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# Strengthening Skills: Hosting a Research Boot Camp

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# STRENGTHENING SKILLS
## Hosting a Research Boot Camp

UNIVERSITY *of* DAYTON

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## NEED

In 2014, the religious studies department approached instruction librarians to build a program to strengthen their graduate assistants' research skills.

## ANSWER

Together, the two departments created a "boot camp" for the graduate assistants, delivered the week prior to the start of the school year.

## PREPARATION
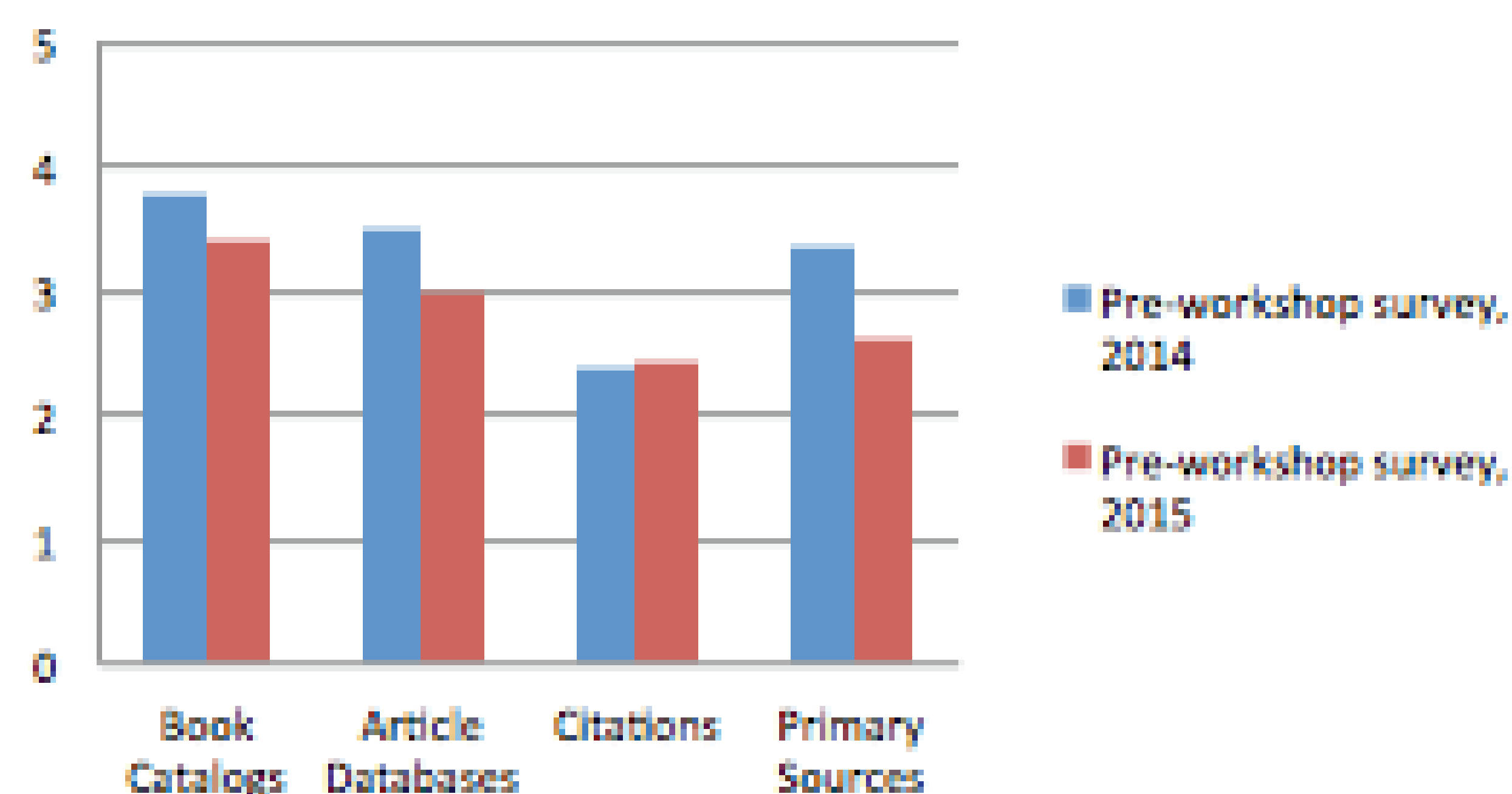
Survey of faculty research interests

Faculty needs assessment for graduate student skills

Graduate student self-assessment of research skills

### FACULTY NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH SKILLS

| | |
|---|---|
| Locating journal articles | 100% |
| Selecting appropriate search keywords | 90.9% |
| Using library catalogs | 90.9% |
| Using discipline-specific databases | 81.8% |
| Locating primary sources | 63.6% |
| Evaluating resources found through internet searching | 63.6% |
| Creating bibliographies in Turabian style format | 63.6% |

### STUDENTS' SELF-ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH SKILLS



Pre-workshop survey, 2014
Pre-workshop survey, 2015

Book Catalogs · Article Databases · Citations · Primary Sources

Students rated their own research skills highly in a pre-workshop survey, except for citations.



## WORKSHOP DESIGN

6 contact hours, 3 days

Daily assessment and skills practice

Graduate student self-assessment of learning gains

**Day 1:** physical library tour, library website, catalog, book citations

**Day 2:** keyword formulation, Boolean logic, databases, Google Scholar, journal article citations

**Day 3:** primary sources, subject-specific citations

**Bootcamp Guide:** libguides.udayton.edu/gradstudents

### CHANGES FROM YEAR 1 TO YEAR 2

• Dropped RefWorks

• Add manual work on Chicago style citations

• Add more daily active learning components
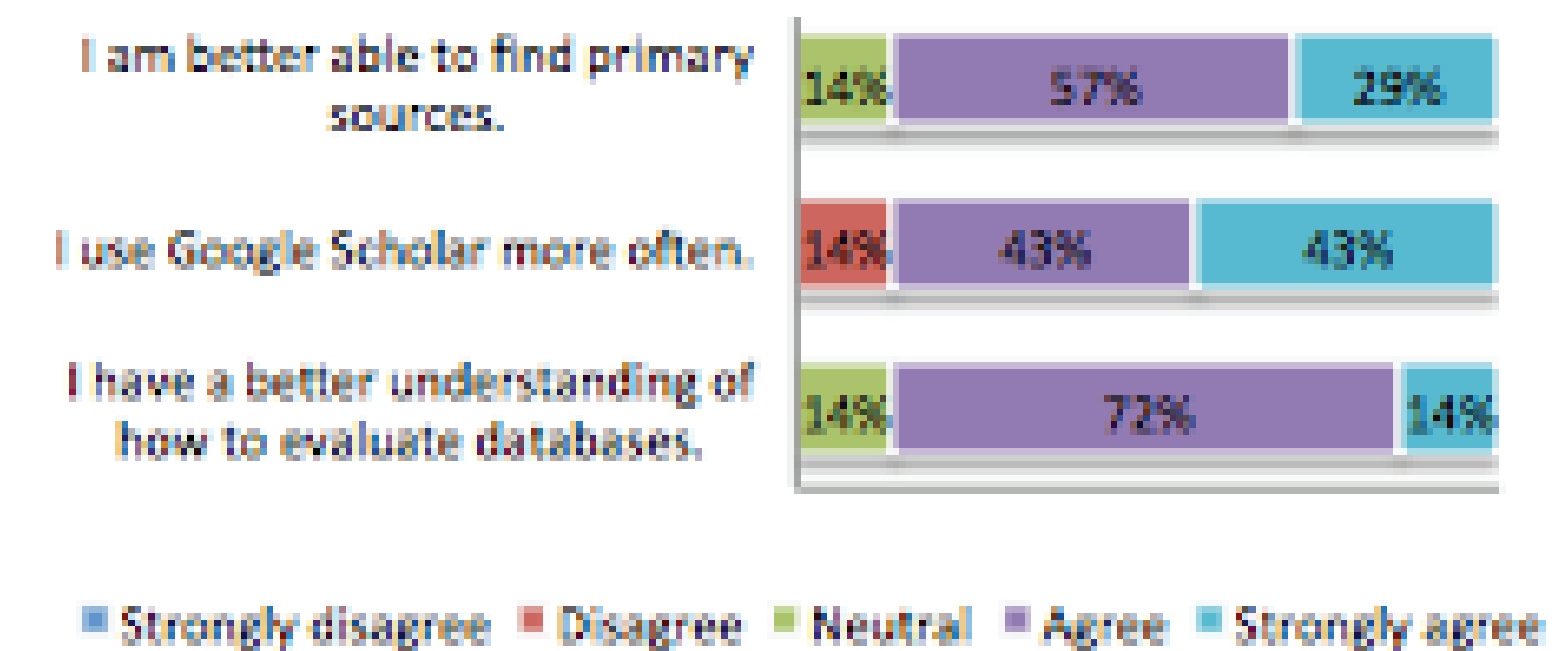
• Faculty invited to sessions

### Name That LCSH! #3

• *Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis: Studies in Memory of William Hugh Brownlee*
• *And God Created Laughter: The Bible as Divine Comedy*
• *The Use and Abuse of the Bible: A Brief History of Biblical Interpretation*
• *God's Word Expressed in Human Words: The Bible's Literary Forms*
• *The Critical Meaning of the Bible*

Active learning exercise for Library of Congress Subject Headings

## RESULTS AND ASSESSMENT

Participant Quote: "Please, if you do nothing else, please give out another copy of that Chicago style guide and do that activity again. Consider laminating and/or framing one of the guides for our office. Mine has frequently come in handy!"

Participant Quote: "Learning how to use Google Scholar was the most helpful. In the past, I avoided it because I could not make it specific enough to be helpful."



| | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|
| I am better able to find primary sources. | 14% | 57% | 29% |
| I use Google Scholar more often. | 14% (Disagree) | 43% | 43% |
| I have a better understanding of how to evaluate databases. | 14% | 72% | 14% |

■ Strongly disagree  ■ Disagree  ■ Neutral  ■ Agree  ■ Strongly agree

A survey conducted eight months after the first workshop showed long-term benefits for the students.

## COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The Religious Studies Department has observed….

• GAs much more likely to reach out for help. They know the library staff and believe in the staff's willingness to help.

• GAs are better prepared to do research from the beginning of their time here at UD.

• Faculty have observed an increase in GA research skills since the first boot camp.

The librarians and the Religious Studies Department have:

• A shared interest in the domain of improving the students' research skills

• Learned and experimented together as a community

• Established shared practices for conducting an effective instruction workshop.

For further information about communities of practice, see Wenger-Trayner, E., & Wenger-Trayner, B. (2015). Communities of practice: A brief introduction. http://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/