The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) Library

at the University of Toronto launched its Personal Librarian Program (PLP) for all incoming OISE graduate students in the fall of 2014. Approximately 970 OISE students received four emails over the course of the 2014-15 academic year from one of the four OISE personal librarians.

The OISE program builds on the University of Toronto’s particular needs of graduate students in education.

1. For more about the University of Toronto’s Personal Librarian Program, see: https://personal.library.utoronto.ca

An outgoing survey indicated that responding students (n=180) were very enthusiastic about the project and the personalized support.

But we wanted to know more than was captured in the evaluation survey. What were students asking? What were their most pressing library needs? A simple content analysis of the actual email interactions provided an overview of the types of questions students had asked over the 2014-15 year.

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Types of Questions Asked

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OISE librarians engaged in 243 direct email interactions with their personal librarian students over the course of the 2014-15 academic year.

Research-related inquiries (R) predominated across all questions and across all masters and doctoral programs at OISE.

Research-related Interactions: Analysis by Type

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Research (R) coding key

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R2 questions by OISE degree program

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R2 questions by OISE department

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Key Findings

An analysis of the actual email interactions provided an overview of the types of questions students had asked over the 2014-15 academic year.

OISE graduate students have strong content knowledge, but they still required individual help in developing advanced search strategies (R6, R7) and finding the right tools to complete their searches (R3, R4, R7).

This analysis helped reinforce the importance of and demand for customized services such as individual consultations and advanced research support at the graduate level.

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