

Rethinking Information literacy (IL) in a post-graduate Information Systems class at the University of Cape Town (UCT)

Susanne Noll

LIASA Conference, Durban , 2016



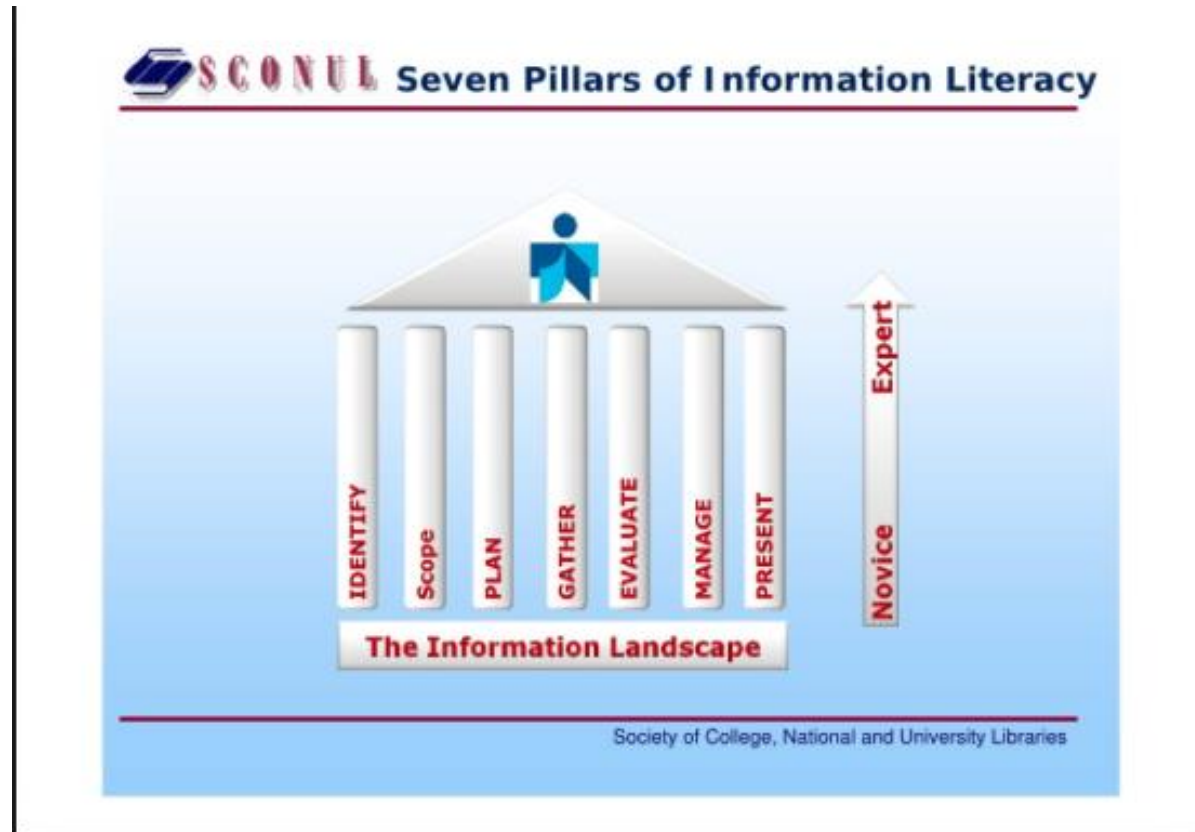
Background to the study

- 10 years involvement with a once off session in IL, in which I tried to cover EVERYthing: website navigation, search strategies, database handling etc.
- However, I realised :
 - No or marginal interest
 - No difference
 - Relevance
 - Boring content for students
 - Tick the boxes
 - Never time for a follow-up session
 - No assessment
 - Working on the periphery
 - Workshop not possible – too little time, too many students, problems with venues



What is Information Literacy?

SCONUL seven pillars of IL



Aims of the study:

- Explore the experiences of a group of postgraduate students in an Information Systems course at UCT with regards to their information and digital literacy skills.
- Specific objectives include:
 - Understanding the process under which students have to write an academic piece without being exposed to formal IL or DL education?
 - Examining the opportunities the students had in IL and DL training before their 4th year
 - Assessing levels of course satisfaction and course dissatisfaction



Research questions:

- What are the students' understanding of IL?
- Do students think that IL is equal to DL?
- How effective is the IL intervention?
- What are the opportunities for curriculum intervention?



Methododology

- Mixed methods or triangulation
 - “Integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis in a single study or a program of enquiry.” – (Creswell et al 2003).
- 1 Survey, Surveymonkey
 - 31 questions:
 - 5 general, 17 on IL, 13 on DL
- 3 Interviews with the course conveners
- 2 Focus Group (FG) discussions

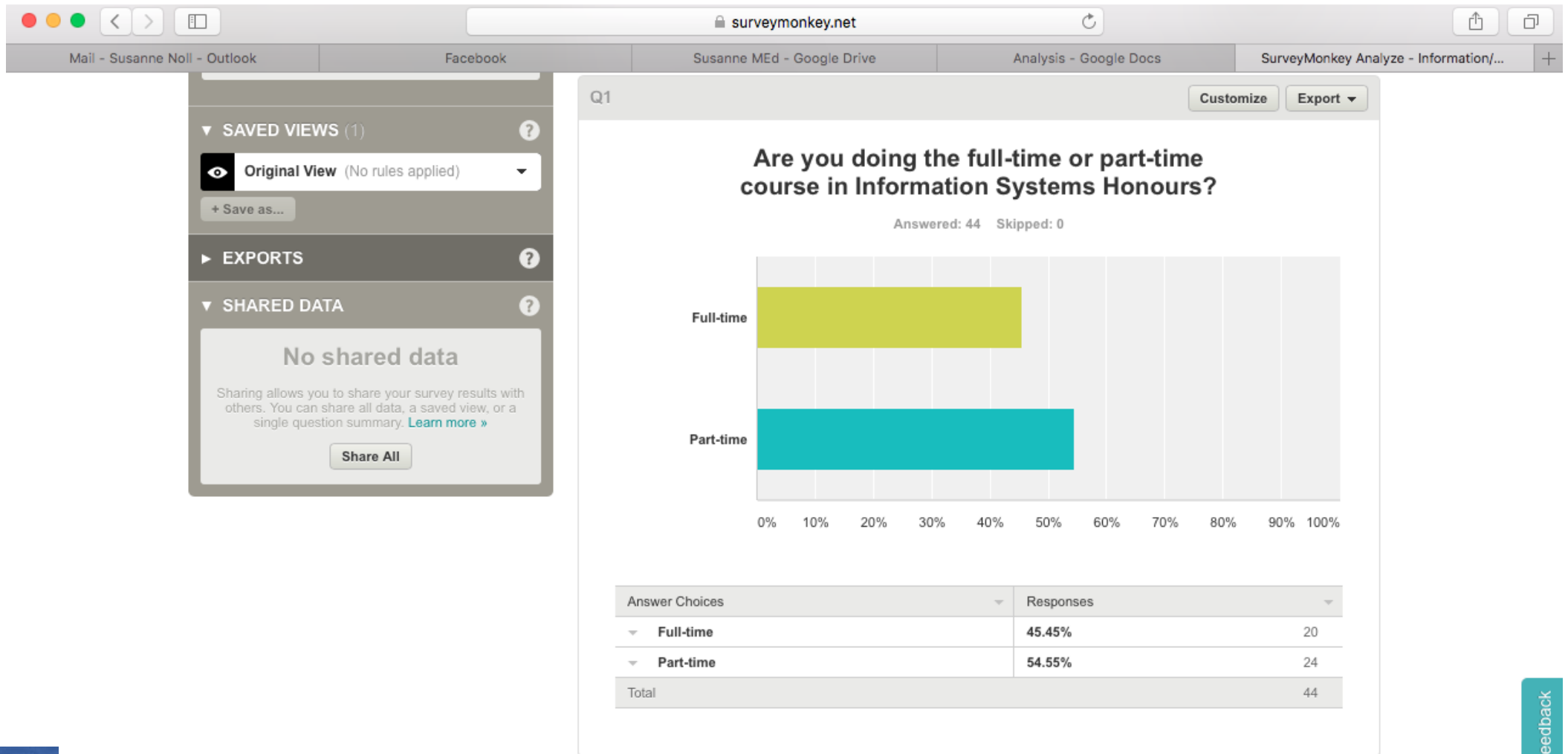


Survey

- I chose SurveyMonkey, because it is an online survey and can be stored in a cloud
- (I thought) it was free
- Survey question types :
 - Multiple choice
 - Rating Scales
 - Comment Box (open ended)
 - Demographic questions
- Offers Templates
- Real Time Results

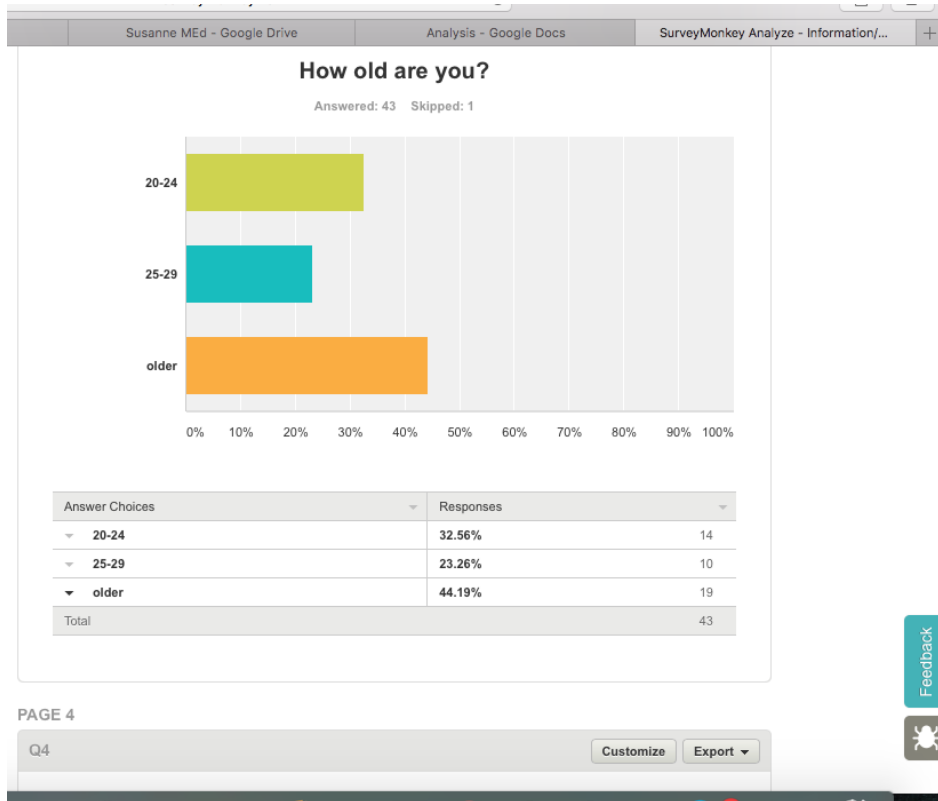


First question

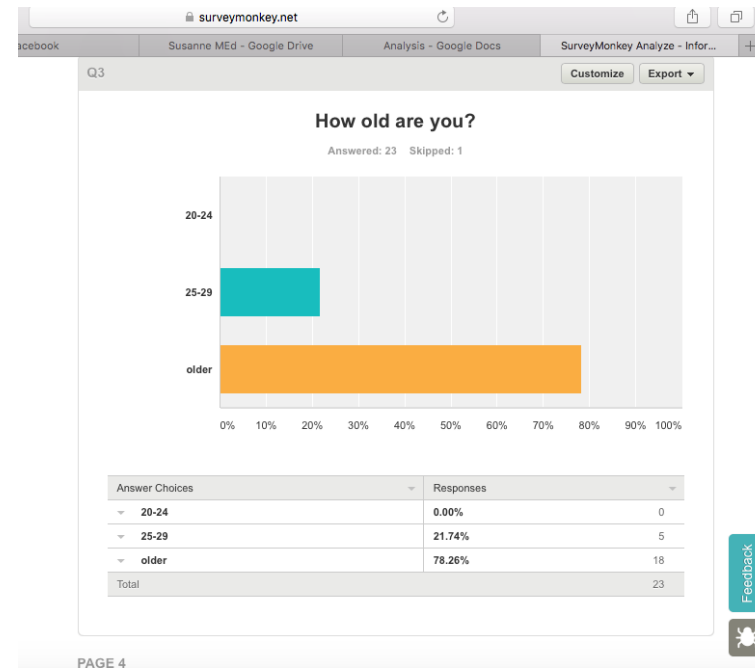


Main difference

All



Part timers



What I then learnt

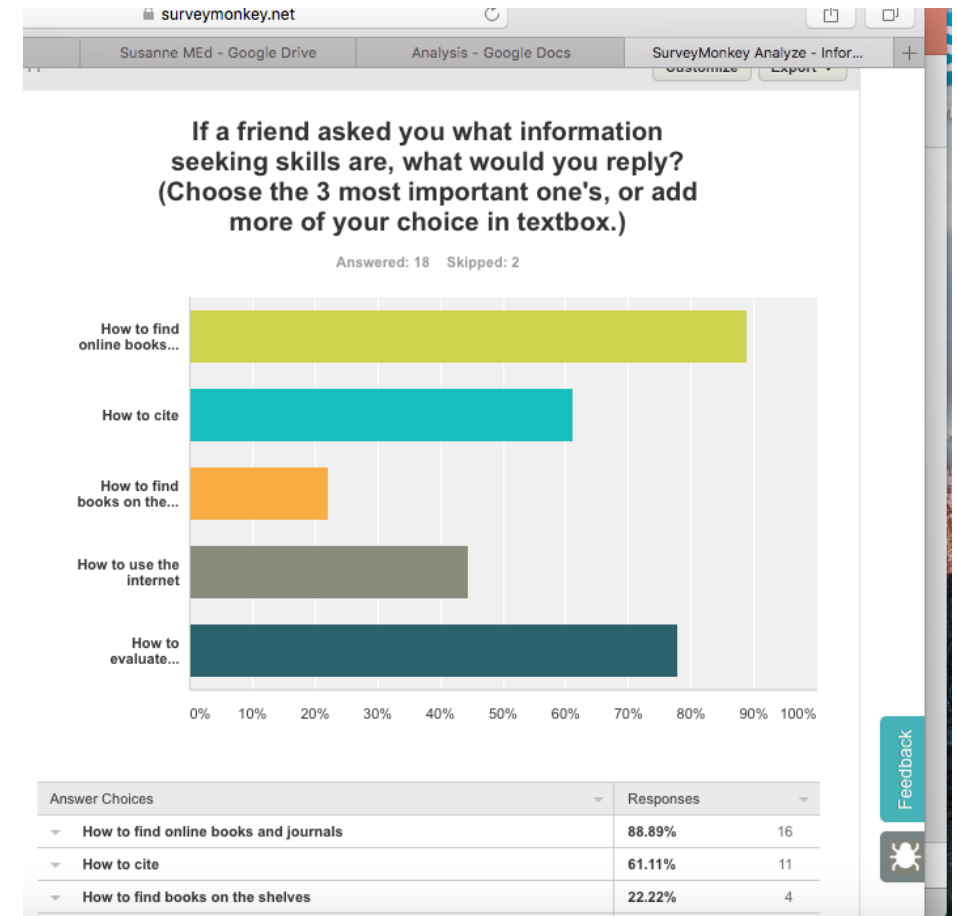
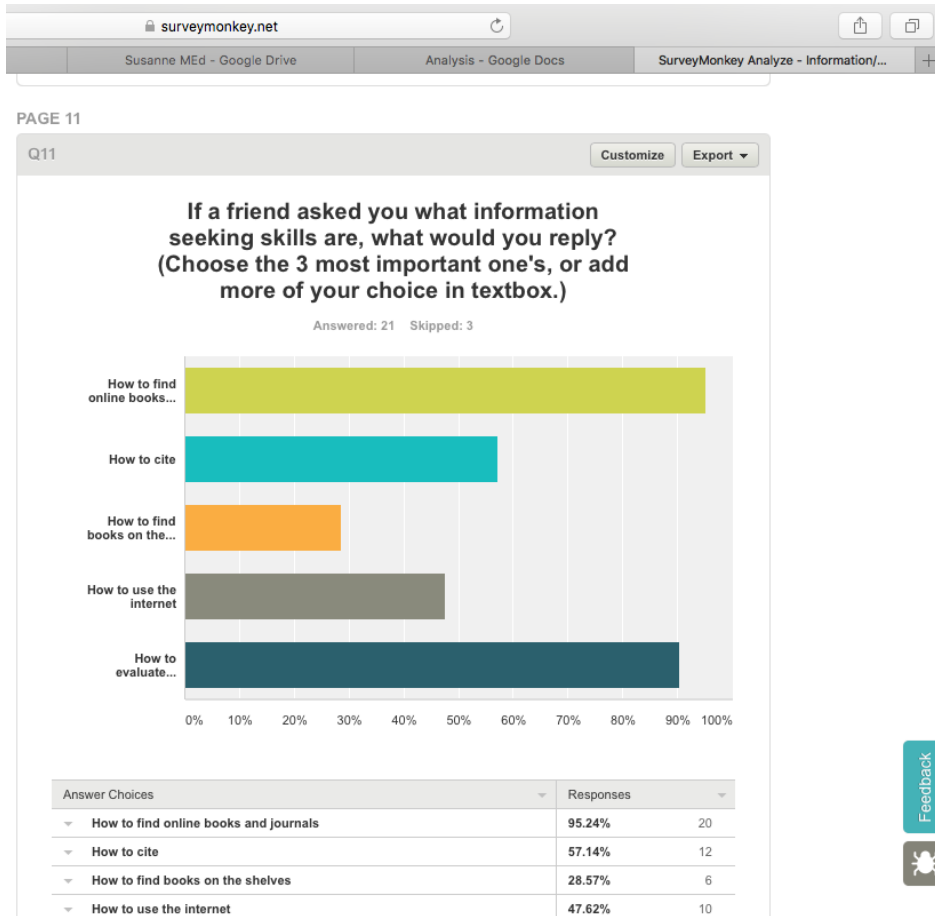
- Part-timers are older
- Completed degrees (in any field : natural sciences, humanities, business sciences) some time ago
- Had some IL contact in their UG
- In open-ended questions they complain about lack of skills in referencing, smart searching techniques for better search results, how to avoid plagiarism,
- they “don’t know what they don’t know”
- Database handling
- Better writing skills in general



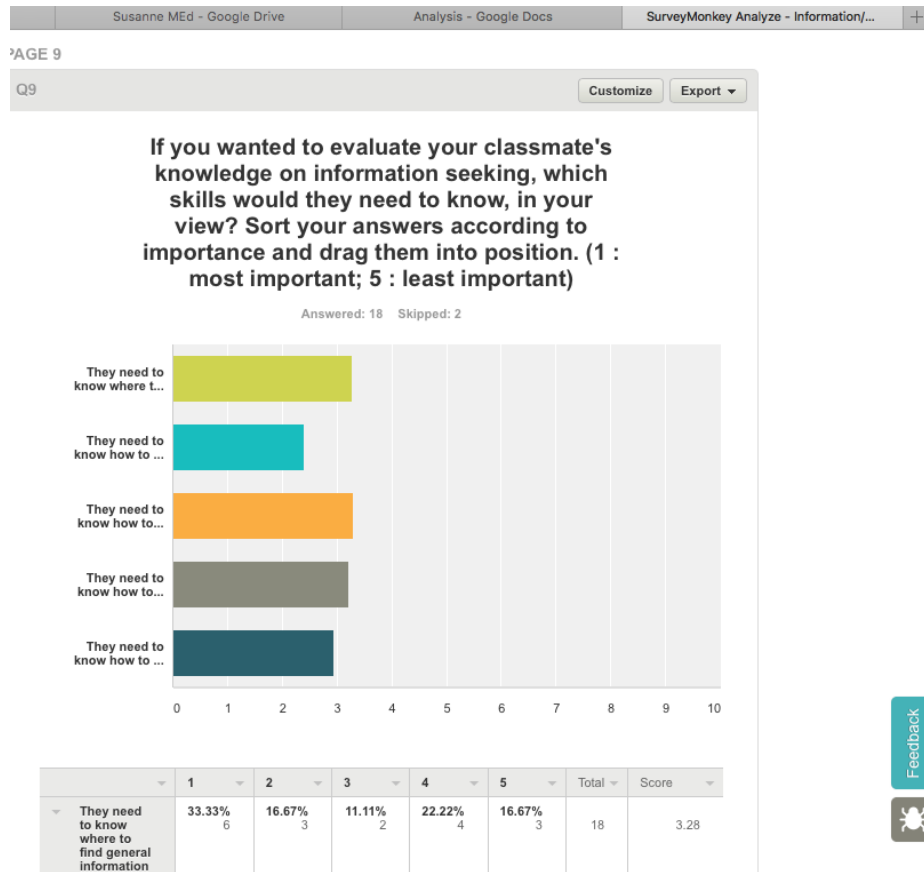
Bot otherwise : hardly any differences in skills

Part timers

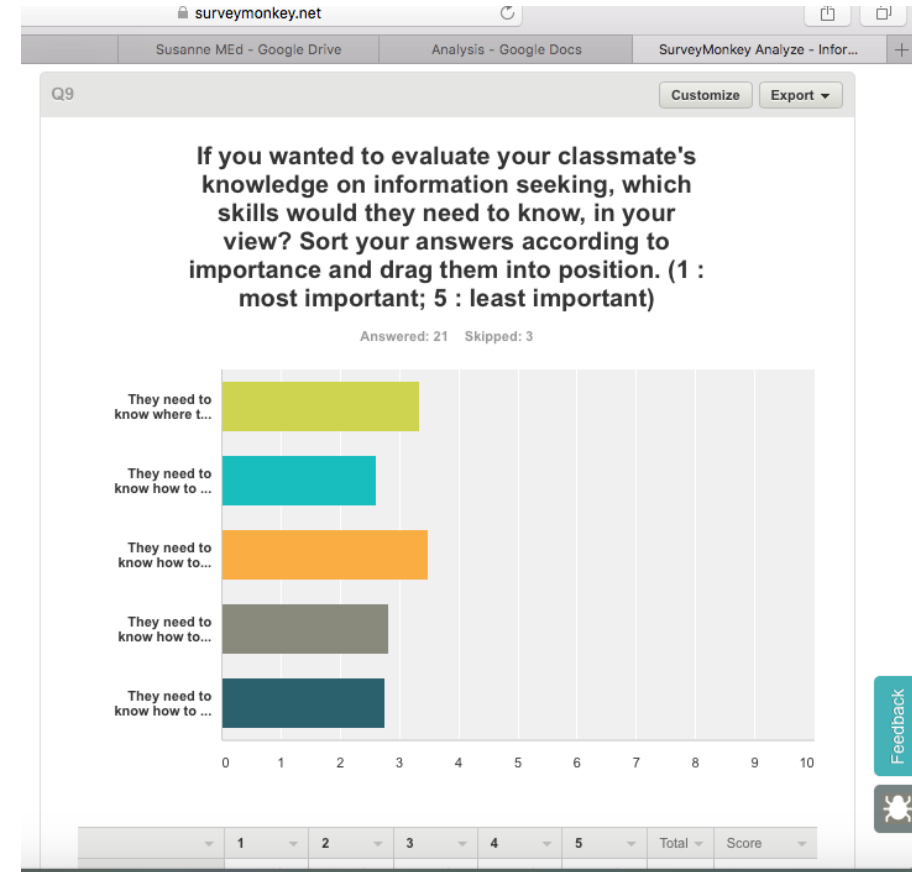
Full timers



Full timers



Part timers



Interviews used

- Semi-structured
- Informal, in the comfort zone of the interviewee
- Far more personal than questionnaires
- Direct conversation
- Asking for facts, but also opinions
- Interview develops as we go along, allowing for new, non-prepared ideas



Interviews

- 3 lecturers who are responsible as course conveners, but also lecturers of the IS Honours Group
- 1 lecturer responsible for the full timers
- 1 lecturer responsible for the part timers
- 1 lecturer responsible for the PG diplomas, who are also 4th years and will move into Honours next year.
- Interviews were done in a matter of 6 weeks
- all interviews lasted for between 35-45 minutes



Focus group discussions

- Group interview
- Generates discussions among group members
- Interviewer to act as a facilitator
- Participants explore and exchange views
- Different ways to communicate such as humour, arguments, anecdotes etc come up
- Diversity of group



Focus group discussions

- 2 groups: 1 from the full time programme; 1 from the part time program
- Same scribe for both groups, who took notes
- 3 invitations until I got one group:
- once per invitation via lecturer via VULA (our collaboration and learning system);
- once per e-mail
- and the last attempt : personal face-to-face invitation before a class, reminding students that we are a research environment, that we all need to do research, and that I will also participate once they need to do research
- 8 students agree to come, put their names down
- 12 came, last attempt worked
- Over lunch time in THEIR environment, THEIR class room, pizza and cool drinks,
- Incentives : Pizza and Cool drinks
- Twice : no avail



Full timers

- Incentives : Pizza and Cool drinks
- Twice : no avail

- Last attempt worked
- Over lunch time in THEIR environment, THEIR class room, pizza and cool drinks, and a brief but firm reminder that we are a research intensive institution, we won't move forward if we don't create new knowledge

- 8 students agreed to come, put their names down
- 12 came



Focus group discussions

- 2nd group:
- 7 part time students requested 2 hr workshop in IL skills voluntarily
- No lecturers involved
- Good opportunity to have a FG discussion
- Only 4 pitched, Saturday morning, very busy day at UCT , no parking available



ANALYSIS

- I used NVivo to analyse the interviews and Focus Group discussions
- NVivo is software that supports qualitative and mixed methods research.
- It helps to organise and analyse unstructured or qualitative data such as interviews, open ended survey responses, articles, social media and web content

- So, I clustered the vocabulary of the seven pillars of SCONUL (Identify, Scope, Plan, Gather, Evaluate, Manage, Present)



Findings

- Lecturers and course conveners do not know what IL is themselves
- They have no idea about the complexity of becoming IL skilled
- That is why they kept distracting from the questions by explaining the difference in FT and PT
- They ASSUME that students know how and where to find information.
- They ASSUME that that is what librarians are there for



Questions that arise

- Is IL in the format we are presenting it , necessary?
- Should we become more pro-active with more and better online resources such as How-to videos, tutorials, quizzes?
- Developments prove that self-directed learning is imminent, are we following that route?
- Should we initiate a lot more IL with DL?
- How can interest in IL be encouraged?
- How can we convince university departments to collaborate with libraries and librarians?



- Thank you!

