

# They're not just using Web sites: A citation study of 116 student papers

A fear often expressed by today's academic librarians is that students at their institutions are using Web sites at the expense of more reputable resources, such as books and journals. In order to study just how true this perception might be at the College of Mount St. Joseph, a private college with an enrollment of 2,500, I requested faculty to forward to me bibliographies of student papers. Six faculty members, each from a different discipline, responded, leaving me to compile statistics from a total of 116 papers. The results from this sample are discussed below.

As Table 1 indicates, the papers yielded 854 citations. A look at the totals reveals that

the traditional research sources, articles and books, remain those most often used. Together they made up 76 percent of the citations, Web sites accounting for the remaining 24 percent. Exceptions to this pattern are the sociology and humanities papers, for which Web sites were used more than any other resource.

No consistent pattern emerged from an examination of course levels for the papers

submitted. The only upper-level courses were those from humanities and religion. The physical therapy and nursing courses were mid-level, and those from sociology and chemistry were lower level. Resource requirements outlined by instructors varied from course to course and had a more profound effect.

The physical therapy instructor did not allow the use of any Web sites; the nursing instructor required that students obtain her permission to use

them as sources for their papers. As the numbers in Table 1 indicate, the instructors in the other disciplines adopted a more lenient stance.

Certainly the addition of Web sites has influ-

enced how students conduct research. If my institution is any true indicator, faculty acceptance of Web sites as legitimate resources is by no means universal, but seems to have become valid for many. Students have embraced Web sites and seem to use them with books and articles. For the time being, however, the more traditional resources remain in the ascendency.—*Paul O. Jenkins, College of Mount St. Joseph, Paul\_Jenkins@mail.msje.edu*

**Table 1. Percentage of citations by resource type**

<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Citations</i>	<i>Articles</i>	<i>Books</i>	<i>Web Sites</i>
Sociology	260	20%	36%	44%
Physical Therapy	234	82%	18%	0%
Religion	149	20%	54%	26%
Humanities	83	11%	42%	47%
Nursing	66	41%	56%	3%
Chemistry	62	48%	27%	24%
Totals	854	41%	35%	24%

ries of steps, including digitizing the microfilm, converting more than 400,000 page images to text, correcting any errors resulting from the optical character recognition software, and creating the search feature.

Works currently available online are from authors such as Bret Harte, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Washington Irving.

Indiana University's Digital Library Program is the project host for *Wright American Fiction*, which is freely available on the Web at <http://www.letts.indiana.edu/web/w/wright2/>.

## New Web site profiles Sanford Berman Papers at UIUC

The personal papers of prominent library cataloger and activist Sanford Berman are now profiled in a Web site at the University of Illinois Library at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). Maintained by the University Archives, the Web site highlights the career of Berman, former cataloger at the Southdale Hennepin County Library in Minnesota and best known for successfully challenging the outdated terminology of widely accepted library catalog subject headings.

The Berman Papers are part of the AIA Archives held by the UIUC library and pro-