As a student of library science and an art history, I have always felt at home equally in the library and the domain of the studio or museum. However, during my graduate studies at Indiana University as a gallery coordinator, a library instruction assistant, and a reference assistant, I encountered many student artists who did not share the same transversal attitude. These students, many of whom were talented and accomplished artists, viewed the library as a source of intimidation, if not plain confusion, and thus avoided exploring its resources. As I talked with students and faculty in the fine arts, it became apparent that library avoidance was widespread and systemic—students not required or encouraged to use the library during their studio studies would be less likely to incorporate library resources into their future classes when they became teachers, creating a cyclical effect. As importantly, it seemed that art students who were not using the library to support their practice were limiting their creative growth and slighting an essential part of a liberal arts education: information literacy, or, learning how to find, evaluate and synthesize information.
This is a concern that encompasses all undergraduate students, not just artists. Its urgency is articulated by the development of two specific terms: information literacy and the Millennials. Information literacy, a concept developed over the past twenty years, refers to an individual’s ability to “recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and [use that information effectively].”
In 2000 the Association of College and Research Libraries published a criteria of five standards that have since been widely embraced by librarians. The development of these standards was no small gesture. In 2003, national library commissions, together with UNESCO, wrote the “Prague Declaration,” which described information literacy as a "key to social, cultural and economic development of nations and communities, institutions and individuals in the 21st century" and declared its acquisition as "part of the basic human right of life long learning."
Although information literacy is an increasing concern in primary and secondary school, it’s a broad-based issue for college-level students, known as Millennials. By their very definition, Millennials counter the five tenants of information literacy with three standards of their own: the three Fs—in a search they will settle on the first information that is fastest and free.
Millenials are defined as those born between 1979 and 2000, and their uniting quality is that they are “digital natives.” Comfortable with collaboration, learning experientially and visually, versed in multi-tasking and conditioned to achieving immediate results, the Millennial has drastically challenged the way libraries offer and disseminate information. Considering the conflux of these subjects, it seemed logical to locate artists’ library use within the larger discussion of the how we embed information fluency within the Millennial students’ education.
After reviewing the literature specific to serving studio student needs within the library I found several excellent articles on integrating students into art library culture—or rather, the other way around—but a lack of information regarding actual use habits. Many art librarians felt their studio students were not using the library to its greatest advantage, but no data existed exploring the extent of the problem. We know artists have unique research needs and approaches to conceptualizing information—how were these methods influencing their approach to the library? In order to provide concrete use evidence I surveyed undergraduate studio students about their library use, the methodology of which I will shortly discuss.

One of the central goals of the survey was to gauge how information literacy and library use increased over a studio art student’s career. Assuming the novice student entered her undergraduate training with a zero to minimal level of familiarity of both the art library and the resources it offered, at what point in her education did the shift occur when she began using the library and its resources successfully? How did that shift occur? Were students in different artistic disciplines receiving different kinds of library training, and if so, at what point in their program? And how were their professors and their graduate-student teachers, who instruct beginning classes, influencing their choices?
The survey was thus designed to reveal the different levels of information-seeking skills at the points of program entry, intermediate training and at the advanced level. This provided me with salient comparisons for the various stages of the undergraduate artist’s training and would hopefully reveal the critical point at which the student became more actively engaged with the library and information literacy.

Conversive tone here: (Based on my own learning style and my observations within the Fine Arts Library, I suspected students were acquiring skills on an individual, need-to-know level initiated by the student rather than the professor or librarian. What I hadn’t anticipated was the degree to which students rely on their professors and one another to teach themselves library skills as opposed to consulting with librarians.)
Indiana University Fine Arts Library

- Supports Studio art and History of Art

- 130,000 volumes and 323 periodicals, including collections of circulating slides and plates and a non-circulating collection of over 1000 artists' books
With the aforementioned in mind I decided to survey what I considered to be the three levels of studio education: introductory level classes, medium specific intermediate classes, and discipline specific, capstone seminars. 100 level classes included Fundamental drawing, studio 2-D and, studio 3-D. These classes are typically taught by graduate students. The 100 level series has enrolled non-majors, but many are considering a studio major or are in related disciplines such as apparel design or art education.

The second level of surveyed classes were the 200-level, discipline specific classes. Classes included ceramics, painting, photography, printmaking, sculpture, digital art and drawing. Studio graduate students also teach these classes. Finally, seminars of the same disciplines were surveyed. The small nature of these classes means they’re combined with the graduate seminars; graduate students were encouraged to complete the survey, but their answers were kept distinct.

To ensure good returns, I chose to administer the survey personally to the fine arts classes; 22 were surveyed in total.

Almost every student in every class completed a survey, with the exception of a few graduate students. While the students completed the survey, which usually took about 10 minutes, I interviewed the professor on expectations of student’s abilities to find information, how they integrated the library directly or indirectly into their class and how they utilized the library to support their own studio practice.
Here are the numbers. A few disciplines have more numbers in part because their classes were larger, but also because I may have surveyed more of the disciplines classes. I tried to pursue faculty and graduate teachers aggressively enough to represent all areas.

There were about 16 graduate students who are filled out surveys but are not reflected in the discipline breakdown.
Here you can see the breakdown between intermediate level classes and advanced, or seminar level classes.

Now, since our time is limited, I selected some questions and comparisons I thought were most interesting, the first being....
Fifty-two percent of students, or 109, reported that they rarely seek consultation when looking for information. Thirty-six percent, or 75 students, said they “somewhat frequently” seek consultation. More students never seek consultation (14) then do very frequently (9).
When the 84 students who seek consultation somewhat to very frequently do ask for help, to whom do they turn? 158 will ask a friend or peer (75%), and 148 will ask their professor (70%). Only 81, or 38%, ask a librarian, and about half that admit to asking nobody at all.

These figures underscore the important role a professor can play when guiding a student toward the library, though not quite as important as the role of a friend. Studies show that students prefer to acquire information seeking skills on a need-to-know basis in which information is shared with them by a friend. Most of us have done this—besides that it is convenient to have a colleague or peer show you how to perform a JSTOR caption search (for example), one is more likely to remember the newly acquired information as there was a specific need motivating the learner. That 75% of fine arts students prefer to consult with a peer bears out this case-by-case method of inquiry.

This survey was conducted about two months into the semester, and some of the advanced classes had not received their big class projects. So the following information needs to be considered with that in mind.

Most studio students seemed to have a low opinion of how much outside work their classes required—42% said their class rarely required outside work, and 35% said their class “somewhat frequently” required outside work. The survey also didn’t specify what was “outside work,” leaving it to the individual to interpret. The opinions of each class were varied, if somewhat united.

And that leads us to the next statistic:
34% have never tried to find information in the Indiana University Fine Arts Library, but—
38% of those who do think they’re very successful at it

Know, we know this is a typical statistic for the Millennial, whom typically has a greater sense of accomplishment than what may be truthfully claimed. Now we know the Millennial art student is like.
So how well do these students know their basic resources? Three questions on the survey tested information literacy. Each question gave students the option of choosing IUCAT, the Indiana University Online Catalog, ARTstor, Art Full Text, or “I don’t know.”

This information is not in the graph, but is an interesting buttress: 46% of students say they use IUCAT for their academic work; 70% say they use it for their studio work. 29% use ARTstor for academics and 21% use it for studio classes.

So a number have caught on to the university catalog but aren’t as familiar with more specialized sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Literacy</th>
<th>Number Students</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students who said art books were found in IUCAT</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students who said art images were found in ARTstor</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students who said journal articles on art were found in Art Full Text</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16%</td>
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How do info lit. rates vary by discipline? As an example, I chose printmaking. The printmaking professors tend to be very involved with the Fine Arts Library, since artists’ books are one the collection strengths. Many of these students have been brought into the library to look at artists’ books, if not to have an instruction session.

These findings are somewhat better than the samples from the other disciplines. Sometimes an exemplary class stood out, such as the printmaking seminar shown here, which had an unusually high scores. This class had a professor who encouraged her students use the library, although 40% of students reported that the class required outside work.

(Report what that professor said) (Add another discipline later)

Compare these numbers to those from the entire sample: 40% recognize the IU catalogue as the correct place to search for art books; 45% know ARTstor contains images, and 15% can identify Art Full Text as a resource for journal articles. SO, overall, if we consider these printmaking statistics to be a rough average for the other disciplines, the undergraduates as a whole fall are scoring the at a level between beginning and intermediate.
81% use Google for studio work, 90% for academic work
Finally:

65% feel the Fine Arts Library at Indiana University is somewhat to very important for their studies; but 34% are unsure or think it is not important.

Conclusions

While the students completed their surveys I interviewed professors and Assistant Instructors about how they directly or indirectly integrated the FAL into their classes, what kind of information seeking skill expectations they had for their students and how they used the library to support their own research.

“I direct them to resources—their research can’t be exist myopically in the studio. They need an outside perspective. I let them know that regularly.” remarked a senior faculty member. “I come to class with the expectation that they already know how to research,” said another seminar professor. Most professors stressed that they want their students to improve upon their critical thinking skills, their ability to do visual analysis and perform technical skills. Most classes did not have a written component but discussed ideas and theories in a round-table discussion format. Professors overwhelmingly felt that their students were learning research skills in other classes, and though many had their students do “research” on an artist or style, the results of this information were presented in a “show and tell” style in class.

Although this is a complicated situation, one of the prime reasons I identified for students’ poor use of the library is that, as other authors have pointed out, studio students are not making the connection between their artistic work and the resources in the library. Though their professors are more apt to make this connection, and many reported that they browse the library for their own work, they are not encouraging a solid connection between theory and practice.

I have personally witnessed many an undergraduate or graduate student’s “a-ha” moment when I show them a resource that allows them to find information more easily, or show them images that add to an existing dialogue, or prove to them that yes, the library actually has dozens of books on their “hard-to-find” subject, or show them work from an encyclopedia that predates the work of an artist they thought had an original approach.

These personal, individualized information exchanges are highly meaningful for the student artist and are, as we saw earlier, an effective way to transmit information. Library literacy—not just information literacy—is most successful when it pertains to a student’s specific project.
Despite some of the disappointing statistics produced in this survey, I detected from its participants a strong interest and curiosity about the library and a desire from faculty to do what was best for their students. The last goal of the Indiana University Studio Art program, as stated on the School of Fine Arts website, is “To support the College of Arts and Sciences’ sophisticated, strategic liberal arts education that cultivates critical thinking and creativity necessary in the twenty-first century.”

The College of Arts and Sciences recognizes that information fluency is an increasingly crucial part of the undergraduate’s curriculum, and the IU Education Policies Committee, part of the Bloomington Faculty Council, has recently drafted information fluency recommendations for all College of Arts and Science students that are currently in place and must be implemented by 2014. It is imminent that studio students, in addition to other humanity students, will be expected to integrate information resources into their education.

The art librarian can assist the visually-based studio student with these goals now by providing professors with easy ways to integrate the library into course assignments and tailoring instruction sessions to specific assignments. 65% of surveyed students felt the FAL was somewhat to very important to their studies—the spark is there if we art librarians are ready to fan the flames.
Conclusions…

Faculty—
- May not be imbedding the library into lessons
- May believe that the internet works just fine…
- May not require students to use library resources in their research assignments

Students—
- Don’t become indoctrinated with the library until their final year of study, if they do
- Don’t ask librarians for help

The Library—
- Is not on the radar of enough students, many of whom take classes in the same building without knowing it’s there
- Librarians are not very visible for reference exchanges or help
Every school is different, but based on this particular case, I would make the following suggestions, which can be adapted:

- Target specific faculty and students to spread the word
- Strategically publicize survey results to further mission
- Use graduate students to infiltrate the ranks of studio AIs and undergraduate students
- Provide easy ways for faculty to integrate the library into assignments (Problem based learning)
- Make resources, and their locations, visible to appeal to the studio search method of “browsing”
- Try adapting instruction sessions to visual and physical learning sessions
This was actually advice I received yesterday from a faculty member who is studying to get her MLS.

I found just stirring the waters a bit with this survey got more people engaged.

The sculpture class that scheduled instruction after I surveyed the class

The graduate assistant who requested a library info class from me the following year.
Partial List of Further Reading:
