



# Assessing the Assessment: how institutions administered, interpreted, and used SAILS

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**Hunter  
College  
At a  
Glance**



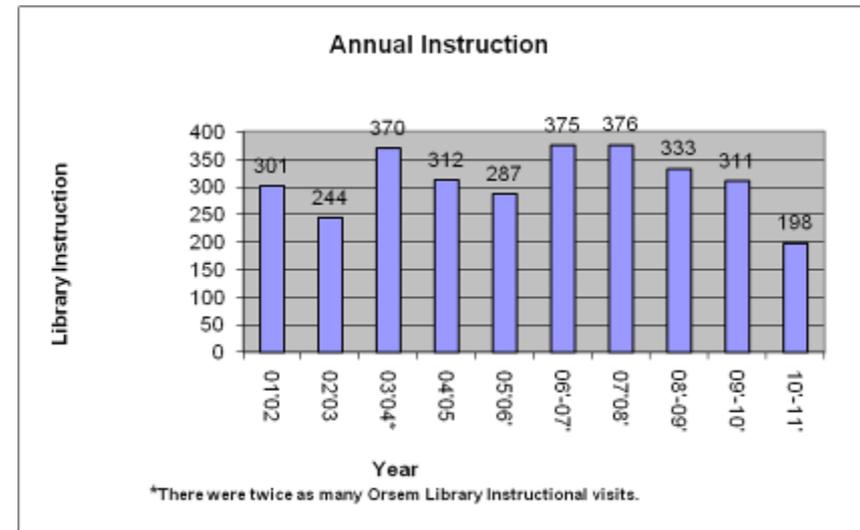
# The Hunter College Libraries

- Branches
- Collection
- Faculty/Staff



# Information Literacy: Assessing our Students

- Teaching stats
- Are they learning anything?
- How do we find out?
- Can we integrate IL into curriculum?
- Grant opportunity



# Using SAILS

- Background on SAILS
  - Why SAILS?



# Using SAILS (cont.)

You want to communicate directly with experts on the subject of earthquakes. How could you communicate with these experts?

- Call them on the telephone
- Email them
- Read articles they have published
- Set up an interview
- Use an online discussion list to talk to them

Your search for articles on your topic, learning styles, has produced many articles that discuss learning styles in a particular context or regarding a specific group of learners. What is the best course of action?

- Broaden your topic
- Change your topic completely
- Narrow your topic

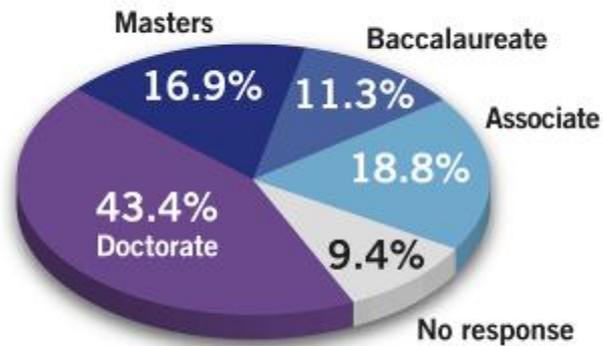
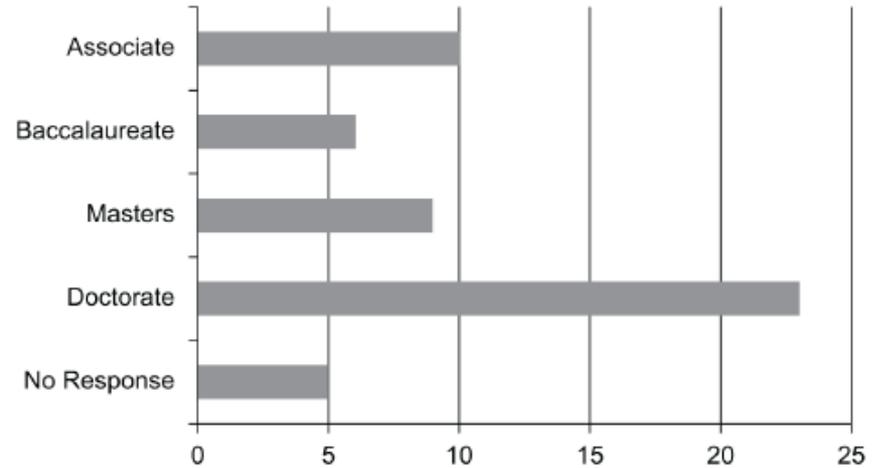
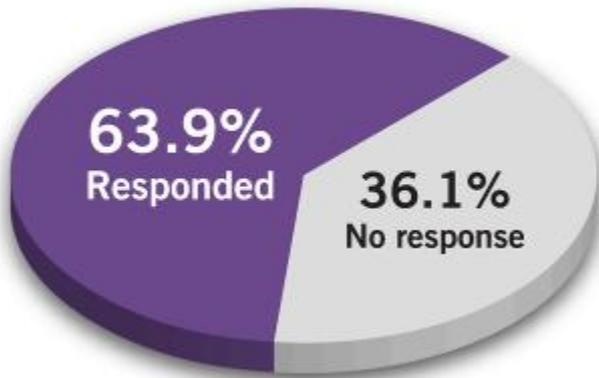
# **SAILS Results**

- Difficulty in finding meaning
  - About the same as...
  - No individual scores
  - Flawed benchmarks?

# Research method: Survey

- Survey instrument (SurveyMonkey): assess administration, use of SAILS report data, perceptions of utility of SAILS data
- Distributed to 83 institutions in the “List of Institutions in the All Institutions Benchmark” (Spring 2007)
- Emailed to instructional coordinators, 2 followups and two hardcopy letters to library directors
- Open for 5 months—Dec. 2008-May 2009
- Research protocol approved, Hunter College Institutional Review Board (Nov. 08)

# Responses



Q9

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**1. What specific kind(s) of probability sampling did you use to select test takers? Please indicate all that apply**

- Simple random sampling
- Systematic sampling (every nth student selected from a population)
- Stratified sampling (population divided into subgroups, and simple random sample or systematic sample done for each subgroup)
- Cluster sampling (selection of a clusters of groups through simple random, systematic sampling, or stratified sampling)
- Don't know

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**2. What was the confidence level for your sampling(s). Please indicate all that apply.**

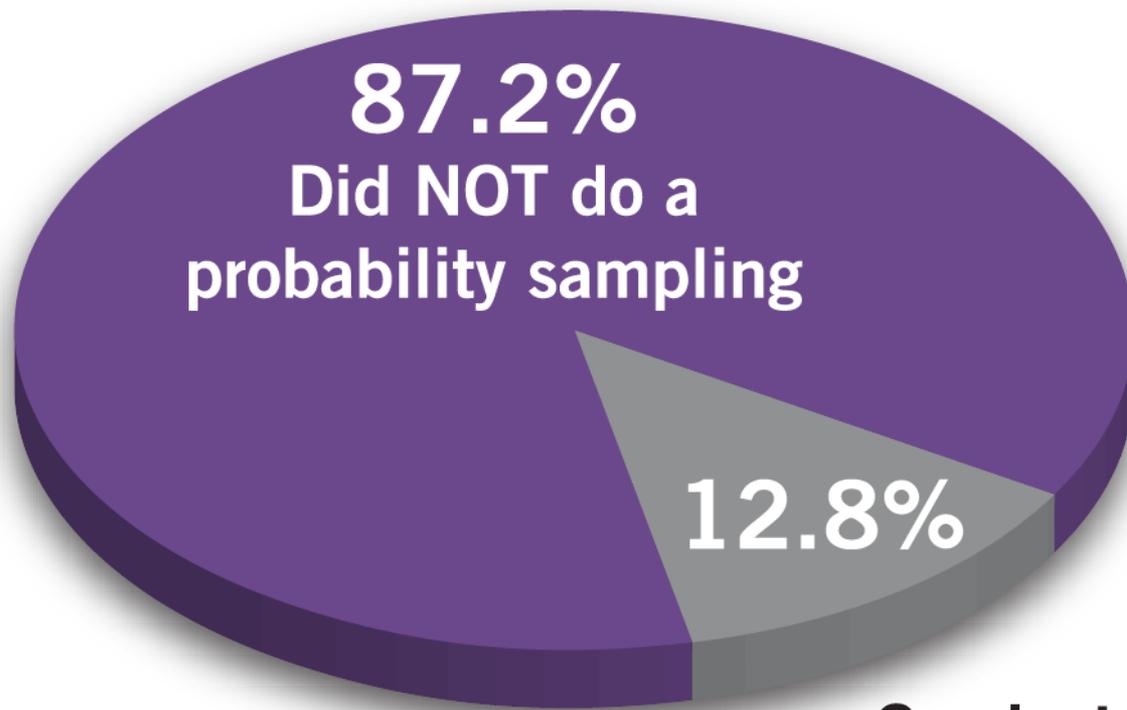
- Less than 95%
- 95% or higher
- Don't know

# Whom did they test?

- General student population: 44.7%
- First-year students only: 50%
- Seniors: 25%
- Students in specific courses: 31.9%
- Specific majors: 14.9%

# Sampling method used

- Most institutions did not use probability (random, systematic, or cluster) sampling.
- Instead, they used convenience sampling, in which students volunteered to take SAILS.



**Conducted  
probability sampling**

# Incentives for students

- 51.2% gave an incentive for taking SAILS.
- Of institutions doing a convenience sample, 64.3% gave an incentive.

# Monitoring the test

- 65.1% used complete monitoring.
- 16.3% used partial monitoring.
- 18.6% did not monitor.

# Support for data analysis

- 81.4% got some kind of assistance.
  - From institutional research office: 46.3%
  - From a statistician to help interpret results: 17.1%
  - From a statistician to help plan the test: 12.2%
- Among doctoral institutions, 71.4% used a statistician to help interpret SAILS.

# Correlating SAILS with other data

- Did you correlate SAILS data with GPA, number of credits earned, completion of gen. ed. requirement, transfer status, etc?
  - No: 69.8%
  - Yes: 30.2%, mostly with GPA or credits

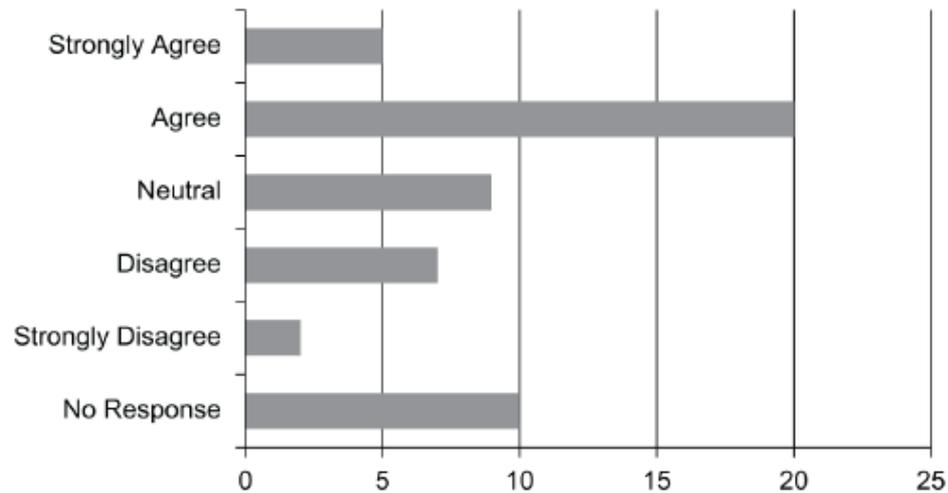
# To whom did you publicize the SAILS findings?

- Librarians: 76.7%
- Teaching faculty: 67.4%
- Administrators: 65.1%
- Students: 23.3%

# Top reasons for choosing SAILS

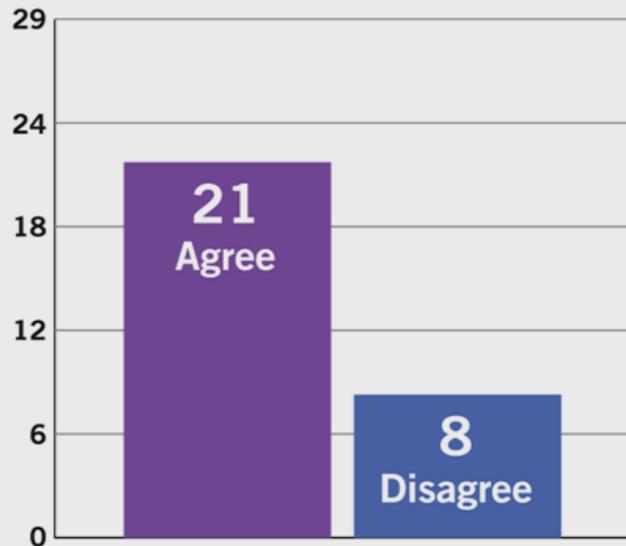
- It's a validated assessment tool.
- It's based on the ACRL standards.
- It tests skills we want to assess.
- The cost is reasonable.
- Many other colleges have used it.
- SAILS provides good support.

“The SAILS reports that we received were full of useful information.”

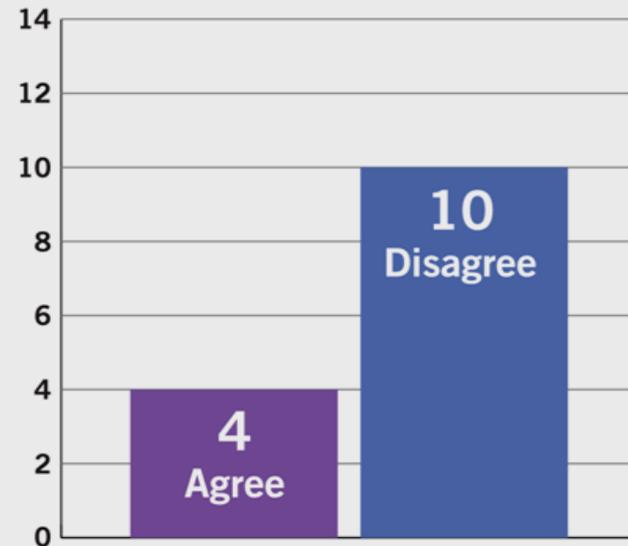


“The SAILS reports that we received were full of useful information.”

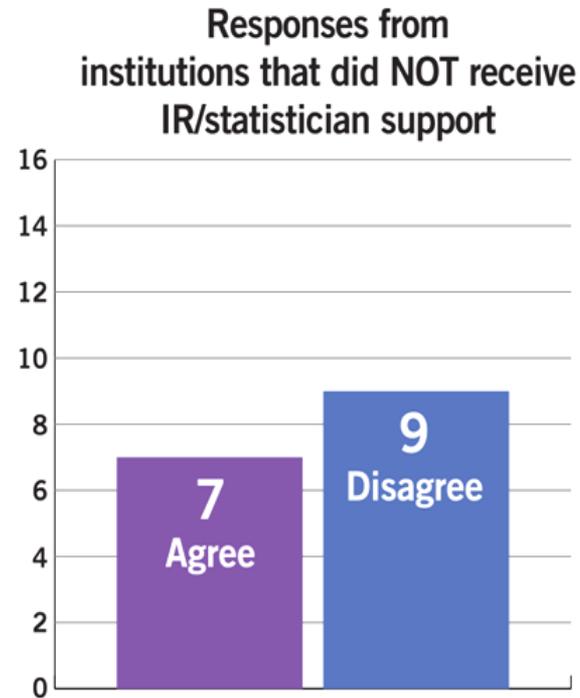
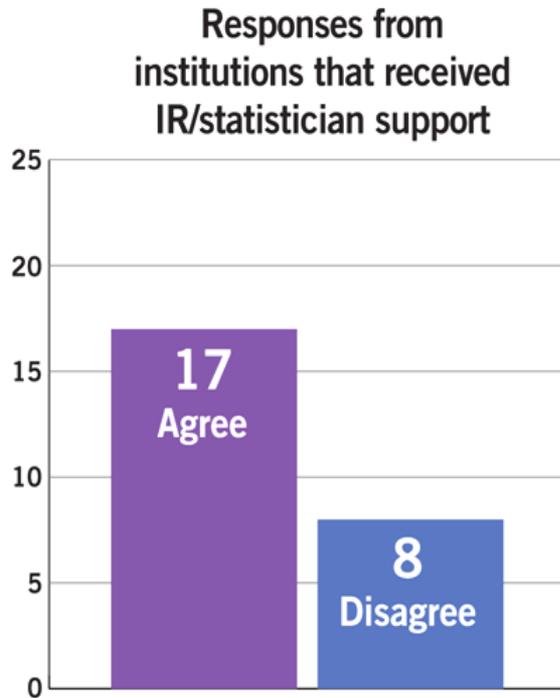
Responses from  
Doctorate and Associate  
institutions



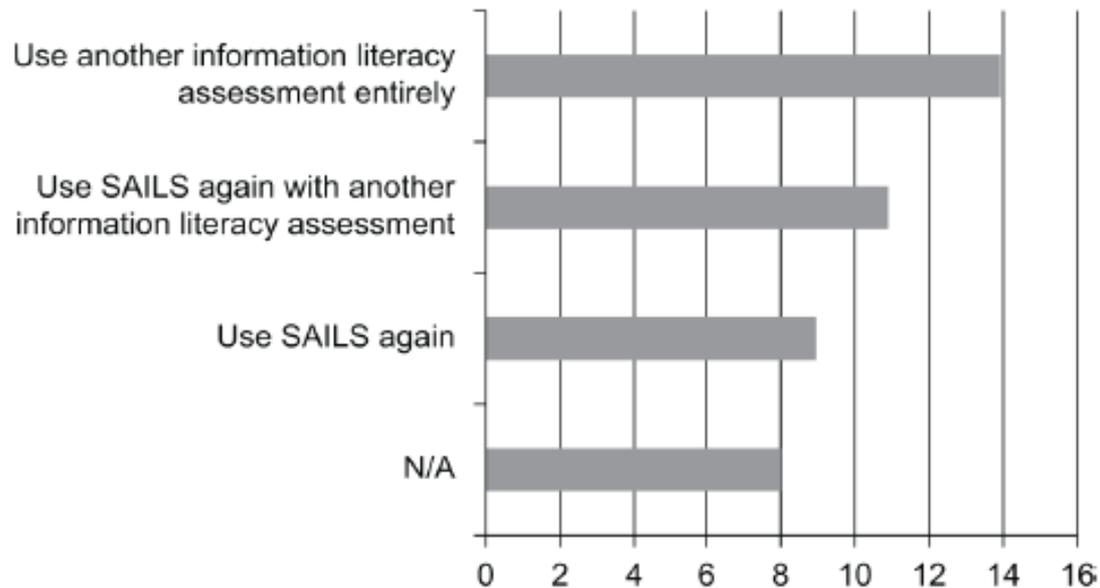
Responses from  
Bachelors and Masters  
institutions



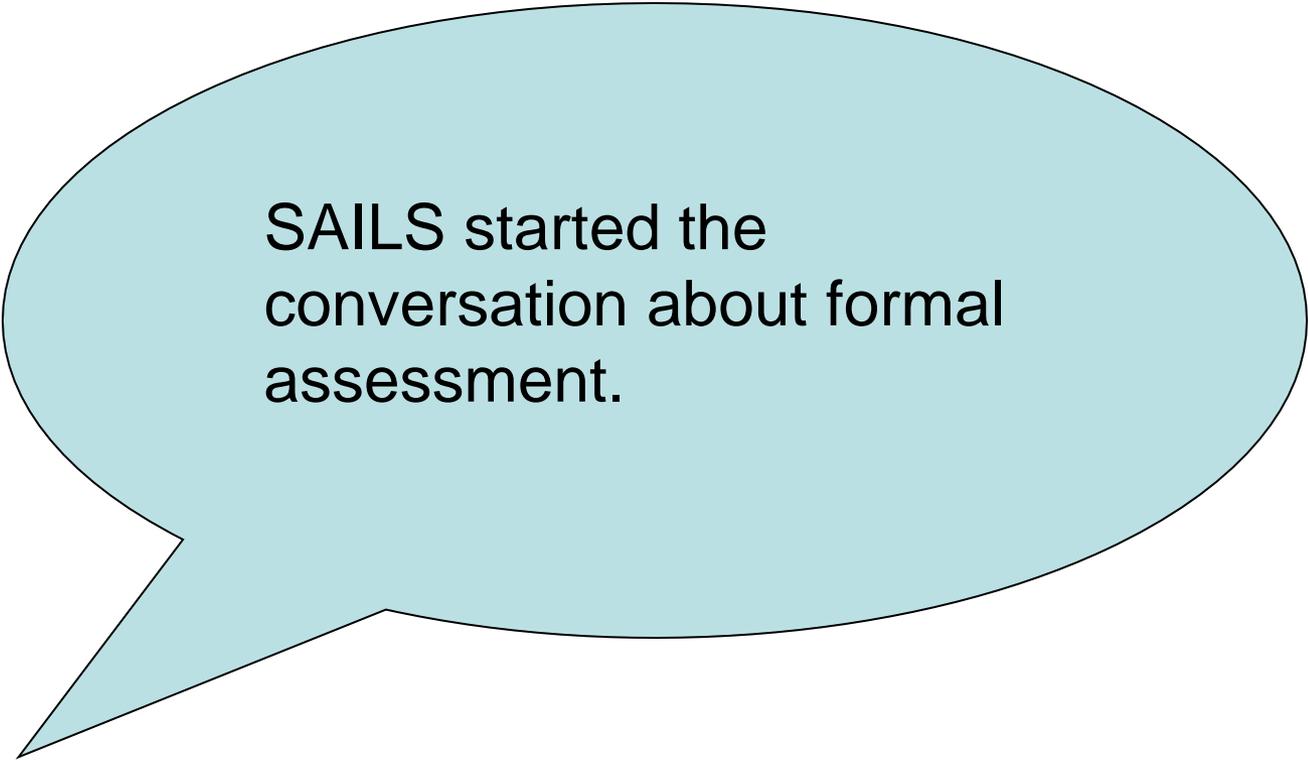
“The SAILS reports that we received were full of useful information.”



# What are your plans for additional IL assessments?



**Other comments about your  
experience with SAILS.**



SAILS started the conversation about formal assessment.

SAILS provided us with useful data that opened opportunities for many conversations with faculty across disciplines about IL. It got the librarians “through doors” that previously had been closed.

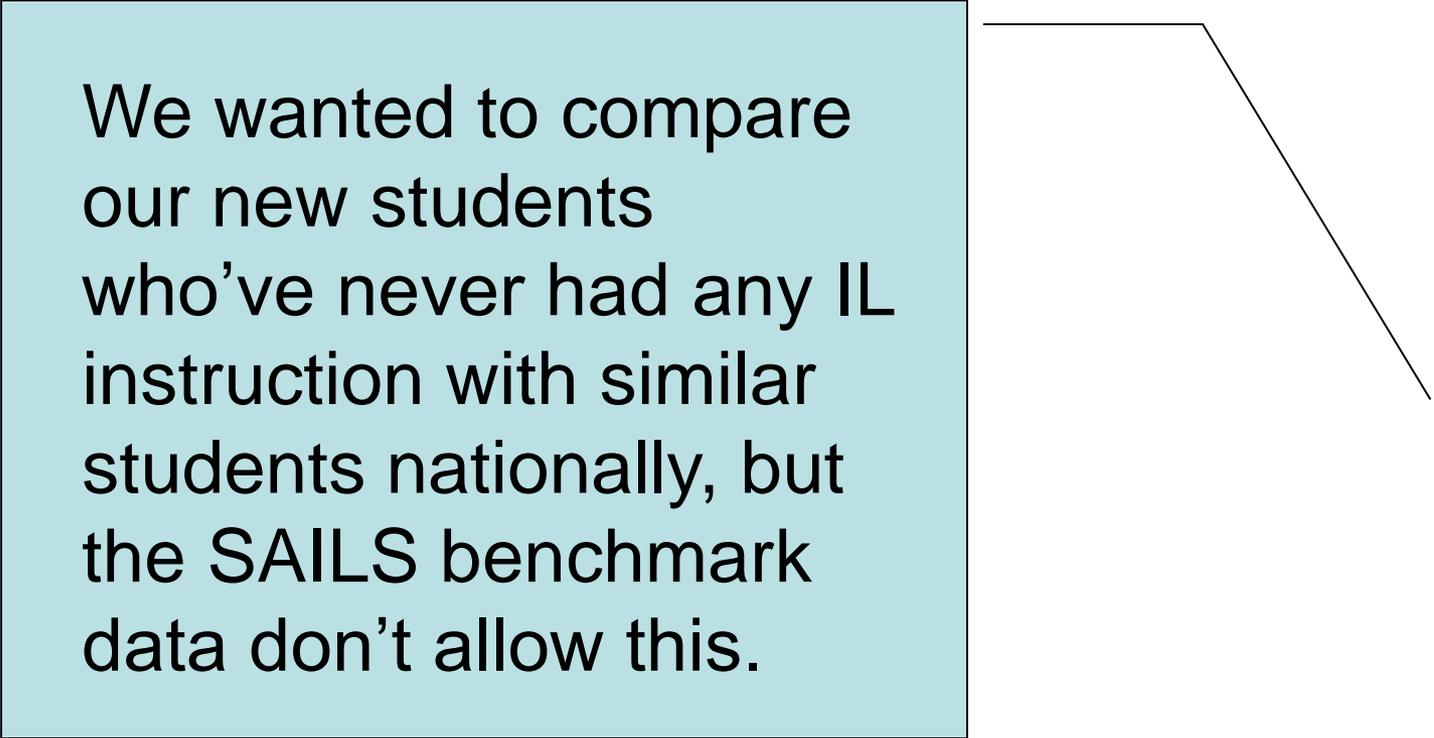
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While it did take a little  
time to interpret the  
results, the  
information contained  
in the report was  
wonderful.

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The test is too long... We  
couldn't recruit enough seniors  
to compare with our freshmen.

We wanted to compare our new students who've never had any IL instruction with similar students nationally, but the SAILS benchmark data don't allow this.



Our students performed “at about the same level” as the benchmark sample. This was annoyingly repeated in our report, and didn’t give us much information to work with.

But SAILS did foster a dialogue with our teaching faculty.

## When is SAILS most effective?

Our research suggests that SAILS can be most effective when an institution has:

- support to conduct the assessment so that results will have an impact on information literacy planning;
- statistical/institutional research office support for the analysis of data;
- the means to recruit a random sample that truly reflects student population;
- another assessment tool to use in conjunction with SAILS; and
- the ability to correlate SAILS data with other existing institutional data to provide more meaningful results

# Questions for further study

- Doctoral & associate-level institutions were happier with their SAILS experience than were master's or B.A.-level ones. Why?
- How have institutions used iSkills, which provides individual student information?
- Consortial administration of SAILS both before & after library instruction.
- How have libraries altered what they do in response to SAILS results?

# Questions?

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