To: User Services Council and Jeanne Boyle, AUL for Organizational Planning and Research  
From: Sara Harrington, Tom Glynn, Eileen Stec  
Re: Ethnographic Study Comments on Instruction  
Date: November 3, 2009

Part I: Brief overall statement on comments:  
The comments revealed that students struggle with “discovery issues,” in other words, simply finding what they want on the website. We draw this conclusion because respondents requested tools or services that we already have (a Refworks tutorial, an online tutorial for beginners, etc.). In addition, language issues surrounding library lingo and RUL branding at times obfuscated the tools for which the respondents were searching. Respondents requested clear, concise instructions on how to find and use tools and services on the website. However, the comments also pointed to an inherent tension, one that is perhaps in part impossible to resolve, as respondents indicated that ‘everything should be one click away, but at the same time the homepage should be streamlined, simple, user-friendly, and not crowded.’

Part II: Recommended Changes or Review of RUL Website
- Respondents requested better and more numerous “how-to’s”, which they referred to by a variety of names: online tutorials, video tutorials, webcasts, web tutorials, embedded ‘quick help’ video and text, visual help, interactive tutorials, video seminars, and podcasts. Ranking the tools and services that would be best served by “how-to’s” is an important next step.
- Surface availability of instructional options
- Respondents suggested a FAQ of the day (above the top news links), perhaps including explanations of individual databases (what’s in it, how do you search it), or how to use interlibrary loan, etc.
- On a subject peripherally related to instruction, there were repeated comments related to the article linker. The language on intermediate page is confusing, respondents suggested including instructions on what to do when one doesn’t find an article on the same page where one searches, and to link directly to article delivery and interlibrary loan. Perhaps this should be a priority for a ‘how-to.’

Part III: Other Issues to Consider in the Future
In general, the comments also revealed:
- A desire for non-discipline specific, in-person graduate and undergraduate research library orientation sessions, drop-in classes, and once-a-semester “how to use the library” sessions
- Respondents had positive associations with face-to-face instruction, found it useful, and some said it should be a requirement
- While ‘scaffolded’ instructional sessions might be ideal, the repetition of instruction would also be valuable, several comments stressed that, since students can go through a number semesters without an assignment that requires library research, they often forget what they've learned in an earlier library session for a Writing Program or other class.
- Web pages for specific populations such as beginners, or grad students, may be useful
- Respondents suggested enhanced marketing and outreach about library instruction and services to full and part-time faculty, including professors, lecturers, and others
• Respondents also suggested “if you liked X index, try Y index” algorithms for helping people search a range of databases and tools.