

The Campus Library

Why It's The Most Valuable Campus Resource

by Kirrin Coleman



Libraries are the nucleus of a college. They hum with social and intellectual activity, and are truly the center of learning. They contain the critical resources that make learning possible—books, journals, workstations, printers, etc.—as well as skilled specialists who can help a student navigate a research topic. The library is often the place students go to get down to business, to reflect and process what they learned in class. Students don't even have to go to the library in order to benefit from its resources. College libraries provide access to invaluable online resources, from databases to electronic journals to tutorials.

Students who use the library and its resources succeed. In fact, according to a recent study in *Libraries and the Academy*, “The data suggest that first-year students who used the library at least once in the fall semester had higher grade point averages compared to their peers who did not use the library at all during their first semester. Further, the data suggest that first-year students who used the library at least one time during their first semester had higher retention from their fall to spring semester.”ⁱ

5 Key Reasons Why The Library is The Most Vaulable Resource and How Students Can Get The Most Out of It:

It's A Productive & Inspiring Study Space

When a student works at home or in a coffee shop, there are innumerable distractions. However, many students consider the library “a safe harbor from everyday distraction.”ⁱⁱ In a study published in the Project Information Literacy Report (2011), the majority of students surveyed described the library as a place “where they could rely on library equipment rather than their own devices that often had too many easy access distractions, including Facebook” and a place “where students could unplug entirely and work in solitude during the final weeks of the term.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The library space itself—and the act of going to the library—signals that it's time to focus. Also, seeing other students hard at work is inspiring. Some students even describe witnessing others studying as “contagious.”^{iv}

It's A Great Meeting Place

It's not all hushed voices and the soft click-clacking of laptop keyboards. Students also see the library as a social hub. The communal spaces are good places to meet up with friends or meet new people. Study groups can also meet in these areas or in smaller study rooms, where they can freely discuss an upcoming project or exam. The library is also a great neutral zone, where tutors and tutees can meet up in a public place without too many distractions.

It Has The Technology Students Need

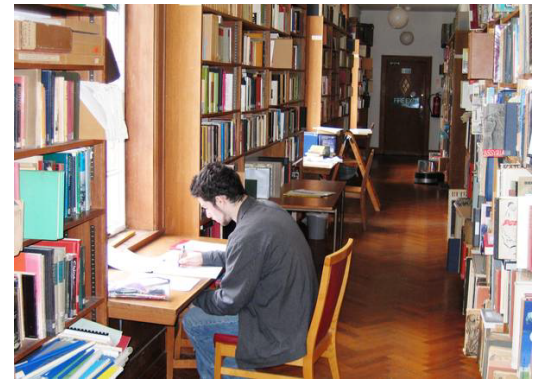
Libraries usually have rich technology resources, from computer workstations to 3D printers. It's no wonder students see the library as the place to go to access the technology needed for a project. Often library staff can help a student troubleshoot a technology issue—whether that's software or hardware related. In fact, students surveyed said that “more than any other library service or resource... they had used the library's technology equipment...”^v

The Librarians

Librarians are the center of the center of campus. They are information literacy specialists with expert knowledge of the library catalog, databases, and other technology and systems students rely on. They can help identify effective search terms and point students to sources in the stacks or online that students would likely not access on their own. While librarians can help troubleshoot library technology, they are, most importantly, educators. Every student needs to be information literate, a term defined by the Presidential Committee on Information Literacy as “able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.”^{vi}

Librarians are in the business of teaching information literacy, and each time a student consults a librarian for assistance accessing or understanding a source, the student learns a bit more about how to do that work independently.

However, many students rarely talk to librarians. Most students prefer to “use a few information sources they have independently cobbled together” rather than learning from a librarian about the variety of sources that are available.^{vii}



Clearly, those students who do recognize the benefits of consulting librarians about research projects will have a richer experience and will improve their own information literacy far more than those students who don't.

The Library System Website and Digital Resources

Most students do recognize the value of their library's website and digital resources. The library website is a hub unto itself; there, students may find everything from online writing tutorials to discussion boards. Another feature of every library website is a portal to the school's subscription databases. These databases are essential and, because they are also reliable and easy to use, most college students make good use of them; after all, a student can access in-depth, credible information in just a few keystrokes.^{viii} Some academic libraries also offer data and statistical services to support students through all phases of a research project, from acquiring and manipulating data to creating tables and graphs to interpreting statistics.

It's no wonder that students spend so much time in the library—or on the library website. It is the place to connect, investigate, question, and learn. It's a rich, dynamic resource; students who understand that early in their academic careers will be more successful.



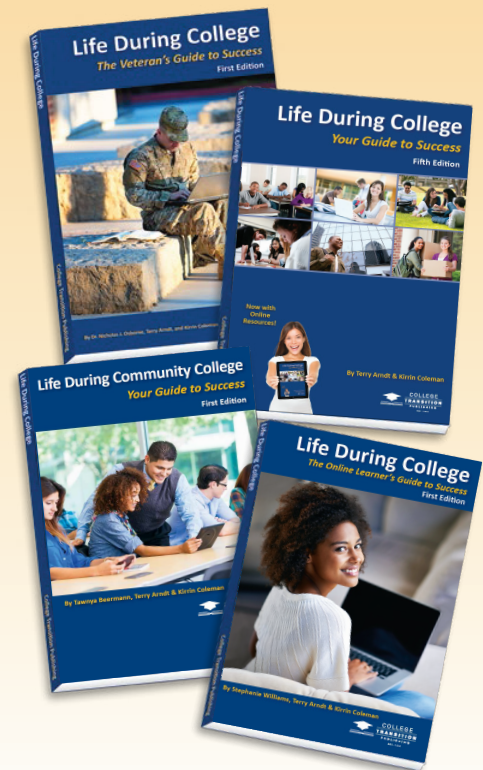
Resources

- ⁱ Soria, Krista M., Jan Fransen, and Shane Nackerud. "Library Use and Undergraduate Student Outcomes: New Evidence for Students' Retention and Academic Success." *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* 13.2 (2013): 147-64. Web.
- ⁱⁱ Head, Alison J., PhD, and Michael B. Eisenberg, PhD. "Balancing Act: How College Students Manage Technology While in the Library during Crunch Time." Publication. N.p.: n.p., 2011. Print. Project Information Literacy Research Report.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Head and Eisenberg, "Balancing Act"
- ^{iv} Head and Eisenberg, "Balancing Act"
- ^v Head and Eisenberg, "Balancing Act"
- ^{vi} "Presidential Committee on Information Literacy: Final Report." *Presidential Committee on Information Literacy: Final Report*. N.p., n.d. Web. 27 Feb. 2015.
- ^{vii} Head and Eisenberg, "Balancing Act"
- ^{viii} Head, Alison J., PhD, and Michael B. Eisenberg, PhD. Project Information Literacy Progress Report. Rep. Seattle: Information School, U of Washington, 2009. Print. LESSONS LEARNED: How College Students Seek Information in the Digital Age.

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