

Are video tutorials worth the effort?

April Colosimo, Life Sciences Library

Introduction

For many years McGill University librarians have been giving an information literacy session to U0 students taking General Chemistry (CHEM 120). The entire laboratory period (2.5 hours) is devoted to the theme of scientific inquiry. These students must choose and modify an experiment from the literature that they themselves will perform at a later date.

To supplement this year's session for the class of 912 students, four Camtasia Studio video tutorials were created:

- Finding experiments (3:35)
- Understanding citations (4:43)
- Locate an article from a citation (4:59)
- Locate a book from a citation (3:53)

The tutorials were posted on the library course guide as Flash videos with three viewing sizes (small, medium, and large), as well as a version that could be downloaded and played on an iPod (.m4v). To view the videos, go to <http://www.mcgill.ca/schulich/collections/links/course/chem120/>.

Questions remained as to whether or not students watched the videos and if they found them useful for the laboratory exercise. Would students bother watching library video tutorials? Are they worth the effort?

Methods

While students were performing their chosen laboratory experiment, two months following the scientific inquiry period, an evaluation form was distributed for the library by the supervisor. The evaluation form covered the usefulness of the session given by the librarian and the usefulness of each of the video tutorials. As part of the evaluation, students were asked, even if they did not watch the videos, would they watch other library video tutorials, and if no, why not?

Results

533 evaluation forms were returned, giving a 58% response rate. Figure 1 shows the feedback on the usefulness of the library session and video tutorials. 512 students responded to the question: even if you did not see the videos, would you watch other library video tutorials? 147 students (28.7%) answered 'no' (Fig. 2). Of these, a total of 105 commented on why they would not watch other videos. The majority of the comments could be divided into three major categories: 1) too much time and effort, 2) not needed, 3) not interested.

Please see Fig. 3 for the distribution.

Figure 1: Students responded to the usefulness of a) the session given by the librarian, and video tutorials: b) finding experiments, c) understanding citations, d) locate an article from a citation, e) locate a book from a citation.

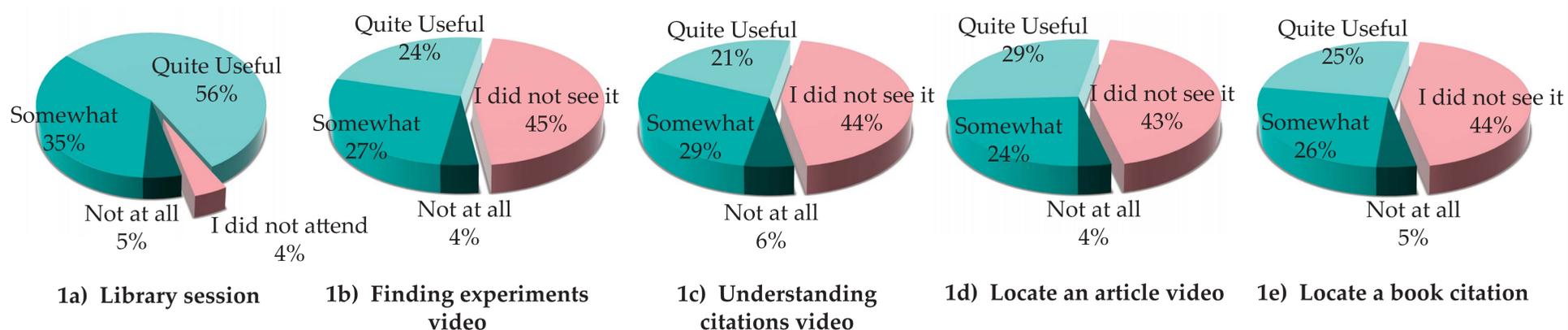


Figure 2: Percentage of those who said "yes" or "no" to whether or not they would watch other library video tutorials.

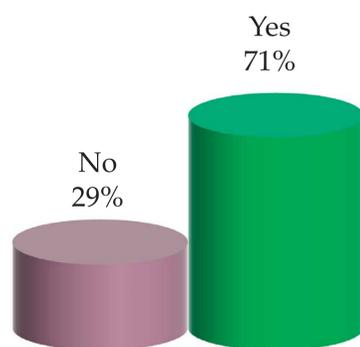
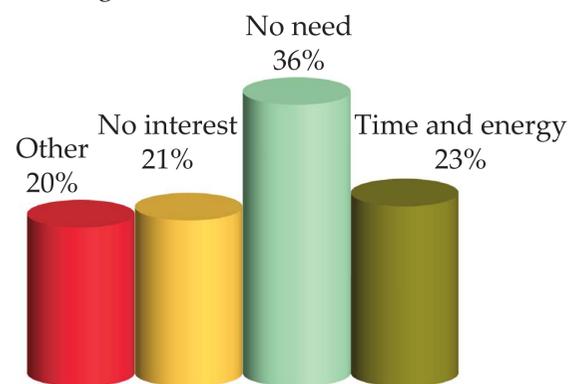


Figure 3: Responses to why students would not watch other library video tutorials divided into categories and displayed as percentage of total.



Discussion

Library video tutorials may not appeal to everyone but these results indicate that over seventy percent of incoming university students would be willing to watch them. To be worth the effort, particular attention must be paid to the usefulness and relevance of the material covered, while keeping the length of videos to a minimum. Library video tutorials can be of much use but interest will have to be generated in the videos in order to appeal to greater numbers.



McGill Library
Bibliothèque

Information • Innovation • Service