library instruction programme you offer?

.....

.....

12. Has your library considered offering library instruction for international students in their native language?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Comments:

.....

13. What level of difficulty do you believe international students, in general, have using your library?
(tick one box)

☐ extreme difficulty

☐ significant difficulty

☐ some difficulty

☐ little difficulty

☐ no difficulty

14. What aspect of the library do you believe international students have the most difficulty with?

☐ Use of computer catalogues

☐ Use of classification system

☐ Use of CD ROM/online databases

☐ Communicating an information need to library staff

Other/comments:

.....

15. Do you believe that international students who have difficulty using the library would benefit from library instruction services specifically designed for international students?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If you believe that international students would benefit from such services, for what reasons do you believe this would be helpful?

.....

.....

.....

.....

16. Please rank the factors below in order of importance as barriers to international students effective use of the library:

(i.e. 1= the greatest barrier, 4= the least barrier)

☐ lack of library experience

☐ differences in cultural behaviour

☐ language difficulties

☐ difficulty with unfamiliar learning styles (such as self-directed learning)

Other factors/comments:

.....

.....

17. What type is your institution?

☐ University

☐ Polytechnic

Thank you for your time in filling in this questionnaire.

Please feel free to add any additional comments or thoughts below.

The questionnaire should be returned as soon as possible to:

*Heather Ward
2/179 Tasman Street
Nelson*

There is a postage paid reply envelope enclosed.

2/179 Tasman Street
Nelson

1997

The Librarian

Dear

I am carrying out research into library services for international students in New Zealand tertiary libraries as part of my Masters in Library and Information Studies. From this research I hope to gain a picture of the situation currently in New Zealand and to gain insight into New Zealand librarians' perceptions of international students. This study will provide a foundation on which further research can be built, so that we may improve our service to these students.

A sample of New Zealand tertiary libraries has been selected. The criteria for this selection was all university and polytechnic libraries with an international student population greater than 1% of the institution's total student population. As the survey sample is small (22 libraries) it is crucial that as many responses are received as possible.

The questionnaire, which is voluntary, should take about 30 to 45 minutes to complete. I would appreciate it if you would pass this letter and questionnaire on to the staff member at your library with the necessary knowledge and responsibility in user education to complete it.

A summary of the findings will be sent to all members of the sample on completion of the research. All responses from this questionnaire will be strictly anonymous and confidential. Completion and return of the questionnaire will be taken as consent to collect the data and analyse it for the purposes of this research. The results of the survey may be published and disseminated to New Zealand librarians in the future, but comments and responses will not be attributed to particular libraries.

Please return the completed questionnaire at your earliest convenience in the reply envelope provided.

Heidi Julien of Victoria University of Wellington supervises this research. If you have any questions please contact either Heidi or myself.

Thank you for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Heather Ward

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