INTRODUCTION

LIS 608, Research Methodology in LIS, focuses on common social science techniques, such as surveys and experiments, which lend themselves to quantitative analysis. Also included are lectures on qualitative methods, such as participant observation and historical research, and hybrid methods like focus groups, content analysis, and evaluation research. Studies of information usage are used as the main examples, and methods peculiar to information science, such as bibliometrics, are also examined.

Student learning outcomes--upon completion of the course students will be able to:

- critically evaluate and apply core principles and theories of library and information science (e.g. the role of information agencies in a democratic and pluralistic society).
- define core ethical principles and describe how they should apply them to the practice of library and information science both as individuals and as part of the collective.
- experiment with appropriate technologies and tools to be prepared to implement them in a variety of information environments.
- interpret and evaluate research.
• apply research to the analysis of professional problems.
• describe how empirical research advances the knowledge base and practice of library and information science.
• communicate effectively in writing.
• apply critical thinking to solve professional problems.

One text is required for the course:


Other required readings can be found in academic libraries or through the UK library website. Some are freely available on the Internet. (Readings for week 2 are posted in Blackboard.)

Structure of the course: Each week you will view a brief lecture (10-15 minutes), which will be linked to the blog. It is highly recommended that you view the lecture before doing anything else, as it will draw your attention to the key concepts for the week and notify you of specifics of that week’s assignment. Almost every week you will do some kind of assignment, whether it is an article review, an application of a method, a quiz, or a targeted exercise. Your participation grade will be mostly based on your engagement with your classmates' work. With the exception of the quizzes, optional online office hours, and your final research proposals, everything will be submitted to the course blog.

Contact Information: I am most accessible through email: melissa.adler@uky.edu. As a general rule, I will respond to course-related email correspondence within 24 hours. Please include the course number in brackets [608] in the subject line for all messages. I am happy to meet face to face or via technology with students, but you should set up the appointment in advance via email.

Please note that class communication is done via your official UK email address. You must check this frequently.

Technological requirements: To test your browser’s compatibility with Blackboard, please visit [http://wiki.uky.edu/blackboard/Wiki%20Pages/Browser%20Eye%20Chart.aspx](http://wiki.uky.edu/blackboard/Wiki%20Pages/Browser%20Eye%20Chart.aspx)

All students should have access to a computer with a secure Internet connection, Adobe Acrobat Reader, and word processing software that allows them to save files as .DOCX, preferably, but also .doc, .odt, or .rtf files. I cannot view .pages files, so Mac users will need to save their assignments in a different format. Microsoft Office and other software is available from [https://download.uky.edu/](https://download.uky.edu/). For more on technical requirements, visit the Distance Learning website's Technical Requirements and Recommendations. Please let me know when you are having technical issues first. For more assistance, contact the following:
Information Technology Customer Service Center (UKIT): 859-257-1300
Help Desk: 218-HELP (4357)
Distance Learning Programs Office: 257-3377
Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning: 257-8272

FERPA and Privacy: As a student, your educational records are considered confidential. Under FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), your records are confidential and protected. Under most circumstances your records will not be released without your written and signed consent. However, some directory information may be released to third parties without the your prior consent unless a written request to restrict this is on file. You can learn more about student rights to privacy at http://www.uky.edu/registrar/FERPA-privacy. In this course, we will be working with third party applications online (Wordpress). The different proprietors of these sites may or may not have privacy guarantees and the FERPA policy at UK does not apply to these sites. It will be your responsibility to read the privacy documentation at each site.

It will be acceptable for you to use an alias when using the Wordpress site required for this course. If you still have concerns, please e-mail me as soon as possible to discuss your options. The blog can only be viewed by members of the class. It may be made public at the end of the course.

Academic Accommodations: If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please see me as soon as possible. In order to receive accommodations in this course, you must provide me with a Letter of Accommodation from the Disability Resource Center (Room 2, Alumni Gym, 257-2754, jkarnes@uky.edu) for coordination of campus disability services available to students with disabilities. We can then collaborate on the best solution.

Academic Integrity, Cheating and Plagiarism: You are expected to submit your own original work for all assignments in this course. See the home page for the Office of Academic Ombud Services (http://www.uky.edu/Ombud) for a definition of plagiarism, how to avoid plagiarism and UK’s new academic offense policy. Please refer to Student Rights and Responsibilities, Part II, Section 6.3 (http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Code/part2.html) for UK’s policy on academic integrity.

Classroom Behavior, Decorum and Civility: Please be respectful to others in the class and engage in civil discourse when we discuss topics that have a diversity of perspectives. Please help me maintain the most courteous environment by using a little peer pressure if necessary.

General Course Policies: Policies concerning academic integrity, excused absences and academic accommodations due to disability are available online at: http://cis.uky.edu/lis/sites/default/files/policies.pdf
Integration of the syllabus with the themes of diversity, assessment, and technology: All UK professional education programs address and affirm the value of diversity in education, the use of technology to support all aspects of instructional programming, and the importance of attaining high levels of skill in assessing the outcomes of instruction. This course provides students an opportunity to demonstrate attention to these themes and reflect on the mechanisms that this course has provided to demonstrate improved skills in these areas.

Grading for the entire course will be based on:

| Assignment 1. LIS literature exercise | 10 |
| Assignment 2: Observation            | 10 |
| Assignment 3: Interview/Survey questions | 10 |
| Article review                       | 10 |
| Article review comments              | 10 |
| Assignment 4: Research proposal      | 25 |
| Participation                        | 15 |

Grading Scale:

[92% – 100%] = A (Exceptional Achievement)
[82% – 91%] = B (High Achievement)
[70% – 81%] = C (Average Achievement)
[0% – 69%] = F (Failing)

Participation (15 points): Your participation grade will be based on how engaged you are within the blog. My hope is that we have a vibrant, ongoing conversation.

Required participation:

You are expected to comment on other people's posts throughout the semester. For each exercise (1, 2, 3, and 4), you are required to comment on at least four of your classmates' posts. Responses should be at least 100 words each and should provide thoughtful reflection.

Write a 200 word response to one of the Week 2 articles (not the textbook chapter) to the home page of the blog by the end of the week (Sunday).
You are also welcome (but not required) to post any news, questions, or insights related to the course to the home page at any time.

Quizzes (5 points each): We will have two short quizzes in Blackboard on the dates indicated below.

Assignments: All assignments are due when indicated. Up to five days extension may be granted for exceptional circumstances if requested in advance. All reading listed should be completed by the date indicated; when a reading has the notion “Discuss” before it, that means that you are to have read the item carefully and are prepared to discuss it. Please double-space and staple all papers; do not use report covers or list Social Security numbers on your papers.

Article reviews: The class is divided up into six groups of five people for the article reviews. There will be five articles that need to be reviewed by each group during the course of the semester. Groups are assigned different articles for each of these weeks. You are not required to read the articles assigned to other groups, but it’s recommended that you skim some of them. (You ARE expected to read all of the articles assigned in week 2, though.) The goal of this assignment is to acquaint you with the methods in action, as well as the scope of research in the field of library and information science. Over the course of the semester each of you will be the primary reviewer for one article, and you will provide responses for four articles. You are encouraged to look at the other groups’ pages to glean a broader understanding of the kinds of research being done in LIS.

Reviews (15 points):

- Each week one person from each group will be assigned to write a 600-800 word critical review of an article, with an emphasis on the use of the research method or theory. Draw from the textbook and supplemental reading to support your review.
- Reviews are due by Thursday of the week that the article is assigned so that commenters have time to comment before the close of the week.
- Reviews will be added to the blog page dedicated to that article. You will go into the page, which contains the citation for the article, and edit, adding your review below the citation.
- If an abstract is provided with the article, copy and paste it into your review. If not, provide a 1-2 sentence summary of the article. The abstract/summary is not to be included in the word count for the review.
- Provide at least two questions for discussion, to be answered by the other members of the group.
The issues covered by the review will vary, according to topic and method and your own lens through which you choose to analyze the article, but some things to consider are the following (this is not an exhaustive list):

What is/are the central research question(s)?

What is the argument/thesis of the article?

How does it inform library/knowledge work practice?

Is something being measured? If so, how? What is the unit of measurement?

Does the author(s) explain their methodology effectively?

What type of sample is used, and how are participants selected?

How is data collected? How is it analyzed?

Is this the appropriate method for this project?

Are there limitations in the research design? Unanswered questions? Holes?

What are the strengths of the paper?

What might be some further research questions that could spring from this article?

**Comments (15 points total over the semester):**

- Every other member of the group will comment on the review, respond to the questions, and add insights.
- You will do this in the "reply" space beneath the reviewer's page.
- Responses must be a minimum of 150 words.

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**ASSIGNMENT 1: LIS LITERATURE (10 points)**

This exercise is centered on the following informal research question: **Should this blog be made public, or should it remain private, for only the class to view?**

You will each look to LIS databases, Google Scholar, or freely available sources on the web and post citations for three sources--one found using an LIS database, one from Google
Scholar, and one on the web. For each citation, explain the argument in the article as it relates to this question. Provide 3-4 sentences on each piece. If you notice that someone else has cited the same work that you chose, please choose another source, unless you have significant additional insights on the article. Note that there will be very few articles that specifically address this question, so you'll have to draw from sources on privacy, LIS education, online courses, self-promotion, social media, blogging, etc.

We'll come back to this question at the end of the course and make a decision regarding the public/private status of this site.

Post these to the Home page of the blog by creating a new post.

ASSIGNMENT 2: OBSERVATION (10 points)

The purpose of Exercise One is to give you experience in observing people. You are to pick a library setting, observe what goes on there, and describe the experience in a 500-700 word blog post. Create a new post on the Home page.

The basic steps are these:

1. Read the material from Kawulick, "Participant observation as a data collection method" and Babbie's chapter on "Field research," for a little "how to do it" advice.

2. Find a library setting in which these conditions apply: a. you have access (i.e., you can legally be there without difficulty); b. there is an unobtrusive place and for you to sit; c. you will not disrupt or interfere with the work of others; d. you have a clear field of view (you can see without twisting and turning or looking around an obstruction); and e. where there is a flow of people and work. Some possible settings are:

   reference desk or circulation desk areas -- periodical or reserve reading areas -- an area for online catalog terminals or Internet computers

3. Pick a half-hour time period (a full 30 minutes) and sit there. Watch carefully what happens around you. Take notes, and mark times at which you make observations. E.g., “6:03. Tall man & small boy--> reference desk”. Do not be so obvious about your observations that people feel that they are being watched. Make systematic observations about what you see. Try to look at the scene as a stranger -- someone who has arrived from a distant place and has never seen this situation before. I can't tell you exactly what to note (that is part of your task), but here are a few suggestions to get you started:

   How many people pass through your field of view? What is the rate of flow -- is it a "busy" place? How would you describe the majority of people who pass by? What kinds of
interactions take place? Describe individual eye and body movements, and vocalizations: conversations with others, or "talking out loud" to oneself. What kinds of roles do people play? Try to avoid preconceptions and common labels: Don't use titles (e.g., "librarian" and "patron") to describe roles, but rather describe what behaviors you see. What observable expressions are evoked in those people you see, e.g., satisfaction, frustration, happiness, etc.? Do you think people know or suspect that you are observing them? Finally, might there be a practical application of your study? E.g., Could the space or the service offered where you observed be improved to better serve the clients of that library?

4. This is the hard part! Write a narrative that conveys the experience that you had (or reports the results of your observations). It is OK to be creative in your style, as long as you don't distort what actually happened. Indicate, either in the margin or in the text, the times that events happened; you may find the reporting easier if you begin each entry or paragraph with a time reference (e.g., “5:02 - 5:05: A group of three women stop at a desk across from the front door. A man and a woman sit behind the desk. The man greets the three women. . . .”).

5. Note the requirements of Assignment 3, and pay attention to anything that brings further questions to mind.

ASSIGNMENT 3: SURVEY or INTERVIEW RESEARCH DESIGN (10 points)

This assignment builds from the observation you just completed. Your observations should have brought up questions that a researcher would want to dig into. Develop an observation into a research question and post the question, along with the following to the home page of the site.

If you create a survey:

- Compose at least 10 discrete questions (i.e., screening and contingent questions don't count towards the total, although it is fine to include them). Do not simply create one question with 10 sub-parts using the same scale, but rather vary the types of questions and answers.
- Use a scale or multiple-choice format for as many items as possible. A few open-ended questions are acceptable, if they are related to your other questions.
- Format the questions in ways that encourage understanding and completion of the questionnaire. Guard against possible misinterpretations of questions or instructions by the respondent: use clear, non-biased and (where possible) simple language.
- Include a statement explaining the survey's purpose and encouraging a response. (This is an atypical venue for distributing survey questions, so there are formalities that are
not required.)

• Explain who you would send this to and how it would be distributed (mail, online survey disseminated through email/social networks/library web site, etc.). How would you choose your sample? What kind of sample would you use?

If you create interview questions:

• Indicate whether the interview will be structured or semi-structured, and why you've chosen this approach.
• Provide 7-10 interview questions, paying attention to wording and delivery. Be sure to avoid influencing responses through the questions.
• Include a statement explaining the interview's purpose and encouraging participation.
• How many people would you interview, and how would you recruit them? How would you choose your sample?

ASSIGNMENT 4: Writing Your Own Research Proposal

GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS

Your research proposal must have to do with libraries or information seeking or information organization. It should be 8-10 pages, double spaced, plus references. The topic is up to you, but it should be original and not based on earlier work for which you've received credit. The paper will be submitted to Blackboard.

You will post an abstract of your proposal to the blog in Week 14.

For this project we are going to follow the guidelines laid out by the Institute for Museums and Library Services. The guidelines are as follows, also found at the IMLS site.

An example is found here: http://www.imls.gov/assets/1/AssetManager/LB21%20Sample%202013%20ResearchUniversity%20of%20South%20Carolina.pdf

An effective research proposal should answer the following questions:

What are the specific research questions this project will attempt to answer? List one or more questions that will drive your proposed activities. Research questions should be clear and concise to help reviewers understand what you wish to learn.

What is the relevance of the proposed research for current practice? Demonstrate how the research will lead to improved museum or library practice and that you are familiar with current research literature.

What research method(s) will be used to conduct the research? Detail the
method(s) you will use in the study and why the identified method is the most appropriate for addressing the question at hand. These methods must be replicable and based on best practices as defined by the current scientific literature or relevant professional associations.

**What type of data will be gathered?** Describe the type of research data you will collect and what measures you will take to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. Detail the methods for collecting the information along with any potential privacy and/or human subjects concerns that may arise. List potential challenges in gathering data and explain how you will address them, should they arise.

**How will the data be analyzed?** Outline an analysis plan that links a set of testable hypotheses to the proposed research question(s). Identify the variables of interest that are key to the investigation, and explain how you will deal with alternative explanations for the observed phenomena.

**How will the information be reported?** Address how you will communicate the results to a variety of target audiences with different levels of expertise.

**Be sure your proposal includes the following:**

1. A statement of the topic, phrased as a research question.

2. A statement regarding why your topic is original and of interest to you.

3. A review describing at least five representative works in the research literature that are relevant to your topic. Describe any theory or model that is relevant to the subject.

4. A definition and explication of the important concepts in your study.

5. An explanation of your methods of investigation and your reasons for choosing them.

6. A description of the expected results (perhaps phrased as hypotheses) and the implications of possible findings.

7. A time schedule for the study (i.e., activities by month or week).

8. A budget (if appropriate).
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<tr>
<th>Date(s)</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>1/15-1/19</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Babbie, Chapter 1</td>
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<td>1/20-1/26</td>
<td>Paradigms, Theory</td>
<td>Babbie, Chapter 2</td>
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<td>1/27-2/2</td>
<td>Reading, writing and planning</td>
<td>Babbie, Chapters 4, 17</td>
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<td>2/3-2/9</td>
<td>Observation research</td>
<td>Babbie, Chapter 10</td>
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<td>2/10-2/16</td>
<td>Ethics of Social Research</td>
<td>Babbie, Chapter 3</td>
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Assignment 1 assigned (due 2/23)
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Chapters/Authors</th>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2/17-2/23</td>
<td>Conceptualization Measurement; Indexes, Scales</td>
<td>Babbie, Chapters 5, 6</td>
<td>Assignment 1 due 2/23</td>
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<td>2/24-3/2</td>
<td>Sampling, Survey research</td>
<td>Babbie, Chapters 7, 9</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>3/10-3/16</td>
<td>Quantitative data analysis</td>
<td>Babbie, Chapter 14</td>
<td>Assignment 2 due 3/16</td>
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<td>3/17-3/22</td>
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<td>3/23-3/29</td>
<td>Statistical analysis</td>
<td>Babbie, Chapter 16</td>
<td>Article review</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>3/30-4/6</td>
<td>Content analysis, Historical research</td>
<td>Babbie, Chapter 11</td>
<td>Article review</td>
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<td>4/7-4/13</td>
<td>Evaluation research, Needs assessment</td>
<td>Babbie, Chapter 12</td>
<td>Proposal draft due 4/13</td>
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<td>Zhang, Yan, and Barbara M. Wildemuth. <em>Qualitative analysis of content.</em> <em>Applications of social research methods to questions in information and library science</em> (2009): 308-319.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>4/14-4/20</td>
<td>Qualitative data analysis</td>
<td>Babbie, Chapter 13</td>
<td>Article review</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Articles for review (see the links at the top of the blog to see which ones your group has been assigned):

Survey


Interviews


**Statistical analysis**

Vance, Jason M., Rachel Kirk, and Justin G. Gardner. "MEASURING THE IMPACT OF LIBRARY INSTRUCTION ON FRESHMAN SUCCESS AND PERSISTENCE." *Communications in Information Literacy* 6 (2012): 1. [http://www.comminfolit.org/index.php?journal=cil&page=article&op=view&path%5B%5D=v6i1p49&path%5B%5D=144](http://www.comminfolit.org/index.php?journal=cil&page=article&op=view&path%5B%5D=v6i1p49&path%5B%5D=144)


Cook, Jean Marie. Library Credit Course and Student Success Rates: a longitudinal study. College and Research Libraries. Preprint. [http://crl.acrl.org/content/early/2012/12/19/crl12-424.full.pdf+html](http://crl.acrl.org/content/early/2012/12/19/crl12-424.full.pdf+html)


**Mixed methods**


