

## **Critical Note: International Student Perceptions of Information Needs and Use**

Yi's International Student Perceptions of Information Needs and Use is an article written for librarians and library administrators. This study focused on the international students at Texas Woman's University (TWU) of which 80% of international students are female. Yi's hypothesis is to determine if there is any significant connection between age, gender and education level towards international student's library use. The article explains the reason for choosing TWU, the study's methods of collecting data, and its results. The survey examined many aspects including information use and additional information needs by international students.

Yi chose to focus the study on international students at TWU because of the unique demographic of the international students: 80% were female, 56.9% were in the twenty-one to thirty age group, and 62% were graduate students. This study focused on searching for any significant correlation between gender, age, and education level and international student library use. (para. 13) Yi also mentioned that there are few studies on international students needs and devised the study as a way to fill this gap.

The method of data collecting was an e-mail survey. The International Education Office at TWU offered access to e-mails of international students, from which 85 were randomly selected. These students were then asked to voluntarily participate and had the option of emailing the filled-out questionnaire back or printing it out and mailing the filled-out questionnaire in. Of the 85 students contacted, 61 completed and returned questionnaires. A follow-up e-mail letter and the two-part information needs questionnaire were sent to the students.

This questionnaire contained six items on personal information (gender, age, place of origin, native language, major, & education level) and seven items on information needs and use of the TWU library. The seven information needs included how to access needed information, library resources, services usage frequency, information viewing formats, most commonly used databases, and search engines. There was a final, open-ended, question on what additional resources and services the participants needed. (para. 16)

The independent variables of this study were the demographics of gender, age and education level. A number of dependent variables were used including online catalog, databases, remote access to the library offerings, interlibrary loan, e-journals, library reserve, ready reference, online subject guides, browsing the internet, e-mail and printed materials. (para. 17) Yi's study also requested information about the amount of usage. For example, participants could indicate that they used the library reserve services a few times in a semester, and the library for e-mail daily; Yi theorized that many of these survey participants may not own personal computers. The participants spoke nineteen different languages and had majors in twenty-nine different programs. (para. 18)

The students indicated their information needs included improving their English, solving academic problems for classes, improving their library skills, improving their software application usage, and accessing periodicals in their native languages. The participants fulfilled these needs by asking either reference librarians, friends and/or classmates, the internet, library training materials, courses, workshops, and using online resources. In response to the open-ended question mentioned above, participants indicated that they needed more library resources like textbooks, main books for courses, periodicals, journals, newspapers, databases, computers, software, library training and additional services (like faxing).

The hypothesis was partially supported. The results of whether education, age, and gender had significant effects on library usage showed that there was a significant relationship between education levels and international students' use of library resources and services. (para. 32) Age and gender did not indicate any difference in predicting library use. The results also indicated that international

students are not wholly dependent on online resources but employ the use of printed media housed in the library as well.

This article is a useful resource for librarians who are curious to learn if gender, age and education level in international students from a large variety of cultural groups have any correlation with library usage. Since this is an unique situation, with 80% of TWU's international students being female, the results may not be applicable to every situation. However, I believe that the correlation between high education levels and high rates of library usage is fundamentally logical.