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## Mixin-It Up: Using a Mixed Methods Approach to Understand Graduate Student Needs

Hilary Bussell

*The Ohio State University*

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# Asking the Right Questions

Using Mixed Methods to Understand Graduate Student Research Needs



# Hilary Bussell

Assistant Professor,  
The Ohio State  
University Libraries

@hilarycbus



**~4,700 grad students  
(27,000 total enrollment)**


**10 academic colleges**

**17 subject librarians**




# GRAD STUDENTS ARE A PRIORITY

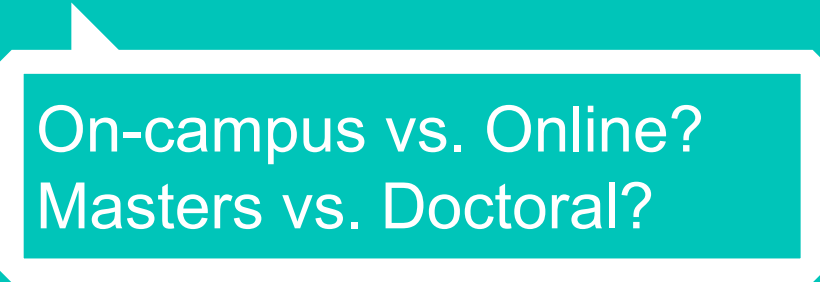
But how?




Why are we  
doing this?



# What are the research needs of graduate students?



On-campus vs. Online?  
Masters vs. Doctoral?



# How do graduate students prefer to learn research skills?


On-campus vs. Online?  
Masters vs. Doctoral?





**Qualitative?**  
**Quantitative?**

Why can't we have both?



# Sequential Exploratory Design



Qualitative → Quantitative

# Focus Groups & Interviews

34 participants (25 on-campus students and 9 online students)



# Qualitative Analysis



# Qualitative Findings: Research Skills Grad Students Identified as Important



**Finding and  
accessing  
library materials**



**Developing a  
literature review**



**Collecting and  
analyzing data**



**Learning how to  
use research  
software**



**Obtaining  
funding for  
research**



**Developing the  
personality  
attributes of a  
researcher**



*“I think the researcher needs be **creative** to start with a new topic or to continue with others...”*

*“I think when you design your research project you have to have **flexibility**...”*

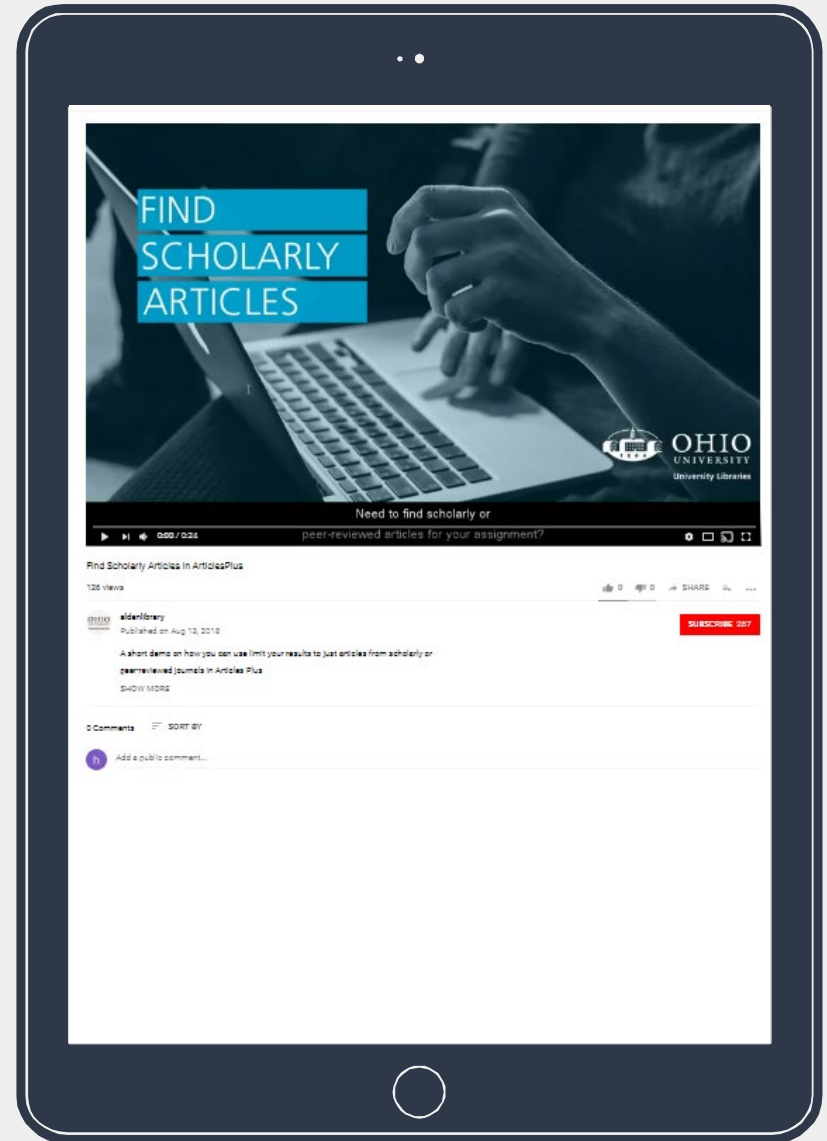


*“When you go into the field, **you need to have a plan B** ... if this doesn't work, what are you going to do, instead of immediately contacting your advisor?”*

*“In undergraduate, they just want you to regurgitate what they taught you. But in graduate school it's so wide open, that **they really want to see what you make of it.**”*

# Qualitative Findings: Preferred Learning Formats

Online options are popular with both online and on-campus grad students







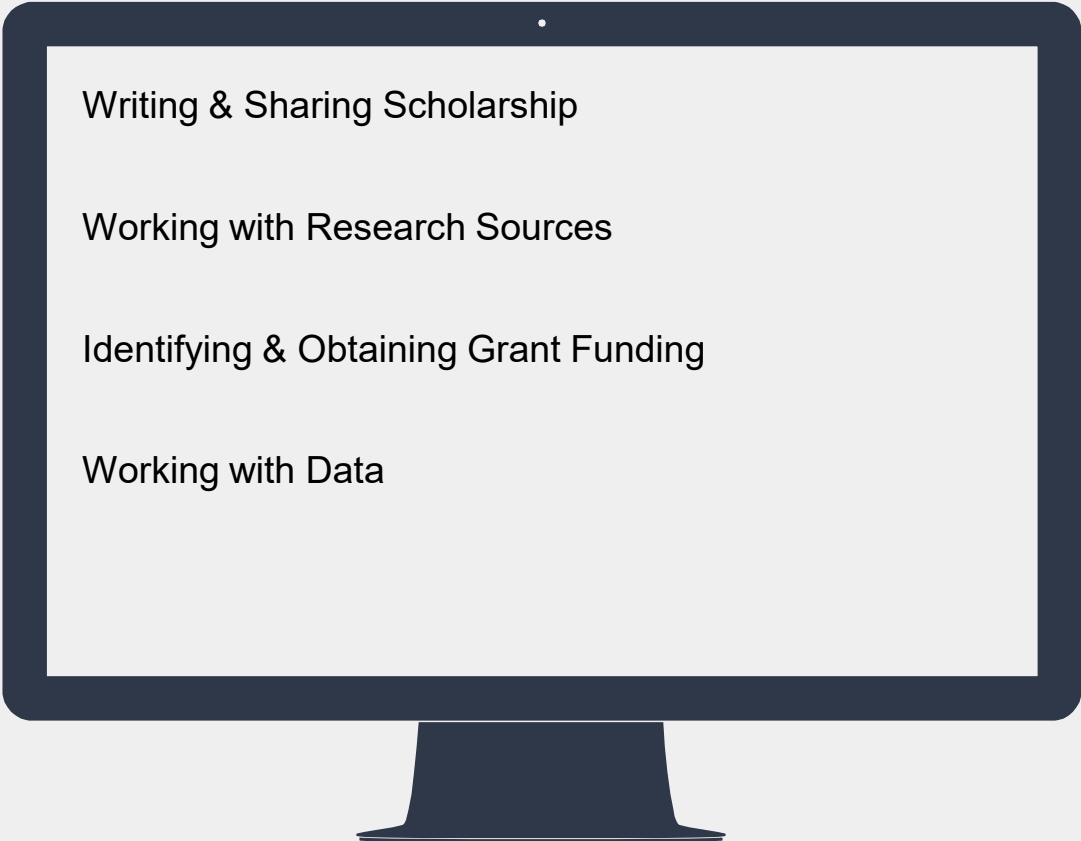
# From Qualitative to Quantitative





# Survey questions

Confidence in ability to complete research-related tasks



Writing & Sharing Scholarship

Working with Research Sources

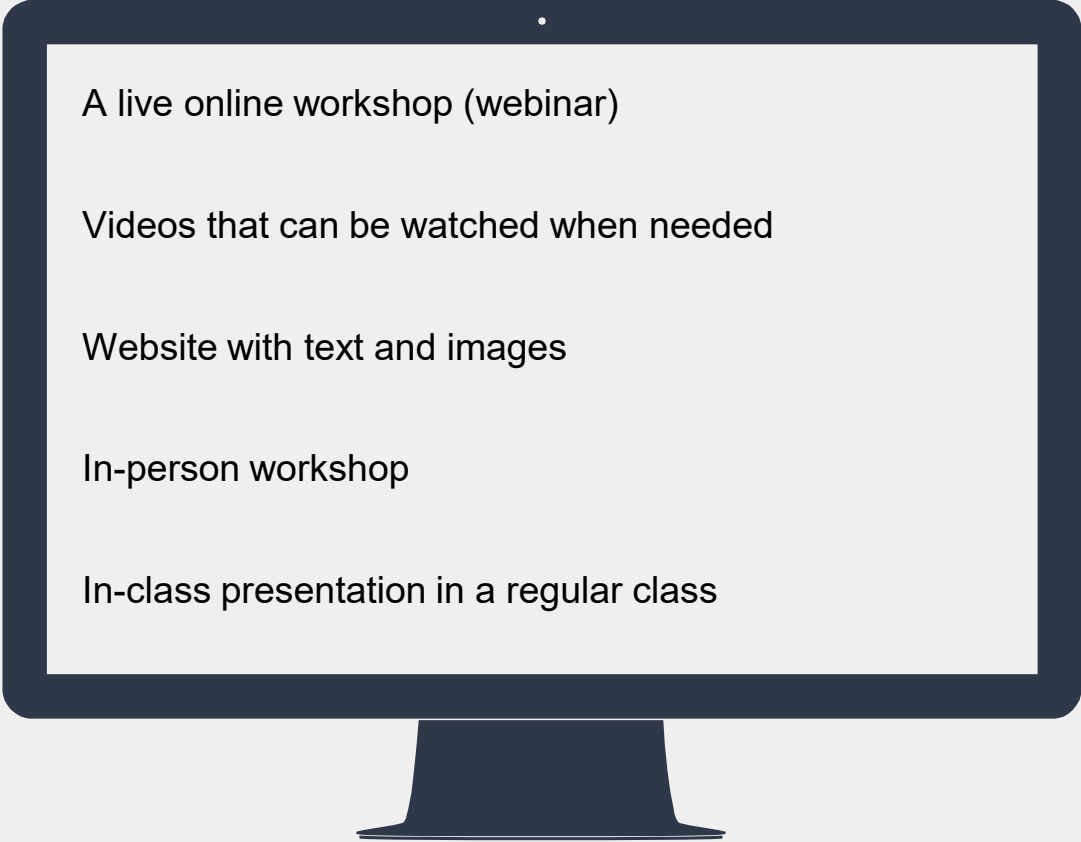
Identifying & Obtaining Grant Funding

Working with Data



# Survey questions

Preferred format for learning a new research skill



A live online workshop (webinar)

Videos that can be watched when needed

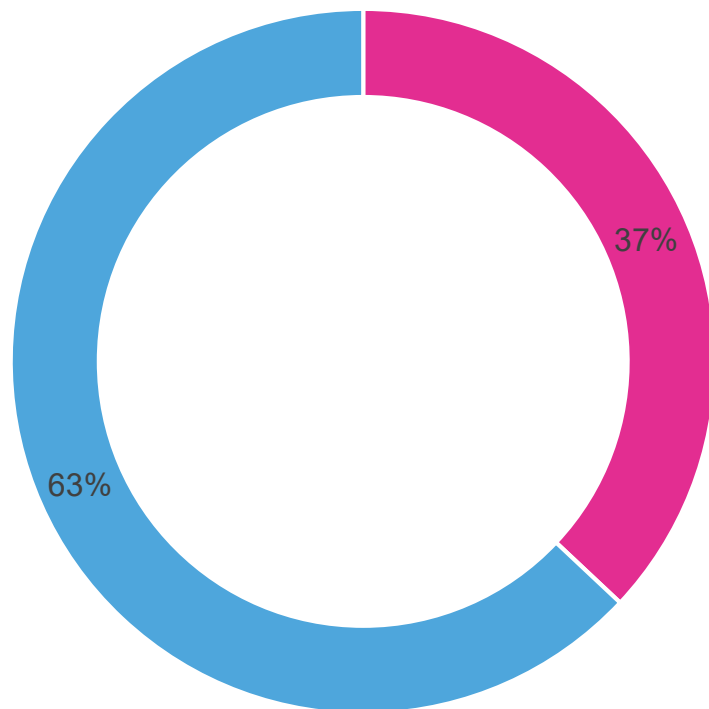
Website with text and images

In-person workshop

In-class presentation in a regular class



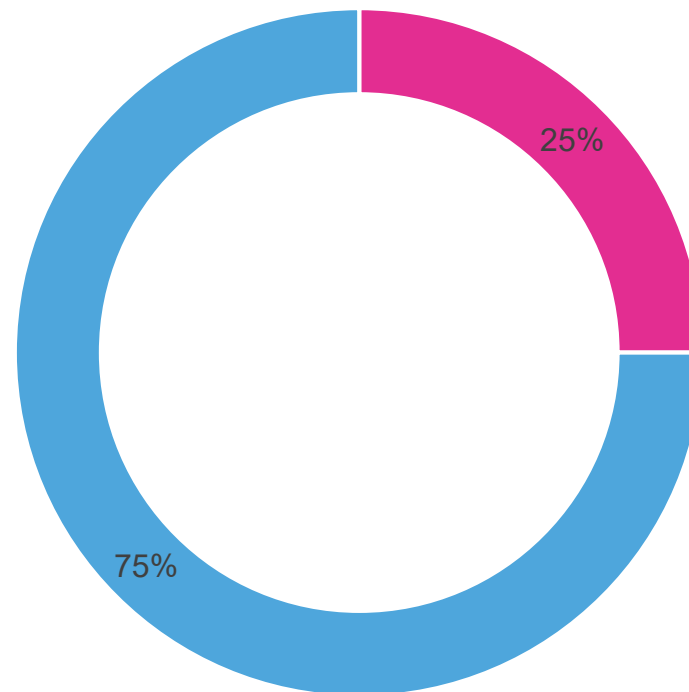
## Enrolled Students, Spring 2014



■ Online ■ On-campus

Total Students: 4,486

## Survey Participants



■ Online ■ On-campus

Total Participants: 842

**Students have highest confidence in their ability to:**



**Cite sources**



**Identify previously published research**



**Access full text**

**They have lowest confidence in their ability to:**



**Determine where to publish their research**



**Obtain grant funding for research**



**Identify sources of grant funding**

## Most Preferred Learning Formats, All Students



**Videos**



**Websites**



**In-person  
Workshops**

## Least Preferred Learning Formats, All Students



**Live online  
workshop  
(webinar)**

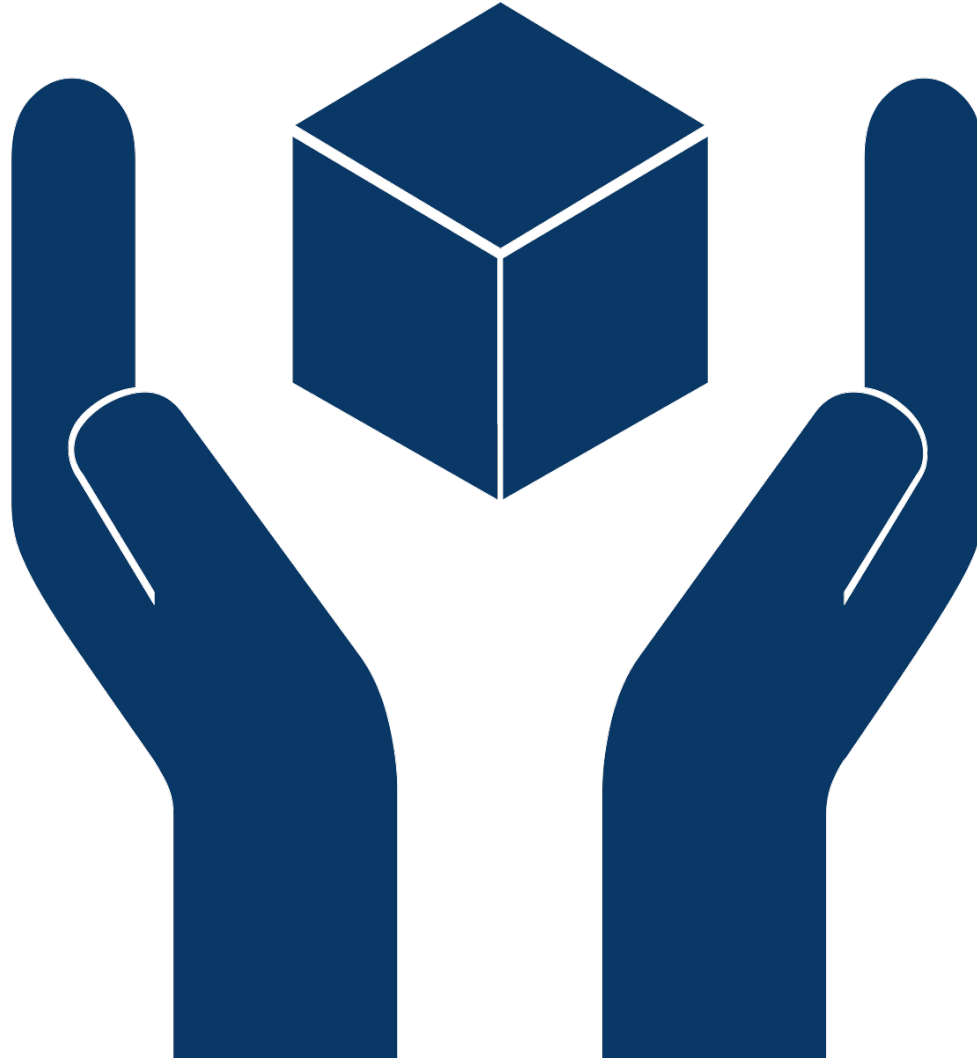


**Presentation in  
a regular class**

# Reflections



# Reflections





# Reflections





The Joys of  
Teamwork



# Publications

Bussell, Hagman, & Guder  
(2015)

<http://go.osu.edu/bhg2015>

Bussell, Hagman, & Guder  
(2017)

<http://go.osu.edu/bhg2017>



Mixin' It Up: Using a Mixed-Methods Approach to Understanding Graduate Research Needs

Hilary Bussell • Jessica Hagman • Christopher Guder  
@hilarybussell @hagman @cguder  
#MixedNeedsAssess

Read the paper at:  
<http://bit.ly/MixACRL2015>



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**Research Needs and Learning Format Preferences of Graduate Students at a Large Public University: An Exploratory Study**

*Hilary Bussell, Jessica Hagman, Christopher S. Guder*

**Abstract**

This article reports on a study of research needs and learning preferences of graduate students at a public research university. A sequential exploratory mixed-method design was used, with a survey instrument developed from an initial qualitative stage. Significant differences were found between master's and doctoral students' and on-campus and online students' confidence with several research skills. Graduate students overall prefer asynchronous online options and in-person workshops over synchronous online instruction and in-class presentations for learning research skills. The article concludes with a discussion of the value of the sequential exploratory mixed-method design for informing practice at an individual institution.

**Full Text:**  
[PDF](#) [HTML](#)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.78.7.978>

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# Thanks!

@hilarycbus

bussell.21@osu.edu

# Citations

Grand Canyon University Center for Innovation in Research and Training. (n.d.). *Choosing a Mixed Methods Design*.

[https://cirt.gcu.edu/research/developmentresources/research\\_ready/mixed\\_methods/choosing\\_design](https://cirt.gcu.edu/research/developmentresources/research_ready/mixed_methods/choosing_design)

Greg Guest, Kathleen M. MacQueen, and Emily E. Namey, *Applied Thematic Analysis* (Los Angeles, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2012), 10–13.

Ohio University Office of Institutional Research. *Final Spring Enrollment Headcount, 2010–2016*.

<https://www.ohio.edu/instres/student/QuartEnroll/QuartEnrollSPRING.html>