

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE BARRIERS FACED BY  
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THEIR USE OF A SMALL IRISH  
ACADEMIC LIBRARY**

**ORLA FOLEY**

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Department of Information Studies

Aberystwyth University

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this dissertation is to present the results of a survey of international students of the Institute of Technology, Carlow which was carried out during 2009-2010.

There has been substantial growth in the number of international students enrolling in the Institute each year. The aim of this research is to describe their current library experiences, identify the main barriers and service gaps encountered by them in their use of the academic library and to develop some guidelines and recommendations arising from the research on how to better support their library needs and make a positive contribution to their experience of studying outside of their home countries.

A mixed-methods research design combining both qualitative and quantitative methods was used. An invitation to complete a web based questionnaire was sent to all international students in I.T. Carlow asking them about their current library experience, their information seeking behaviour, the language and cultural barriers facing them and any changes to the library service they would welcome. Out of 300 students contacted, 66 took part responded giving a response rate of 22%. This was followed by semi-structured interviews with three international students.

Results showed that English language proficiency remains the most significant barrier facing international students with 60% of the students who responded having problems both writing and speaking English. In addition, the survey highlighted poor participation rates by international students in library inductions or information skills training programs. This problem needs further investigation in order to improve international student engagement in said programs.

International students make a valuable contribution to enriching the cultural and intellectual diversity of the Institute. The library needs to be proactive in addressing the needs of these students in order to provide the library support required for them to successfully pursue their studies.

## Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed..... (candidate)

Date.....

### STATEMENT 1

This work is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s).

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes and/or an appropriate citation method giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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I hereby give consent for my work, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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## **Abbreviations:**

HEA	Higher Education Authority
IOT	Institute of Technology
HETAC	Higher Education Training Awards Council
DOES	Department of Education and Science
IEBI	International Education Board of Ireland
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

The mobility of tertiary students has seen significant growth over the past decade. UNESCO, in its 2009 Global Education Digest, estimates that the number of students enrolled in educational institutes outside of their country of origin in 2007 was over 2.8 million. This represents an increase of 4.6% on the previous year and growth of almost 53% since 1999. Two thirds of these students are based in 7 major countries – the US, UK, France, Germany, Australia, China and Japan. However, according to the International Education Board of Ireland (IEBI), Ireland, while not considered an internationally important location for higher education, has also seen an increase in international student numbers that is broadly in line with those of the main destination countries. For the year 2006/07, the most recent year for which data is available, there were 27,275 non-Irish students registered in 50 higher education institutes from over 140 countries. This represented a growth rate of 8% over the previous year. According to figures compiled by the IEBI, the Institutes of Technology (IOT) slice of this market, to which I.T. Carlow belongs, has grown from less than 5% in 2002 to around 15% in 2006/07 with over 4,000 international students enrolled throughout the 13 Institutes.

Continuing to increase the numbers of international students enrolling is one of the goals of management across the IOT sector. The recruitment and retention of these students has become increasingly important, not only in the IOT sector but to the higher education sector as a whole in the Republic of Ireland. International students not only contribute to the cultural and intellectual diversity of our third level campuses but also generate vital revenue for the host institutions and for the wider economy as a whole. Ireland's recent economic downturn has meant that funds from central government to the education sector are under intense scrutiny with ongoing political discussion about how third level education should be funded. While free tuition fees are currently still afforded to domestic students, this is not the case for students coming from outside the EU. The IEBI reports that for the academic year 2006/07, €164 million was generated in international student fees and estimates that a further €208 was spent by these students on accommodation and other living expenses with each student spending an average of €10,200 per year in the Republic. In an economy suffering an

unprecedented, dramatic downturn and in a sector particularly vulnerable to the vagaries of government support, these are not inconsiderable sums.

There are many reasons why students choose to study abroad and many factors that may impact on their choice of where to study. Reputable academic institutions will tend to attract these students and part of an institution's reputation is based on the quality of the library facilities and services available. The library and its staff can have an important impact, positive or negative, on the academic progress and overall experience of students studying abroad. The increasing number of these international students in Irish education institutes has implications for future academic library service provision. As recruitment of international students continues, library plans need to incorporate their particular needs. This dissertation will attempt to evaluate the needs and potential barriers facing international students by looking in depth at a particular third level institute, the Institute of Technology, Carlow.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

Internationally, the composition of the student body on college campuses can be incredibly diverse. However, in Ireland, this is a relatively recent phenomenon. Economic growth during the last ten years has made Ireland a more attractive place for people to come to work and study in. While Irish Universities would always have had a certain number of international students enrolled, especially in fields like medicine, it is a new experience for the IOT sector. While for reasons already mentioned, these students are actively recruited; often the support that they need to successfully adapt academically has not been fully considered and may be inadequate, especially if difficulties arise. The same is true from the library perspective as well.

The library of the Institute of Technology, Carlow has seen significant increases in the level of international students that it welcomes through its doors each year. Unfortunately, up to now, the library has not been in a position to consider in a planned way the needs and requirements of these students. Going forward, the library needs to ensure that it puts in place specific supports and measures to meet the academic library needs of international students. A first

step in this process can be achieved by asking the students themselves what their library needs are and what are the main barriers they encounter.

### **1.3 Definition**

The definition of international student that that is going to be used in the dissertation is the one used by UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) which defines these students as “those who study in a foreign country of which they are not a permanent resident (35)”

### **1.4 The Current Situation in I.T. Carlow**

The Institute of Technology, Carlow is a third level education institute in Ireland’s south-east region. Founded in 1970 as the Regional Technical College, Carlow, it has grown from an initial recruitment of 70 students to over 3,000 full time and 800 part-time students operating from its three campus sites at Carlow, Wicklow and Wexford. In 1998, it was upgraded to Institute of Technology (IOT) status along with 12 other similar institutes. Its stated mission is to provide “excellence in higher education through the provision of programmes leading to internationally recognised awards.”(4).

### **1.5 International Student Body**

The international study body at I.T. Carlow is comprised of two different streams of students – those coming from within the EU (through the ERASMUS Office) and those from outside the EU (recruited through the Non-EU Office).

I.T. Carlow was one of the first third level institutes in the country to set up an international partnership exchange network which now has 54 European partnerships in 15 countries. Its latest international endeavour sees it moving outside of Europe and reaching as far afield as China and South East Asia to welcome students to the I.T.

### 1.5.1 ERASMUS Students

Under the ERASMUS programme, the Institute welcomes approximately 140 students each year. The ERASMUS programme or European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students is a European student exchange programme established in 1987. It is the EU's flagship training and education programme facilitating thousands of students to study abroad each year.

### 1.5.2 Non-EU Students

The recruitment of overseas students from outside the EU to the Institute by the Non-EU Office has been ongoing since 2003 and has been successful in attracting students, particularly from China and Korea. The recruitment of Non-EU students is seen as a priority for Institute management due to the large fees they can generate. Efforts made to increase the number coming to study in Carlow have included recruitment visits by Institute staff to various Chinese colleges in order to increase the profile of I.T. Carlow as a destination for students who wish to study abroad in an English language speaking country.

In its first year of operation 2003/04, the Non-EU Office welcomed a total 50 students to the Institute. This number has grown year on year and for the academic year 2008/09, there were 181 international students enrolled on academic programs through their office. This represents a total increase of 262% over the six years the program has been in operation.

**Table 1-1                      Number of Non-EU students studying at I.T. Carlow 2003-2009**

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Number of Non-EU students</b>	<b>% Increase Year on Year</b>
2003/04	50	
2004/05	67	34%
2005/06	109	63%
2006/07	121	11%
2007/08	163	35%
2008/09	181	11%

## **1.6 Research Proposal**

Students who choose to study abroad face the same issues and concerns as home students but they can also face additional difficulties due to language and cultural barriers. The purpose of this research is to investigate the particular needs and barriers facing international students today and identify ways in which these needs can be addressed and barriers overcome by putting in place the help and support necessary for them to achieve academic success. The international students of the Institute of Technology Carlow will be used as the research sample population in order to gain insight into the concerns, experiences and needs of this group of students in using an Irish academic library. The current literature about international students will also be examined in order to look at the issues that have already been identified and explored and examine the solutions put forward to address some of the difficulties experienced by international students.

## **1.7 Aims and Objectives**

### **1.7.1 Research Aim**

The aim of this research is to identify and explore the issues confronting international students in their use of the academic library and evaluate how they can be effectively supported in their academic needs.

### **1.7.2 Research Objectives**

The objectives of the research are:

1. To describe international students' current experiences of using the library.
2. To identify the main barriers encountered by them in using the academic library so that these barriers can be reduced or eliminated.
3. To investigate the library literature and look at current best practice in how libraries can effectively support international students in their academic needs.
4. To develop a set of recommendations for use in the library to support the academic needs of international students and make a positive contribution to their experience of studying outside of their home countries.

## **1.8 Scope**

The scope of this survey is limited to the international student population of the Institute of Technology, Carlow.

## **1.9 Summary of Dissertation**

This dissertation follows the traditional format and uses the MLA citation style throughout.

Chapter One introduces the topic to be investigated, provides some background information and gives context to the study.

Chapter Two presents a review of the literature pertaining to international students.

Chapter Three presents the methodology used in the research process. It describes the design of the study, the research approach taken and the data collection methods used.

Chapter Four presents the findings from the questionnaire and from the interviews.

Chapter Five looks at the findings in more depth and looks at implications for the library service.

Chapter Six gives some recommendations arising from the research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

International students play an important role in enriching the cultural and intellectual diversity of the education system in their host countries. While it is a chance for these students to broaden their cultural and intellectual horizons and should also prove to be an exciting and life enriching experience for them, many of them may experience some difficulties in adjusting to a new academic and library environment. To ensure a continued flow of international students into host countries, they need to be successfully integrated into the Third Level education system and given the academic support required in order to successfully pursue their studies. In this regard, the library can and should play a vital role. Considerable research has already been undertaken to identify the particular needs and unique issues confronting this particular group of students. It is consistent in finding that the main challenges confronting international students are:

1. General Cultural Adjustment Issues
2. Language and Communication problems
3. Adjusting to a new library and educational system.

In a comprehensive review of 18 articles written between 1987 and 1993 on international students' use of US academic libraries, Allen Natowitz (1995) identified these as the key issues and concerns facing these students. The same conclusions were also reached by Sara Baron and Alexia Strout-Dapaz in research they conducted in 2001 where they mailed surveys to the heads of library reference services and to the international student office directors of 300 academic institutes.

Helping international students overcome these challenges is also much discussed in the library literature. It explores the changes that libraries and library staff can make to ensure that the library is perceived as a welcoming space for international students and a place where they will be empowered with the necessary information skills to confidently and successfully tackle their academic courses.

## **2.2 Culture and Cultural Adjustment Issues**

Culture has a profound effect in shaping us as people and in providing the framework for how we live our lives and how we interact with others. In leaving their home countries and cultures behind to study abroad, international students can be confronted with a society that may be profoundly different to their own. This immersion in a new culture may prove ultimately to be an exciting and enriching experience but it can also, at first seem a frustrating and frightening one. “Culture shock” is a term that is applied to the stress that one experiences when immersing oneself in a new environment. Donna Louise Gilton (1997) asserts that international students, a group living outside of their own country, are likely to experience varying degrees of culture shock. In addition to the problems of adjusting to a new university, they will also have to face the difficulties associated with coming to live in a new country with a different culture. Some of the challenges that they may encounter include loneliness, stress, homesickness, depression, difficulty in making friends as well as having to adjust to new food and climate (Grayson, 2008). Even though students from linguistically and culturally similar countries (such as those from other EU countries) can also experience culture shock, an increasing number of international students coming to study in the Institute today are coming from Africa, the Middle East, the Far East and other developing nations where their culture and society is vastly different to that of the West. Brown and Holloway (2008) in their research on international students include testimonies from students who share their experiences of how the unfamiliarity of their new surroundings and its social conventions led to feelings of stress and disorientation.

## **2.3 Cultural Awareness**

Research shows that library staff can play a part in easing the feelings of culture shock experienced by international students by making a concerted effort to understand the diversity of the cultural backgrounds of the students that they are dealing with. In doing so, they can help avoid the potentially harmful misunderstandings and miscommunications that can give rise to needless tension. Recognising diversity is a key element in dealing effectively with international students. Unfortunately, as Zhang (2005) notes, much of the research on international students has studied them as a homogenous group, as if they all had similar

cultural backgrounds and therefore faced similar barriers when this is not the case. Students from different countries, or even students from within the same country, will have different requirements depending on their past library and academic experiences, exposure to technology and English proficiency. Zhang looks in particular at the communication and cultural barriers confronting East Asian students studying in the West and gives some examples of how, such as out of politeness rarely using the word no, with these students, cultural miscommunication can occur and leads to needless misunderstandings.

Hall (1992) also emphasises the importance of cultural awareness. He argues that librarians need to be aware that intercultural problems are more than just linguistically based. He points out that it is easier to recognise language difficulties and make adjustments accordingly than it is to be aware of, and alert to, implicit cultural cues and mores. In his view, it is those cultural cues, the ones that we are perhaps least aware of, that can lead to the most discordance in communication between librarians and those from a culture different to their own. He gives concrete examples, such as not maintaining eye contact or nodding to mean no rather than yes, of where not being aware of cultural cues can give rise to misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Hall recommends that librarians should educate themselves about cultural differences and develop awareness of how these differences may adversely affect our interactions with students.

As far back as her 1984 article, Sally Wayman was advocating the need for cultural awareness among librarians. She also provides examples of the sorts of cultural misunderstandings that can cause problems. For example, students coming from male dominated cultures may not be willing to seek help from a female librarian. Issues such as maintaining eye contact, respecting personal space, time keeping, talking loudly etc can cause tension and misunderstandings between international students and library staff. The need for training in cross-cultural awareness is mentioned in much of the research on international students and Louise Greenfield (1986) describes the benefits of one such workshop held to train library staff to communicate more effectively with international students. By increasing their knowledge and understanding of the diverse backgrounds of the students they were dealing with, the staff involved felt able to better communicate with them and were more aware of their own communication styles. The need to respect the cultural diversity of students is

vitaly important and is emphasised in the literature but it is also important that we are aware of our own cultural conditioning (Adler 86). Kwasi Sarkodie-Mensah (1992) looks at the issue of dealing with diversity in the library from her own experiences of being both an international student and public services librarian. She warns that there is a need to be tactful when engaging students about their home countries as it is easy to make assumptions about cultural heritage which may seem condescending and prejudicial to the student. An awareness of the diverse cultural backgrounds of our students and our own cultural conditioning should lead to more harmonious engagement between the international student body and library staff.

#### **2.4 Language and Communication Issues**

Most international students come from countries where English is neither an official language nor a medium of instruction. The lack of English language proficiency will prove to be a barrier that both they and library staff will have to work to overcome. Verbal communication between library staff and international students can be frustrating and fraught with misunderstandings on both sides. A lack of proficiency in the English language also affects the way in which international students use the library services and facilities. It can make encounters with staff at the reference or issue desk more difficult, has a negative impact on their participation in library skills training programs and makes the effective use of the OPAC and other electronic resources more problematic. Although, international students' will have demonstrated a certain standard of English proficiency before commencing their studies, this, as Sarkodie-Mensah (1992) states in her article, does not mean that their English is strong enough for them to overcome all barriers when searching for information. Bilal (1989) agrees. In an experimental study she conducted into international students' acquisition of library research skills in relation to their English language proficiency, she found that many students with English as their second language had half the reading comprehension of home students and even poorer oral comprehension skills. Their lack of command of the English language proved to be a major barrier in their comprehension of materials. However, Zhang (2006) points out that students from East Asia often have excellent English reading skills but have little experience in actually speaking the language.

Brown and Holloway (2008) also highlight the anxiety that linguistic competence caused the international students who took part in their research. The participants in their study used terms such as “embarrassed”, “ashamed”, “not confident”, “nervous” and “scared” to describe their feelings in regards to their English language ability. Students who lack confidence in their language abilities may avoid asking questions and they have also been known to exhibit avoidance behaviour (Natotwitz, 1995). Liu’s (1993) research into the difficulties confronting international students in using academic libraries in the United States found that English proficiency had a significant impact on the students’ use of the library. They disclosed that their lack of confidence in their language skills led them to seek assistance from their friends rather from the library staff. This lack of fluency impacts on how effectively they use library services with both librarians and students encountering verbal and written language barriers and non verbal communication problems. This problem is also addressed in a study of Japanese students’ information needs in two Canadian universities by Ishimura, Howard et al (2007). The Japanese author (Ishimura) admitted to feeling lost and unsure when he was confronted with the Library of Congress organised library, different to the Japanese libraries he was familiar with. His lack of language skills made him feel nervous about making himself understood when speaking in English at the reference desk and also made selecting appropriate keywords for online searches difficult. There are also problems writing in English for students whose first language is not English. Ishimura recalls how it took him two or three times longer than home students to write up his assignments and even then he needed his work to be reviewed by a native speaker. The difficulty in writing up assignments may not just be due to a lack of fluency in the English language. As Zhang (2006) describes, there are fundamental differences in communication between East and West (high context v low context) and these differences influence learning styles. Some international students may have developed their critical thinking skills in vastly different educational systems and may have difficulty in adjusting their thinking patterns to the Western analytical style of developing arguments.

At the reference desk, language and communication problems can become particularly apparent. International students may not be aware of the role of the reference desk from their home libraries and may feel that they are disturbing the librarian if they ask for information (Kumar 2000). In their study at San Jose State University, Liu and Redfern also found that a lack of confidence in their English language proficiency inhibited Asian students from using reference services as they were not confident enough about making their query understood. To overcome this problem, De Souza (1996) advocates the use of neutral questions when providing a reference service to international students.

Cultural differences may also have an impact on communication. Body language, eye contact, the influence of gender and social status on communication can vary widely from culture to culture and misunderstandings can easily arise between students and librarians. In light of these difficulties, some research has been conducted into how to help students overcome these barriers. Dawn Amsberry looks at ways of applying second language acquisition theories to teaching international students in academic libraries. Other recommendations made by her include modifying vocabulary, avoiding cultural references, idioms and library jargon. However, she warns against speaking slowly or dumbing down the intellectual content of the library sessions.

## **2.5 Adjusting to a New Library and Educational System**

In coming to study in a foreign country, international students not only have to adjust to new styles of teaching and learning but they also have to get used to a new library system which may be very different to their home countries. Some library concepts such as open access stacks or services such as inter library loan or reserves may be unfamiliar to them. Chinese students are not used to producing independent pieces of critical thinking. In their education system, they are examined on modules and often may have one specific textbook per part of the course. Therefore, when using Western University academic libraries, they are unfamiliar with the concept of having to compete with other students for books and other materials. Other difficulties may occur using an unfamiliar classification system and in using online catalogues and databases. Both Zhang and Ishimura (2007) note how in Japan, libraries lack reference services and Japanese students regard them mainly as study halls. Because of this

conditioning, Ishimura believes that Japanese students may be less accustomed to seeking information in libraries than others international students and, compounded with a cultural need to save face, prefer to ask friends for help rather than admit their ignorance to library staff. Song (2005) also found significant differences between domestic and international students use of the library space and library databases. In contrast to domestic students, international students used the library far more as a place to study or have group meetings and less as a place to conduct research.

Even students with relatively good English language skills may encounter difficulties adjusting to a new library system due to their unfamiliarity with library jargon. Pamela Jackson (2005) describes this jargon as a “third language” for them to become familiar with.

## **2.6 Library Anxiety**

Library anxiety is also a barrier to students’ effective and efficient use of the library. Some of the characteristics of library anxiety, as identified by Constance Mellon (1996), include feeling overwhelmed by the size of the library, not understanding how the library is organised and fear of asking for help. Other contributing factors include fear of approaching staff for help and fear of appearing ignorant. These are all issues, while by no means being unique to them, that international students face. In fact, international students who do not speak English as their native language are one of the groups that have been found to have the highest levels of library anxiety. Using two data-gathering instruments, the Demographic Information Form (DIF) and the Library Anxiety Scale (LAS), Onwuegbuzie and Jiao (1997) compared the frequency of library use and level of library anxiety felt by 552 native and non-native English speaking students. They found that even though non-native English speakers used the library more and had attended more library instruction classes, they still had higher levels overall of library anxiety than native English speakers. Library anxiety leads to students avoiding the library, being reluctant to ask for help and reduces the overall effectiveness of library instruction classes.

## **2.7 Teaching Information Literacy Skills**

Effective library instruction sessions are vitally important in helping international students feel comfortable in the library environment, enhancing their learning experience and in helping them to succeed in an academic environment that may be very different to what they are used to. Worryingly, some studies have shown that students studying in a foreign language do not participate in library instruction programs in great numbers whether because they are unaware of the programs or because they do not feel they are useful. Allen (1993) found in a study of ESL (English as a Second Language) students studying in the University of Illinois that 44.6% of them had never taken any of the information skills training programs offered by the library. This trend is alarming because studying in a foreign language and in an unfamiliar library system will mean that international students will have increased difficulties in finding, evaluating and using information. Hughes (2005) found in her research that the use of online resources by a group of international students in Australia was adversely affected by their level of English language skills. These students had difficulty in choosing search terms and then in evaluating the results.

The most effective way of teaching information literacy skills to international students is an issue over which there is some disagreement, however. Just as with domestic students, it is vitally important that international students are furnished with the information skills necessary to use the information resources available to them during their studies and afterwards to become fully functioning citizens of the information society. However, due to aforementioned language and educational differences, librarians face additional challenges when trying to teach them those skills.

Information literacy standards for Higher Education have been established in America by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), in the UK by CILIP and in Australia and New Zealand by the Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy. Applying these standards to international students would be problematic however. Baron and Strout-Dapaz (2001) suggest that these standards need to be modified to take account of the special needs of international students.

From an Irish perspective, Hurley, Hegarty et al (2006) describe the challenges of developing and delivering a pilot library skills course for international students. They found that the low

level of language proficiency was one of the main barriers to success. Not only did it make communication in the class difficult but delayed progress to the extent that they could not cover all the intended course material. They also found the students were reluctant to participate in class. This is consistent with the findings of Ladd (1999) who found that the learning style most common among international students is the lecture method where participation is not required.

As students are already studying in a second language, with library terminology being as Pamela Jackson (2004) describing it as a “third language”, the best method of teaching them library skills is subject to ongoing debate. Miriam Conteh-Morgan (2002) argues that for information literacy classes to be effective, instructors must be aware of and incorporate first and second language learning theories into their library instruction classes. She believes that a basic understanding of second language theories is fundamental to improving librarians’ ability to teach better and to help non-English speaking students learn more effectively. According to Conteh-Morgan, if librarians design courses that are more linguistically, socially and culturally responsive to international students and bring library instruction closer to the language instruction methods already familiar to them, it will make these students more active participants in class and give them a greater understanding of the impact that information skills can have on their academic success. Other researchers, however, believe that the language difficulties represent too great an obstacle to effective teaching and advocate giving library instruction to international students in their native language if possible. Daniel Liestman and Connie Wu (1990) report the results of a library instruction session where one group was given the session in English and another group the session in their native language. In pre and post test results, the group given the session in English only modestly improved their scores while the group receiving instruction in their native language improved their post test scores significantly. This demonstrates the effectiveness of using translated materials during library instruction and orientation. Kumar (2000) agrees with this view and argues that designing one course for all international students would be ineffective due to their differences in background, language skills and computer skills. However, not everybody is in favour of multilingual library instruction, Jackson (2004) points out that English language proficiency is required of all university students and by providing too much information in non-English languages could detract from the instructional mission of the university. Also, as students are

required to write their assignments in English, it would be better for their language skills to be totally immersed in English from the start of their studies. She also feels that while there is a need for specialised library instruction, this should be based on research into the library experience and information needs of the incoming international students themselves rather than being based on what librarians or international staff perceive as their needs.

Although it would certainly be effective in developing library skills, for most libraries teaching international students in their own language would present practical difficulties. There are other, more realistic and universally achievable ways of providing students with the required skills. Kamhi-Stein & Stein (1998) advocate a new model of library instruction for students where English is their second language. They advocate the use of six library instruction principles including the integration of course content, information competence instruction and language learning in a collaborative approach, to support and enhance literacy skills.

A very practical and obvious way that all librarians can help the understanding of international students is being by being aware of their own vocabulary and speech patterns. Zhang (2005) points out that many international students will have learned English, usually British English, from tapes and CD's and may have difficulty understanding real world English. Therefore, they may have difficulty understanding slang, regional accents or colloquialisms. She advises speaking slowly, using simple words, rephrasing the concepts and not giving too much information at a time. Greenfield (1986) echoes this advice and adds that library staff should check often for comprehension and question students directly about points that have been covered. She advises using visual aids such as posters and handouts to make instruction sessions more effective as many foreign students come from cultures where learning takes place through observation and emulation.

From language difficulties to cultural adjustment issues, there are many aspects of studying abroad that will prove challenging for international students. There is an onus on libraries to make a concerted effort to understand these difficulties and make the necessary adjustments to their services so that international students can fully benefit from what the library has to offer.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to describe in detail the research process undertaken by the author in order to address the objectives of the study. It includes a description of the methods used for gathering and analysing data and attempts to justify why these particular methods were chosen and the benefits of doing so.

Sotirios Sarantakos claims social research is “about discovery, expanding the horizons of the known, confidence, new ideas and new conclusions about all aspects of life.”(4) It is concerned with rigorous investigation into some aspect of social reality with the aim of generating new, useful and valid knowledge or expanding on what is known. According to him, social research is complex, diverse and pluralistic (29). Its function is to aid in the process of exploring social phenomena, trying to understand aspects of human behaviour and finding possible solutions to the problems uncovered.

Because of the complex nature of social research, there is much debate among practitioners and academics about the most appropriate choice of strategy and methodology to employ when conducting research. As a process, social research cannot be neatly and easily pigeonholed. Its steps of planning, data gathering, data analysis, writing up and disseminating results cannot always be conducted in a linear succession of distinct stages. Rather, it is a process that occurs over time in which stages and strategies can merge and evolve.

### **3.2 The Research Approach**

When first embarking on the research process, it is important to establish the research paradigm. The research paradigm has been described by Sarantrakos as:

“a set of propositions that explain how the world is perceived; it contains a world view, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world” (30).

In establishing the paradigm, researchers such as Alison Jane Pickard suggest that the following three questions need to be addressed.

The ontological question – What is the nature of reality?

The epistemological question – what is the nature of the relationship between the knower and the known?

The methodological question - how can we come to know it? (12)

Two of the paradigms most closely associated with social research are positivism and interpretivism with both of these having their own set of basic beliefs.

### **3.2.1 Positivism**

Positivism has its roots in the methods of the natural sciences. Its paradigm is based on a belief in the existence of an objective, independent and stable reality which is available for discovery and analysis (Pickard 8). One of the distinct features of positivism is the notion that reality consists of cause and effect relationships and that these relationships can only be proven or disproved by empirical testing methods, and therefore, social phenomena should be investigated in the same way in which scientists study the natural world. The positivist paradigm has as its focus the use of quantitative methods which are used to test and verify, or not, various hypotheses.

### **3.2.2 Interpretivism**

This paradigm is concerned with exploring how human beings understand and interpret their subjective reality. The stress is on understanding the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants (Bryman: 366). The interpretivist approach is closely associated with qualitative research techniques. Qualitative research is commonly used in social science among practitioners who wish to study human behaviour. This research tends to be more explorative and unstructured as one of its key purposes is to understand and gain insights into social phenomena. The emphasis is on words rather than on quantification in the collection and analysis of data.

### **3.3 Research Methods**

Social research methods can be broadly categorised into two distinct strands - qualitative and quantitative - with both of these methods having their own ontological, epistemological and methodological considerations and each forming a distinct type of research strategy.

### **3.3.1 Quantitative Approach**

Quantitative research was traditionally the dominant strategy for conducting social research. Even though its influence has diminished with the increasing popularity of qualitative research methods, it nevertheless still remains a vital method of data collection. Quantitative research is most closely associated with a positivist paradigm and is typically used when it is known what type of information is to be collected. It emphasises quantification and measurement in the collection and analysis of data. Research methods most closely associated with quantitative research include surveys, experiments and questionnaires.

#### **Quantitative Research Methods**

Some of the research methods most closely associated with quantitative research include surveys, experiments, questionnaires and structured observation. After assessing the merits of each of these methods, the author identified the following ones as the most appropriate to use in this particular research study.

#### **Questionnaires**

Questionnaires can be defined as “methods of data collection in which information is gathered through oral or written questioning” (Sarantakos 239). They provide the researcher with a relatively straightforward approach to studying the attitudes, beliefs, expectations and experiences of the participants. The many advantages of using questionnaires, including web based surveys, have ensured that they have become one of most frequently used and most popular methods of data collection in the social sciences. Some of these include

1. It is possible to gather information from a larger sample than would be possible using any other technique.
2. They can be administered at a very low cost particularly if done by e-mail or other electronic means.
3. The participants’ anonymity can be assured and their responses kept confidential
4. Because they are conducted anonymously, there is less chance of bias in the responses.
5. As the questionnaire when administered is the same for all respondents, it allows for a stable, consistent and uniform measure, free from other influences.

However, the questionnaire does have some weaknesses particularly in regard to the limited contact it affords the researcher with the participants. Because of this, there are some negatives to using them.

1. It is not possible to probe or clarify responses in depth
2. The identity of the respondent is unknown. Therefore the researcher cannot be sure if the target respondent answered the questionnaire or under what conditions it was completed
3. Due to lack of supervision, low response rates and partial completion can be a problem.
4. They do not provide an opportunity to gather additional information.
5. They can exclude some people if they don't have the skills required e.g. I.T. skills or access to a PC in the case of an email survey.

However, despite these limitations, the questionnaire survey was chosen by the researcher as one of the methods to be used in gathering information from the selected population. It facilitated the gathering of a large amount of information on participants for a low cost and in a relatively short space of time.

### **3.3.2 Qualitative Approach**

According to Martyn Denscombe:

“Qualitative research is an umbrella term that covers a variety of style of social research, drawing on a variety of disciplines such as sociology, social anthropology and social psychology” (266).

Qualitative researchers consider reality to be subjective, constructed, multiple and diverse (Sarantakos 41). Research is undertaken in a natural setting and in the collection and analysis of data, the emphasis is firmly placed on words rather than on quantification. This emphasis allows the researcher to obtain a richer and clearer picture of the social phenomena under investigation than would be possible with strictly quantitative methods. Qualitative methods are employed by those practitioners who favour the interpretivist approach. Data collection methods can include participant observation, focus groups and in-depth interviews.

## Interviews

Interviewing is one of the most commonly used methods of data collection within the social sciences and is used in most research designs regardless of the underlying methodology. Interviews are used when the researcher is seeking qualitative, in-depth, descriptive data and when the nature of the data may be too complicated to be asked and answered easily (Pickard 172). Interviews are used to gain insight into individuals' specific experiences, views, opinions, beliefs and feelings about a particular subject. The interactive nature of an interview allows the participants (and the interviewer) to move back and forth in time, to recall the past, interpret the present and to predict the future (Pickard 172). Interviews can also be used to confirm, clarify, refute or expand on data already gathered from other data collection methods such as observation or surveys.

Using the interview method enables gives the interviewer scope in how they approach the participants. It allows them to uncover the feelings and opinions of the participants and affords them the opportunity to clarify meaning or clear up misunderstandings or ambiguities. Interviews also allow people to respond on their own terms and within their own linguistic abilities. This was especially important in a project like this where the participants have varying levels of English language proficiency.

There are a number of different types of interview than can be conducted depending on the nature and the depth of information that is sought. These range from the *structured*, a very formal interview with strict adherence to the order and wording of the questions to the *unstructured* type with open-ended question, where wording and order can be changed. Another type of interview is the semi-structured type which lies somewhere between the structured and unstructured model. The degree to which the interview is structured depends on the research objectives and the type of information sought.

Some of the advantages to conducting interviews include:

1. The interviewer can be flexible in the approach taken.
2. There is a high response rate due to the nature of how interviews are arranged.

3. Interviews do not require the participants to be able to read complex questionnaires and allows the interviewer to clarify meanings and correct any misunderstandings by participants.
4. Gives the participants time to think about their responses.
5. Allows the interviewer to relate questions to what has already previously been said.
6. The interviewer can explain the ethical considerations of participation in the interview process, explain what the purpose of the research is and assure the participants of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

However, there are also some disadvantages.

1. Interviews can be costly and time consuming.
2. Interviews are less anonymous than some other methods of data collection.
3. Participants may be more unwilling to share sensitive information with the interviewer.
4. Participants may be affected by the interviewer and give answers that they think he/she wants to hear.

### **3.4 The Mixed Method Approach**

The traditional approach when conducting research was to favour one method of research over the other. Advocates of each method argued that the differences in the epistemologies that underpinned the respective research approaches and design was so great that they could not be usefully combined in a single research project. However, the modern tendency is to integrate both qualitative and quantitative research methods in social research. This approach, known as the mixed methods approach, has the support of many leading experts in the field of social research. Contributors to the debate such as Colin Robson and Alan Bryman warn against the dangers of what they term “methodolatry” by which they mean placing methodological concerns over other considerations (164 Robson). They feel that the distinction between quantitative and qualitative methods of research is no longer useful, that the two methods can complement one another and that combining both approaches helps to build up a more

complex and comprehensive picture of the social reality under investigation and may provide more enlightening results.

Alan Bryman, while acknowledging the differences in research strategies, theory, epistemological issues and ontological concerns between both methods, argues that the distinction should not be overdrawn and is no longer a hard and fast one. His contention is that the connections between ontology and epistemology on the one hand and research method on the other hand are not absolute and are best thought of as tendencies rather than as definitive connections (588). Research studies that have the broad characteristics of one strategy may also have a characteristic of the other so, in principle and in practice, a predominantly qualitative design can incorporate quantitative methods of data collection.

Social science research allows for the belief that the researcher at the beginning of a project does not know what he/she does not know and using a mixed methods approach allows the development of a flexible research design, one which anticipates and allows for the design to emerge and develop during the collection process (Robson 164). Rigorous data collection procedures are employed, typically using multiple data collection techniques during mixed methods research.

According to Bryman, some of the advantages to the researcher of using a mixed method/flexible design approach are as follows (609):

1. Greater validity – combining both qualitative and quantitative research to triangulate findings so that they might be mutually corroborated.
2. Completeness – by using both methods, a researcher can put together a more comprehensive picture of their area of enquiry.
3. Explanation – one of the two research methods is used to explain findings generated by the other.
4. Credibility – employing both approaches can enhance the integrity of findings.
5. Unexpected results – qualitative and quantitative research can be usefully combined when one method generates surprising results which can be understood by employing the other.

### **3.5 Choice of Research Methods**

This dissertation seeks to illuminate some aspects of the reality confronting international students as they study in a language that is not native to them and in a country that is foreign to them. The researcher selected the mixed methods, flexible design approach as the most appropriate way of gathering the required information. While the approach taken is predominantly a qualitative one, it was also important to gather some quantitative data about the international student body.

The two methods chosen to conduct this particular piece of research were:

1. Web based self-administered questionnaires
2. Semi-structured interviews

The web based questionnaire allowed the researcher to obtain information from a larger sample of the international student body than would have been possible than by using any other method and by following this by the semi structured interviews, it was possible to probe some of the findings of the questionnaire and capture the meaning behind the data gathered and gain further insight into the experiences of international students.

The quantitative data was gathered from a web based questionnaire that was conducted in October 2009. The questionnaire was given to 100 international students. Of this number, 66 responded. The web link to the questionnaire along with an explanatory note was e-mailed to both ERASMUS and Non-EU students. Follow up semi-structured interviews were then carried out with international students.

### **3.6 Data Collection**

For the purposes of this study, there were two types of data collected, namely primary and secondary data.

#### **3.6.1 Secondary Data Collection**

The form taken by the secondary research was that of a literature review. The main purpose of the secondary research was to gain a deeper understanding of the issues confronting international students globally to be able to consider them in an Irish context. Secondary data was collected using the resources, both paper and electronic, of the libraries of the Institute of Technology, Carlow, Aberystwyth University and the British Library. Some of the main

online resources used included Infotrac, Emerald, LISA, LISTA and Science Direct. Internet search engines such as Google Scholar were also valuable in providing links to relevant current research and information. Conducting the literature review allowed the researcher to become familiar with the research already conducted that was concerned with identifying the needs and difficulties of international students as they adapt to a new educational and library system.

### **3.6.2 Primary Data Collection**

The primary data collected included a self administered questionnaire and this was followed up by semi structured interviews. The function of the questionnaire was to elicit information about the attitudes, beliefs and experiences of the international student population of the Institute and to give the researcher a deeper insight into the current issues of concern to them. The content of the questionnaire was based in part on the secondary research conducted and was intended to check if the past and present literature had correctly and comprehensively identified the issues that confront international students and to see if these issues were still of relevance. The semi-structured interviews that were then conducted were used to follow up on some of the results of the survey and to probe some of the issues in more depth and also to corroborate the survey findings. It was also used to ascertain first hand from students how their library experience could be improved and if there were any significant gaps between what is considered best practice and their own expectations of the library service.

The survey approach provided many advantages in conducting research. These included the following:

1. It allows large numbers of people to be studied relatively quickly and cheaply.
2. If properly conducted, the results are reliable and can represent a much larger population than that directly investigated.
3. Personal influence of the researcher on the results should be slight.
4. It allows the collection of data that can be expressed in statistical forms, thus allowing comparisons between different groups and populations, such as in this case comparing the experiences of EU students as opposed to non- EU students.

### **3.7. Pilot Study**

It was considered important to conduct a pilot study of the questionnaire prior to the full survey being carried out. The purpose of the pilot questionnaire was to identify any errors or ambiguously worded questions that could lead to problems of interpretation. This was particularly important given the language issues that international students face. This approach also allowed the researcher to determine if the questions were presented in a logical order and would elicit the information required from the respondents. Based on the responses and feedback of the test participants, any modifications or clarifications needed could be included in the full survey. The pilot survey to test the questionnaire was conducted in April 2009. It was a paper survey given to 20 randomly chosen international students. All of the questionnaires were returned. Based on the responses received, some amendments were made to the questionnaire to make it more user-friendly and less time consuming for respondents. Because of the language skills of the target participants, the wording of questions was carefully considered and simple and unambiguous language was used in the design of the questionnaire.

### **3.8 Questionnaire Design**

The final questionnaire given to International students was web based and was developed by using the hosting software of a company called survey monkey. It consisted of 13 questions. Ten of these were short questions of a closed nature with students having to choose from a specific range of options. The three concluding questions were Likert-type questions with students having to choose from a rating scale their level of satisfaction with selected aspects of the library service. Due to the fact that students would be answering in a language that was not native to them and one in which they would not be entirely fluent and therefore to avoid difficulties of interpretation or comprehension, questions of a closed nature and ones which gave students a range of options to choose from were the preferred choice of question. It was hoped that by making the questionnaire relatively straightforward to read and complete, it would encourage the respondents to complete it fully. Strauss (1996) stated that the ability of Internet-based surveys to force completion of questions could lead respondents to answer questions without fully considering the question or cause them to withdraw altogether. Therefore, with this in mind, the design of the online questionnaire did not require that all

questions be answered although this was technically possible using the questionnaire design software.

The questionnaire was designed to investigate the 4 critical aspects affecting international students' use of the library, namely language barriers, barriers with staff, adapting to an unfamiliar library and educational system and to gauge their awareness of and ability at information seeking.

### **3.9 Population and Sampling Frame**

For the purpose of this study, the population under investigation may be defined as all students who are temporarily residing in Ireland rather than their country of citizenship in order to participate in higher education courses at the Institute of Technology, Carlow.

For the year 2009/10, there were approximately 185 students registered by the Non-EU Office of Institute of Technology, Carlow. These students all come from outside the EU and come in the main from China and other parts of South East Asia. The ERASMUS Office has approximately 115 students registered. These students come from within the EU with the vast bulk of them being from Spain, France or Germany. To gain as many responses as possible, an e-mail was sent to the college e-mail account of all international students inviting them to participate in the study. The e-mail consisted of a cover letter explaining (see Appendix 4) explaining the purpose of the study and the link to the website where the questionnaire was hosted. This e-mail was sent to students on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2009 and the questionnaire web link which was made available via the survey monkey hosting service was open for the next 10 days. This length of time was deemed sufficient for the international students to have read the e-mail and participate in the survey if they so wished.

This particular time period was chosen in order to allow the students to get over the first phase of adjustment to a new library and academic environment and to give them some time to settle in and commence their academic course work.

### **3.10 Semi Structured Interviews**

In order to gain a deeper and more immediate understanding of the attitudes, beliefs and experiences of the international student population of the Institute a series of semi structured interviews was arranged. Doing so enabled the participants to comment from personal experience on the area being researched. It was hoped that the interviews could produce information rich in detail that would be difficult to obtain by any other means and would not prove inhibiting for the participants.

The interviews lasted for 15 minutes and were recorded for later transcription and analysis with the participants' knowledge and permission. The interviews were conducted after the web based survey and allowed some of the findings of that research to be discussed and checked.

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

All of the participants who took part in this research project were international students studying at a Third Level Institution. In accordance with the ethical guidelines as outlined by the British Sociological Association, their informed consent to participate in the research project was sought. The reason for undertaking the research and the purpose behind it was explained to them. The participants were assured of anonymity and privacy regarding their personal information and that the data gathered during the research process would be only used for the purposes of the research.

### **3.12 Conclusion**

This chapter has described in detail the methodological approach adopted by the author in carrying out the research. The merits of the different research methods were examined with the mixed method, flexible design approach being selected as the most appropriate in this case. A combination of self-administered questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were selected as the most appropriate means of collecting the necessary data.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The following findings are taken from an online survey that was given to all international students in the month of October 2009 and from the semi structured interviews that were subsequently conducted.

The data gathered is examined under the following headings:

1. Adjusting to a new library and educational system
2. Language and communication issues
3. Information seeking skills
4. Barriers with staff
5. Cultural and cultural adjustment Issues
6. Use of library resources

These particular aspects of the library service were chosen to be explored in the research as a result of a review of the literature, from the results of the pilot study and from the researchers own knowledge and experience.

### **4.2. The Participants**

#### **4.2.1 The survey**

The e-mail inviting participation in the survey was sent out to all international students currently enrolled in the Institute of Technology, Carlow. It was sent to 185 Non-EU students and 115 ERASMUS students. Sixty six international students completed the survey. This figure was comprised of 43 non-EU students and 22 ERASMUS students and one other. The participants came from six different countries with the majority of them being from China

(39), followed by France (17), Germany and South Korea (3) Spain (2) and Russia (1). One student declined to specify their country of origin.

**Table 4-1 Home Country of Students who took part in Survey**

China	39
France	17
Germany	3
Spain	2
South Korea	3
Russia	1
Not specified	1

#### **4.2.2 The interviews**

Semi- structured interviews were carried out with three international students. They were all asked the same questions (See Appendix 2). Two of the students came from China and one from France.

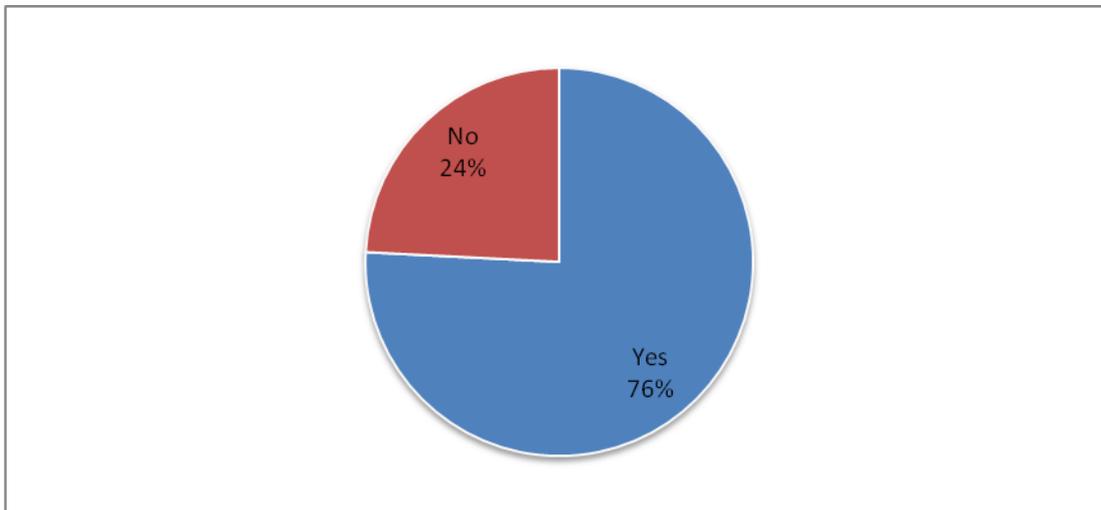
### 4.3 Quantitative Findings

#### 4.3.1 Adjusting to a new library and Educational System

Adjusting to a new library and educational system is one of the acknowledged difficulties of international students. In addition to studying in an unfamiliar country and language, they also have to adapt to library terminology which can seem like a third language.

Figure 4.1 shows the number of participants who had previous experience of studying at a University or Third Level College before coming to study in Ireland. This information was used to ascertain whether or not having previous library experience had an impact on their use of the library and its resources. The majority of respondents (75.8%) indicated that they already had experience of studying at third-level before coming to study in Ireland.

**Figure 4-1 Students with Previous Third Level Experience**



### 4.3.2 Familiarity with Library Terms

As part of the survey, students were given a list of common library terms and asked to indicate if they understood and/or were familiar with them. Table 4.2 provides a basic overview of their level of familiarity with basic library and academic terms and cross tabulates this with whether they had previous academic experience.

**Table 4-2 Cross tabulation: Whether the respondents had previous experience of an academic library \*Familiarity with library academic terms**

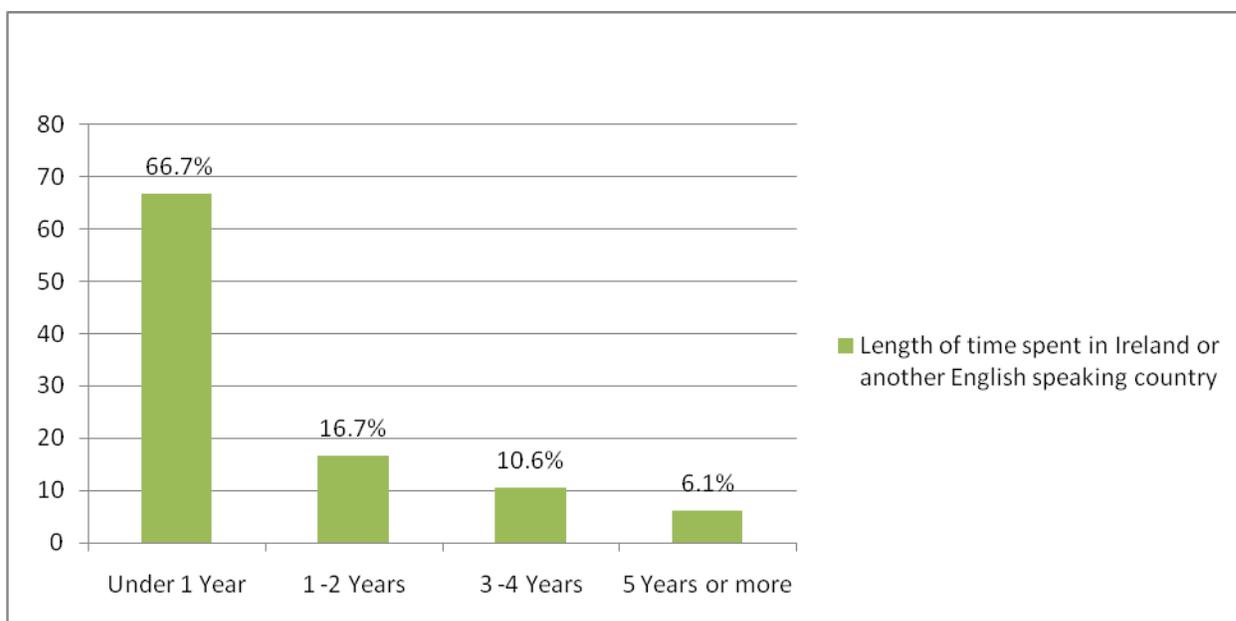
<b>Library Term</b>	<b>All Respondents =66</b>	<b>Respondents with Previous Library/Academic Experience =50</b>	<b>Respondents with NO Previous Library/Academic Experience = 16</b>
Catalogue	76.6%	78.0%	71.4%
Citation	39.1%	38.0%	42.9%
Reserve	31.3%	36.0%	14.3%
Inter Library Loan	32.8%	32.0%	35.7%
Dissertation	46.9%	48.0%	42.9%
OPAC	9.4%	10.0%	7.1%
Plagiarism	50%	52.0%	42.9%

Table 4.2 shows that there was not a significant gap between international students who had previous library experience and those who had none as regards their ability to understand and recognise library terms. In both cases, there was a quite limited understanding and knowledge of many of the terms with under half of the students being able to recognise them. The term “Catalogue” had the most recognition from both groups with 71.4% of students with no previous experience recognising it while the figure was 78% for those with previous library experience. All the other terms were recognised by less than half of the respondents with library terminology such as “Reserve” and “OPAC” being largely unrecognised by either group.

### 4.3.3 Language and Communication Issues

Language and communication difficulties are among the primary acknowledged barriers that international students face and previous research has shown that language proficiency has an impact on their use of library resources and services.

In order to determine their level of familiarity and proficiency with the English language, the survey participants were asked how long they had spent in Ireland or another English speaking country.



**Figure 4.2 Length of time spent in Ireland or another English speaking country**

Figure 4.2 shows that the majority of international students who took part (66.7%), had spent less than a year studying in Ireland or another English speaking country. 16.7% had spent between 1 and 2 years, 10.6% has spent between 3 and 4 years and the remaining 6.1% had spent 5 years or more in Ireland or another English speaking country.

**Table 4-3 Statement on Language Difficulties**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
I find it difficult to write assignments in English	14.3%	46.0%	19.0%	17.5%	3.2%
I sometimes find it difficult to communicate in English	13.3%	45.0%	20.0%	16.7%	5.0%
I have difficulties reading English	8.3%	16.7%	41.7%	23.3%	10.0%

Table 4.3 shows that significant language difficulties exist for international students. 60.3% of them either agree or strongly agree that they have difficulties writing assignments in English. 58.3% either agree or strongly agree that they have difficulties communicating in English. There were fewer problems for the students reading English with only 25% of them agreeing or strongly agreeing that they have difficulties.

#### 4.3.4 Information Seeking

The survey also examined international students' information seeking habits, the resources they actually use and asked them what sources of information, if any, that they would like to see more of in the library.

**Figure 4-3 1<sup>st</sup> Choice Asking for Help Finding Information**

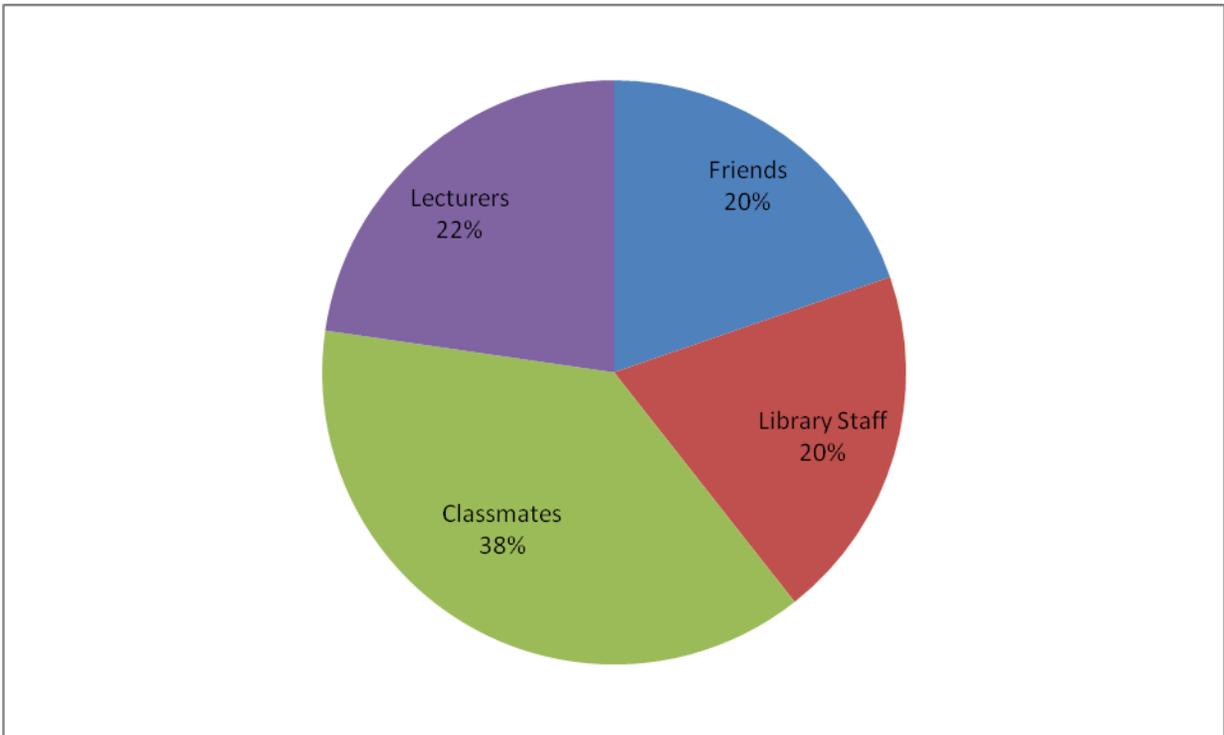


Figure 4.3 shows who international students ask for help from first when seeking information for assignments. Classmates was the most popular choice with 37.9% choosing them as their first option, lecturers were selected by 22.7%, library staff and friends each getting 19.3%.

**Figure 4.4 Resources international students would like to see more of in the library**

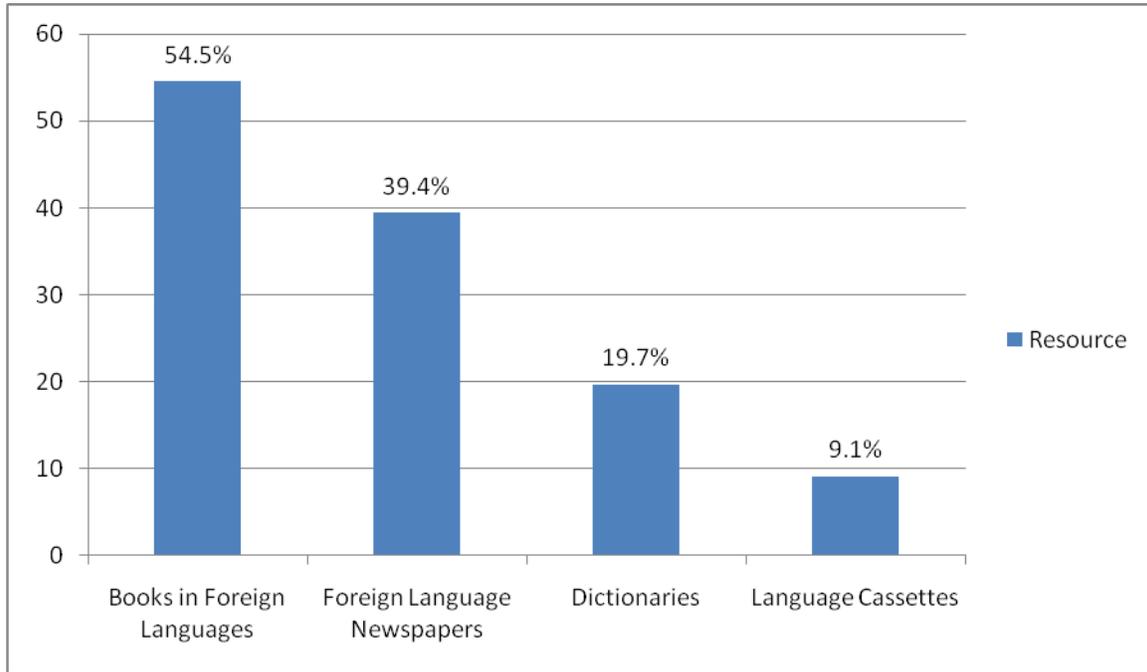


Figure 4.4 shows the resources international students indicated they would like to see more of in the library. They were not confined to one option. 54.5% of the respondents would like to see more books in foreign languages in the library, 39.4% would like foreign language newspapers, 19.7% chose foreign language dictionaries and only 9.1% of students were interested in having language cassettes available to them.

**Figure 4- 5 Resources used for class assignments**

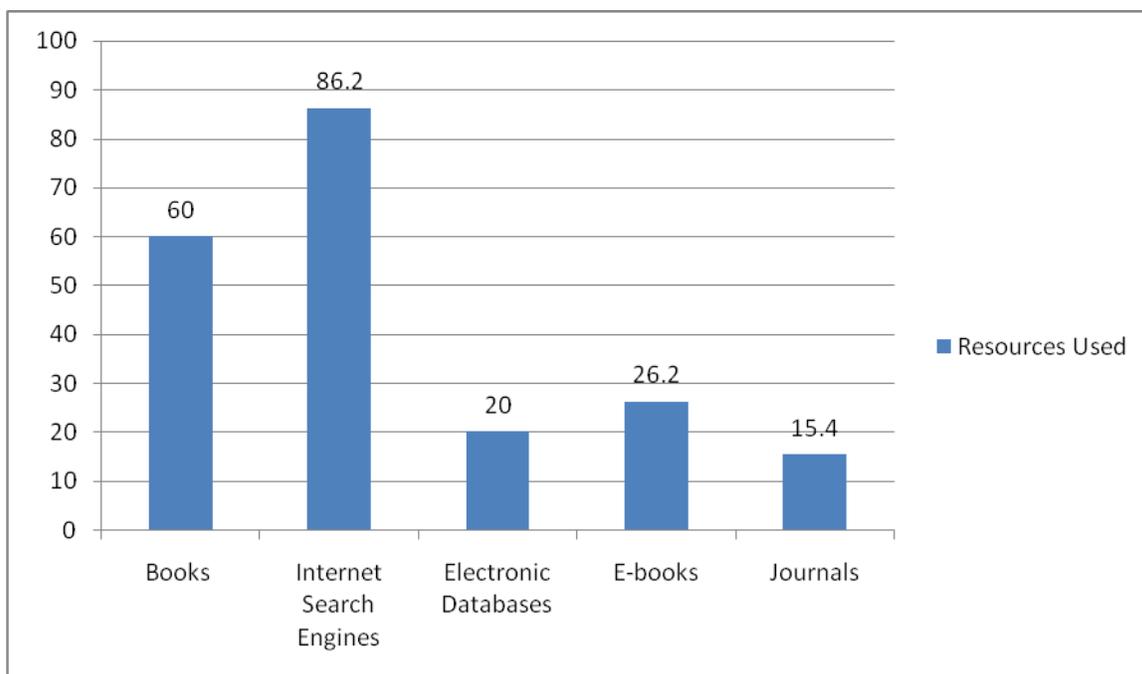


Figure 4.5 shows the resources used by international students to find information for class assignments. Internet search engines are used 86.2%, books by 60% and e-books by 26.2%. Other resources are not so heavily used with only 20% using subscribed electronic databases and 15.4% using journals.

**Table 4-4 Cross- tabulation: Whether the respondents had previous experience of an academic library\*Use of resources for class assignments**

<b>Resource Used</b>	<b>All Respondents =65 +1 skip</b>	<b>Respondents with Previous Library/Academic Experience =50</b>	<b>Respondents with NO Previous Library/Academic Experience = 15 (1 skips)</b>
Books	60.0%	54.0%	80.0%
Journals	15.4%	14.0%	20.0%
Electronic Databases	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%
Internet Search Engine	86.2%	86.0%	86.7%
E. Books	26.2%	24.0%	33.3%

When it came to use of the resources for completing assignments, the results between the two groups were broadly similar. Both books and e-books were used slightly more by the group with no previous library experience. However, the internet and electronic databases were used the same by both groups.

#### 4.3.5 Barriers with Staff

Because of language and cultural differences, international students can sometimes experience barriers with staff so it was decided to investigate this aspect of their library experience in I.T. Carlow. Students were asked to rate from a 5 point ratings scale 3 statements about the library space and library staff.

**Table 4-5 Statements on library space and library staff.**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Agree Strongly</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree Strongly</b>
The library is a friendly and welcoming environment	44.3%	42.6%	11.5%	1.6%	0.0%
The library staff are helpful	26.8%	51.8%	17.9%	3.6%	0.0%
The library staff are welcoming	31.0%	43.1%	25.9%	0.0%	0.0%

The first statement that the library was a friendly and welcoming environment was agreed with by 86.9% of students overall with 44.3% strongly agreeing and 42.6% agreeing. Five respondents skipped this part of the question. The second statement asked about the helpfulness of library staff. Overall, the results were positive with 26.8% strongly agreeing and 51.8% agreeing that the library staff were helpful. 17.9% neither agreed nor disagreed. 3.6% disagreed that the library staff were helpful but there were no students who strongly disagreed. The final statement asked students to rate how welcoming library staff were. For

this statement, 31% strongly agreed, 43.1% agreed with 25.9% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. No respondents selected disagree or strongly disagree when answering this question.

#### 4.3.6 Use of library resources and services

The participants in the survey were asked to list in order of importance their main reasons for using the library.

**Table 4-6 Main Reasons for using the library in order of importance**

	<b>Response Average</b>	<b>Response Total</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Study	2.06	132	64
Use the Internet	2.70	173	64
Borrow Books	3.67	235	64
Meet Friends	4.20	269	64
Find Information	2.52	161	64
		Answered Question	64
		Skipped	2

Table 4.6 shows that the main reason for using the library was to study with this option getting an average response of 2.06, followed by finding information with 2.52, using the Internet 2.70, borrowing books with 3.67 and finally meeting friends with an average response of 4.20.

**Figure 4- 6 Use of library Services**

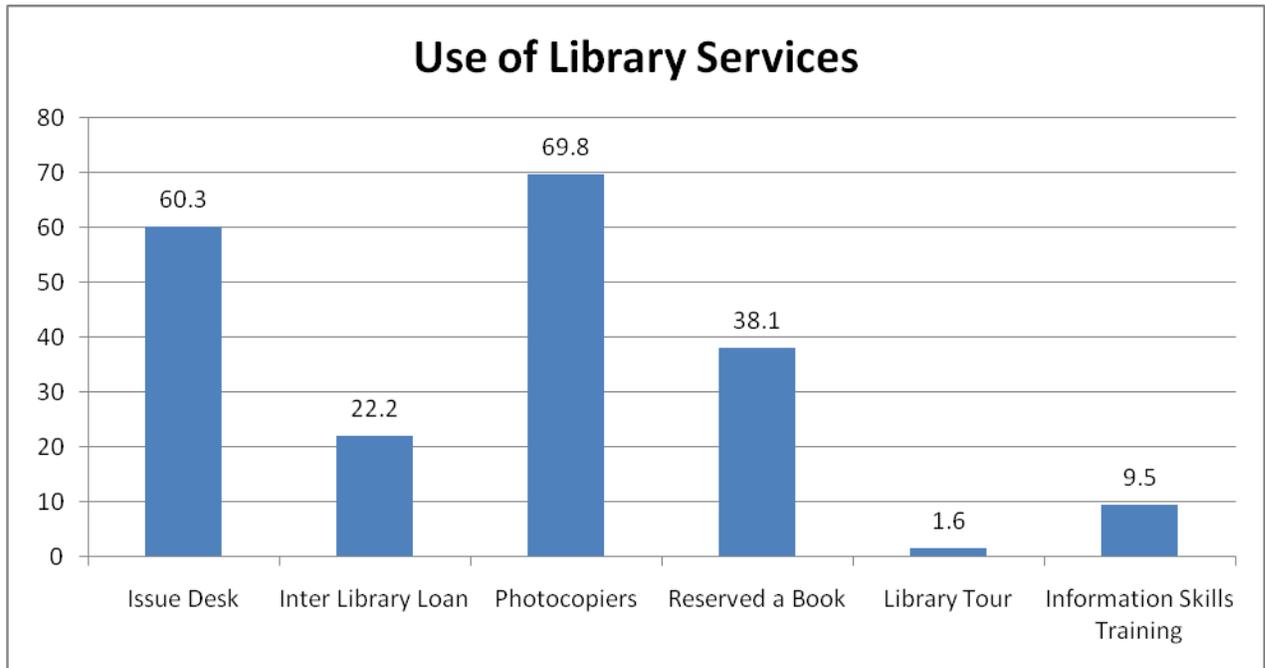


Figure 4.6 shows which library services are being used by international students. It includes some surprising results. The participants in the survey neither attended library tours nor took part in library information training sessions in any numbers even though tours are offered at the start of the academic term to all new students and there is ongoing training in information literacy. The results from the survey show clearly that these options are not being availed of by international students. Out of the 63 responses to this part of the survey, only 1.6% (1) student had attended a library tour and 9.5% (6) had attended a library skills training course.

Some of the other library services were better used however. 69.8% had used the photocopiers, 38.1% had reserved a book, 22.2% had used the Inter Library Loan service and 60.3% had used the library Issue Desk.

### 4.3.7 Information Seeking

As so few of the participants had availed of library tours or information training sessions, the results were somewhat contradictory when it came to investigating how students felt about searching for information and using the library catalogue.

**Table 4-7 Agreement of three statements on finding information**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Agree Strongly</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree Strongly</b>
I find the library catalogue easy to use.	13.6%	40.7%	40.7%	5.1%	0.0%
I can find the information I need in the library without difficulty	8.9%	44.6%	30.4%	16.1%	0.0%
I would like more help finding information in the library	13.1%	42.6%	29.5%	14.8%	0.0%

When asked if they found the catalogue easy to use, 13.6% strongly agreed that they did, 40.7% agreeing and the same figure neither agreeing nor disagreeing. 5.1% disagreed with the statement and none strongly disagreed. There were 7 non responses to this statement.

When asked if they were able to find the information they needed without difficulty, 8.9% strongly agreed, 44.6% agreed, 30.4% neither agreed nor disagreed with 16.1% disagreeing.

The third statement asked the participants to indicate if they would like more help in finding information in the library. 13.1% of them strongly agreed that they would like more help, 42.6% agreed, 29.5% neither agreed nor disagreed with just 14.8% disagreeing about needing more help. Again there was no student who strongly disagreed with the statement.

#### **4.4 Qualitative Findings**

The interviews conducted with students support the findings of the survey and gave some background information into the reasons behind some of the results.

##### **4.4.1 Adjusting to a new library and educational system**

All three students had attended a Third-Level College before coming to study in I.T. Carlow so they already had experience of using library resources. There were differences, however, in the classification system used by the libraries in their home countries. Chinese students were not accustomed to the Dewey classification system and this made it more difficult for them when searching. In China, each book has its own “code” and for them could be more easily identified.

There had been some difficulties with using photocopiers and printers initially but these issues had all been sorted out.

The opening hours of the library were also raised as a point of concern. The students would like the library to be open all weekend (not just on Saturdays which is currently the case) as this is what they are used to from their home countries. They felt that they were in class all day during the week and the weekend was the only time they had free to work on assignments.

##### **4.4.2 Language and Communication Issues**

Language difficulties were a significant barrier for the students and had an impact on the resources they used and on their communication with staff. The language barrier was particularly a problem for the Chinese students. Student A explained how she “can’t express the detail clearly about what I need” so finds it difficult when she needs to ask for help from library staff but she says that “if I listen to some others I understand”. Student B noted that “our words are a problem” but added that when she is listening to what she is being told that “most of the time I understand”. There were also difficulties in writing English with Student

C admitting that “the difficulty is writing. My grammar is not so good”. As in the survey however, reading English presented them with the least difficulties.

#### **4.4.3 Information Seeking Skills/Library Resources**

The internet and books were the main sources of information used by the students. Students A and B used books mainly for their class assignments but had also used some of the electronic databases. They were familiar with their use from their previous University. Student C had used several of the electronic databases for assignments and found them really useful:

“I have used many of the business databases for projects. They are good because I find information about French companies and can use this information for projects. Sometimes, too much information.”

The Chinese students were particularly interested in information that they could translate electronically. While they used books a lot, they felt that it was very time consuming to translate the information themselves. They were interested in having more e-books in the library collection or other ways of having books electronically available. When asked what changes to the collection she would like, Student A suggested “maybe some e-books, maybe some CD’s, DVD’s of books, I would like to be able to borrow them and copy information”. Student B also spoke about the importance of being able to translate information “because when I translate it, I can understand it”.

None of the students had used the journal collection.

#### **4.4.4 Barriers with staff**

The students were very positive about their interactions with library staff and they all confirmed that if they needed help in using the library, notwithstanding the language difficulties, that they would ask the staff.

Student A found the staff “very helpful” and Student C declared that the “library staff have helped me with many things”.

Student B also had no hesitation in saying that “if I have some problem about how to use the library, I ask library staff”.

#### **4.4.5 Library Tours and Information Skills Training**

One of the most significant findings of the survey was that very few of the international students seemed to have either been on a library tour or any library training course.

This was confirmed by the students in the interviews. They had never been on a library tour and had never had the option of going on one offered to them. They all indicated that if this option had been available that they would have availed of it. Their only explanation for not knowing about the tours was that they must have arrived too late to have been included in the induction process that takes place at the start of the academic term.

Student B “I didn’t know this (about the tours). Maybe this time I wasn’t here”.

Student A “in middle of September, I arrived here. Maybe I missed them”.

Student C “No, I didn’t know about tours, I never knew they were on”.

#### **4.4.6 Cultural and Cultural Adjustment Issues**

There were no significant cultural adjustment issues reported by the students. Apart from finding accommodation and food quite expensive, they all said that they enjoyed living in Ireland and found Irish people helpful and welcoming.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The interviews results support the quantitative findings of the survey. The main barrier facing international students is the language barrier. There were no barriers reported with staff and the students, from the findings in both the survey and the interviews, found the library a welcoming and friendly place. One of the areas of concern brought to light by the findings was the lack of participation in library tours or training programs.

## **Chapter 5 Discussion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The results from the survey and semi-structured interviews are consistent with other studies that were concerned with international students' experience of academic libraries. In common with previous research, the main barrier remains the language barrier. In I.T. Carlow, there are also substantial problems with how library inductions and training programs are organised as there is an almost total lack of participation by international students in this aspect of the library service.

### **5.2 Language Barrier**

A lack of proficiency in the English language remains the most significant barrier facing international students. The problem is particularly acute for Non-EU students. Although, they must take a language proficiency test, IELTS, before being accepted onto academic programs in IT Carlow, significant difficulties communicating in English remain for these students. Overall, 60% of the IT Carlow international students who took part in the survey admitted to having problems with both verbal and written communication in English and 26% with reading English.

Research shows that the language barrier affects the students' library use in many ways. Asking library staff for assistance, the use of information resources, participation in library training programs are all affected by their English language proficiency. From the results of the survey, students demonstrated a clear need for more help from library staff with 55% of the respondents agreeing that they would like more help in finding information in the library and 40% of them agreeing that they would like printed guides in their own language. In their use of library resources, international students show a heavy reliance on the Internet with 86% of them using it as one of their primary sources of information.

These language problems should be recognised and addressed by library management. Dawn Amsberry, in her 2008 paper on how to communicate with international students in a classroom setting, gave some useful ideas on how to develop communication skills for working with this group of students. Her recommendations include such straightforward measures as avoiding idioms and cultural references, limiting the use of library jargon and

speaking clearly and at a normal rate. Adapting these measures would make understanding verbal communication easier for international students whether they are at the library desk or during information literacy classes. Dealing with students who have poor communications skills can be difficult and frustrating for library staff and some formal training in how to communicate with international students would be of benefit to both staff and student.

### **5.3 Barriers with Staff**

The findings from the survey that looked at barriers with staff were quite positive. The vast majority of students, almost 80% in both cases, rated the library staff as both helpful and welcoming with only a very small percentage overall of 3.6% rating them as unhelpful. So it would seem that international students are happy with their interactions with library staff. While these results are very positive and welcome, it does not mean that library staff can become complacent. In fact, other findings in the survey would indicate that there is limited interaction between staff and students outside of the issue desk and that the knowledge and expertise of library staff is not being utilised by international students. In the survey, when the participants were asked about finding information for assignments, library staff were ranked the lowest, along with friends, in terms of who they asked for help from. Only 19.7% choose them as their first point of contact for finding information. The information role of library staff should be made clear to international students and they should be one of the primary sources of contact when students are looking for information for completing assignments. The sources of information that the participants are using for assignments are another indication that they do not approach the library staff for help in using resources. In common with other studies on information seeking by international students, the information resource most used by the participants were Internet search engines such as Google with journals and electronic databases being among the least used resources. The Internet is a valuable information resource for students but other resources such as journals and subscribed databases should be utilised by students. These resources need advocacy and training by staff in order for students to get to know about them in the first place and to be trained in how to make the best use of them.

#### **5.4 Library Training Programs**

One of the most worrying findings from the survey was the almost total lack of participation by international students in any of the library training programs that are conducted throughout the year. From those who participated in the survey, only 1.6% went on a library tour and 9.5% attended a library skills training program. While, the trend for international students not to attend library programs has been noted before by Allen (1993), this figure highlights a significant problem in the current library induction program in IT Carlow. Although 76% of the students stated that they had already attended a Third Level College or University before coming to study in Ireland and therefore would have already developed some library skills, there still remains a sizeable number who have no experience of the academic library and its resources. If international students do not attend library orientation classes or go on library tours, they are putting themselves at a disadvantage as they try to assimilate academically into a new education and library system. The low usage of information sources such as journals and subscribed internet databases and of library services such as the inter library loan service only serve to reinforce the conclusion that international students are not making the best use of the library service because they have not taken up the opportunities afforded to them to learn more about how the service works or the nature and scope of the resources that they have access to.

To increase participation from international students in library programs, consideration should be given to tailoring these sessions specifically for international students. Miriam Conteh-Morgan, in her research, proposes that the best way of teaching international students information literacy is to take their limited English language proficiency into account and use ESL (English as a Second Language) techniques. The need for specialised library instruction classes for international students is also shared by Liestman and Wu (1990), Kumar (2000) and others. While developing this type of specialised library training might seem unachievable for a small academic library, there are examples within the IT sector of how a training program could be developed. Waterford IT library staff members, in an article published in 2004, described the challenges they faced in developing and delivering a pilot library skills course to international students from China and Pakistan. As well as describing the experience, they included recommendations for other libraries who might be contemplating putting in place a similar program.

Improving communication and co-ordination between the library and the two offices responsible for international students (the ERASMUS Office and the Non-EU Office) about when these programs are conducted might also improve participation as problems due to timing or perceived lack of relevance should be possible to overcome.

### **5.5 Adjusting to a New Library and Academic Environment**

As 76% of the students who participated in the survey had already attended a Third Level College or University in their home country, there was general understanding of library terms such as catalogue (76%) and dissertation (46.9%) but much less so when it came to specialised library terms such as citation, inter library loan and reserve with recognition by only around one third of the students. This is consistent with other research on international students conducted by Pamela Jackson (2005) in which she likened library terminology to a third language.

The main reason that students gave for using the library was to study and this was closely followed by access to the Internet. International students may be more reliant on the library as a place to study and to access e-mail and the Internet than home students. For a variety of reasons, from not having the same social outlets as home students, from established habits from their own academic background, from the necessity of spending time translating and preparing assignments and for other reasons, the library is an important space for international students. For this reason, it was positive to see that 86% of students either agreed or strongly agreed that the library was a friendly and welcoming space. While this figure is very positive, it should not be taken for granted. Some small improvements could be made to the décor and signage of the library to make it more reflective of the multi cultural background of the students who are studying there.

## **5.6 Use of Library Resources and Services**

In their use of the library sources of information, the students showed a clear preference for two types of resources. Books were used by 60% of students and the Internet by 86%. Other information sources such as journals (15.4%), electronic databases (20%) and e-books (26.2%) were used to a much lesser degree. Although, the heavy use of the Internet reflects a growing trend among the general student population, the use of e-books, which form a very small part of the IT Carlow collection, by a quarter of the survey group shows that they are comfortable getting information electronically. The value of using the other resources available to them such as journals and databases should form part of library training courses.

The responses to the questions on finding information in the library were a little bit ambiguous (see Table 4.7). On the one hand, over 50% of respondents claimed that they could find the information they needed in the library without difficulty and that they found the library catalogue easy to use with only 16.1% and 5.1% respectively disagreeing, yet, conversely, 55% also agreed that they would like more help in finding information. So while they are finding the information they are looking for, they perhaps also accept that additional help in searching for information would be useful.

When asked about what types of foreign language material they would like to see more of in the library, there was strong interest in having additional foreign language books in the collection as well as newspapers from other countries. While, given financial considerations, it is not obviously possible to have large amounts of foreign language material available, adding some books and newspapers from different countries to the collection is a good way of making students feel comfortable and at ease in the library. Foreign language newspapers allow international students to keep up to date with what is going on in their home countries. Despite the fact that the dictionaries in the IT Carlow collection are quite dated in age and limited in number, only 19.7% of students expressed an interest in this area of the collection being added to. Perhaps, due to the availability of electronic translation services, there is no longer a demand for physical copies of dictionaries. Chinese students were interested in having the e-book collection added to as they would be more easily able to translate the text from this type of material.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

While the international students of I.T. Carlow were positive about their interactions with library staff and using the library, there is clearly a need to improve their participation rate in library instruction classes. This is currently at a very low base and some investigation needs to be done on how to improve participation rates. Developing information literacy classes specifically for international students should be considered to help them develop their library skills. There are also substantial language difficulties acknowledged by the students. The library needs to develop strategies to help both staff and students overcome this barrier.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The growing number of international students enrolling in I.T. Carlow has meant that their particular library requirements need to be assessed and addressed as a matter of priority. The objective of this study has been to look at their current library experiences and identify the main barriers or gaps encountered by them in their use of the library. Having considered the literature and having regard to the findings from the research, some guidelines and recommendations for the library are suggested to better support international students library needs in the future.

### **6.2 Review of the Research**

The method chosen to conduct the research was a flexible research design incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods. The benefit to the research of using mixed methods is that it enables triangulation of the results with one method (the survey) being corroborated by the results of the second (the semi-structured interviews). The research was carried out in an objective manner with the entire international student population given the opportunity to participate in the study meaning that the results should be transferable to other similar studies.

The online questionnaire was concerned with gathering objective, empirical evidence about the services and resources used by students, the barriers they face in their use of those resources and services and about changes they would like to see in the library. The semi-structured interviews that followed allowed some of those finding to be probed in more depth and allowed the researcher to gain further insight into the issues uncovered.

The three main challenges facing international students, as asserted in the library literature, are language and communication problems, cultural adjustment issues and adjusting to a new library and academic environment. There has been very little research done on international students in the Republic of Ireland so it was worthwhile looking at the issues to see how we compare internationally. The findings show that the same issues are prevalent in Ireland.

The on-line survey and semi-structured interviews that were conducted with the I.T. Carlow students confirm that language is the single greatest barrier facing the students with over 25% of them having problems reading, writing and speaking English. Communicating in English is a problem in particular for Non-EU students.

Although, most of the international students who participated in the survey had previous academic experience, their use of the library was quite limited in scope. Books and the Internet were the most heavily used resources with journals and databases not getting significant use. The lack of participation in library skills training courses or inductions was quite a surprising finding and indicates that there are problems that need to be addressed with how library induction and training are carried out with regards to international students. More positively, there were no indications of library anxiety or barriers with staff from the results of the survey or from the interviews. The students overwhelmingly confirmed that they were happy to ask for help from library staff if they required it and that they were comfortable using the library space.

### **6.3 Lessons Learned**

The main challenge in conducting this research proved to be the same one for the researcher as for the students. The lack of English language proficiency of the international students made it difficult conducting interviews. Because of the language barrier, making sure that both parties understood each other was time consuming and painstaking. However, a clearer picture of the language barriers facing students emerged in this way than if these interviews had been conducted with students whose English was of a better standard and who would obviously have a different experience. The advice for future researchers conducting interviews with international students with poor language skills would be to have a translator available if possible as this would make communication easier for all parties.

## 6.4 Recommendations Arising from the Research

Having reviewed the literature and taking into account the results from the survey, there are some changes that could be made to the library service that would not have significant financial implications but would make a positive contribution to international students' experience of the library.

1. Designate one member of library staff to act as a contact point for international students and to have special responsibility for co-ordinating library activities for international students.
2. Provide regular training for library staff in cross cultural awareness and diversity training.
3. Use plain, jargon free English in library publications, guides and in general library use.
4. Develop lines of communication with international students in order to inform future plans.
5. Liaise with other Departments, such as Student Affairs, ERASMUS Office and Non-EU Office which also support international students.
6. Develop the library web pages to include a page for international students. Included in these pages could be links to information of particular relevance to them.
7. Ensure that international students are given access to information about plagiarism so that they understand the concept and are able to maintain academic integrity in their work.
8. Promote access to resources that are available in their own languages, such as newspapers, journals or websites or of particular relevance to them such as online translating services.
9. Have signage in different languages and a dedicated notice board for international students with information of special interest to them such as who their liaison member of staff is.
10. Hold extra information training skills at holiday times aimed at international students as this is a time when they are still on campus and may have some free time.

## **6.5 Areas of Further Interest**

An area that warrants further investigation is the development of information literacy standards for international students. Developing information literacy skills is considered a key outcome for third level students as being information literate not only helps them in their future careers but in many aspects of their lives. Researching and developing literacy standards that are specific to international students' that helps them to develop their critical thinking skills and reasoning abilities would be of practical and ongoing benefit to them.

As the number of international students throughout the IOT sector continues to grow so rapidly, the 13 Institute libraries should give consideration to working together collaboratively to develop and design information literacy programs for them. This type of cross institute initiative would have positive benefits not only for the international students but also for the library staff of the various institutes.

Third level institutes like I.T. Carlow can play a role in equipping students for living and working in an increasingly globalised society by fostering a truly diverse, multi cultural campus. To reflect the international ethos, the library needs to be proactive in developing and strengthening the library service that it provides to these students in order to make a positive contribution to enriching the learning experiences of those who chose to study outside of their home country.

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## **Appendix 1: E-Mail to International Students**

Dear Student,

I am currently undertaking a Masters in Library and Information Studies with the University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

My dissertation is concerned with the library experiences and needs of International students.

To help me gain some insight into the current experiences of International students here in I.T Carlow, I would ask you to fill out a short survey by clicking on the link below.

Participation is entirely voluntary but each and every response received will greatly help in my research.

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=B7Hq6RTYCSZ6WwfmulfpfQ\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=B7Hq6RTYCSZ6WwfmulfpfQ_3d_3d)

All responses will be treated completely confidentially.

Thanking you in advance,

Orla Foley

## **Appendix 2: Interview Questions**

1. Have you studied in College or University before?
2. What are the big differences between your old library and this one? Eg types of resources, books on open stacks
3. What aspects of using the library do you find difficult? E.g asking for help from library staff.
4. Do you find you have problems communicating/making yourself understood?
5. If you needed help finding information, would you ask library staff for help?  
If not why not?
6. Who do ask for help from when looking for information?
7. Do you feel comfortable asking library staff for help?
8. Are there changes you would like to see in the library?
9. Did you attend library tours at the start of the year? If not why not?
10. If yes, how did you find it/find it useful?
11. Which of the resources do you use?
12. Do you use electronic databases?
13. Do you know about the Chinese newspapers?
14. Are there any cultural differences that make it difficult it for you studying in Carlow?

### **Appendix 3: Sample Transcript of Interview**

#### **Sample of a Transcript of Semi –Structured Interview with Student A (Non-EU student) on 11/01/2010.**

Interviewer: Have you studied in a University or Third Level College before?

Student A: Yes I studied in Chinese College, [name of College in China], this is my first year in Carlow. I have the fourth year, the last year student so I will graduate this year.

Interviewer: What are the big differences between your old library and this one? Eg types of resources, books on open stacks

Student A: Maybe the big difference about the language because our English is not very good and some others, in Chinese library, every book has their code and if we search some books in library in the web, search some books, maybe two kinds or three kinds of similar books are using the same code and we need to find...

Interviewer: So in your home country, the code on the books was different?

Student A: Yes even if the same book, have the same name book, maybe two books the same but they have different codes.

Interviewer: So do you find it hard to find the books then that you need or were you able to learn...?

Student A: Yes but a little difficult, just a bit

Interviewer: So, searching for information, you find difficult or easy?

Student A: A little difficult. Some similar books, like for example, some software books maybe a little difficult but I want to study some more detail about some books but I just cant find the same code among these books so I need to... search one by one.

Interviewer: If you needed help finding information, would you ask library staff for help?

Student A: Yes

Interviewer: You would. But do you find language is a problem, do you find it hard to make yourselves understood or it is a little bit difficult but you are able to get across what you need?

Student A: Just some... expressing myself, cant express the detail clearly about what I need.

Interviewer: Is that frustrating for you then, is it hard if you are trying to explain yourself?

Student A: Yes, yes it is difficult.

Interviewer: Its hard to find the right word

Student A: But we can listen.. if we listen to some others we can understand but we cant express ourselves.

Interviewer: Do you find the library staff approachable and helpful when you ask for help?

Student A: Yes, very helpful.

Interviewer: Did you attend a library tour at the start of the year?

Student A: No, No.

Interviewer: You didnt attend a library tour? That's because you didn't hear about them or you didn't know when they were on?

Student A: I didn't know.

Student A: Yes, in the middle of September, I arrived here, maybe I missed them.

## Appendix 4: Online Questionnaire

### Library Survey

#### 1. How long have you lived in Ireland (or another English speaking country)?

- Under 1 year
- 1 - 2 years
- 3 - 4 years
- 5 years or more

#### 2. Had you studied in a University or Third Level College before coming to study in Ireland?

- Yes
- No

#### 3. What is your country of origin?

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#### 4. Which of the following library terms are you familiar with/ do you understand?

- Catalogue
- Citation
- Reserve
- Inter Library Loan
- Dissertation
- OPAC
- Plagiarism

**5. When looking for help finding information for assignments, who do you ask for help first?**

- Friends
- Classmates
- Library Staff
- Lecturers

**6. Which of the following resources would you like to see more of in the library?**

- Books in Foreign Languages
- Foreign Language Newspapers
- Dictionaries
- Language Cassettes

**7. What is your main reason for using the library?**

**Please number 1-5 in order of importance.**

- Study
- Use the Internet
- Borrow Books
- Meet Friends
- Find Information

**8. Which of the following resources have you used for class assignments?**

- Books

- Journals
- Electronic Databases i.e Emerald, ScienceDirect
- Internet Search Engines e.g. Google
- E. Books

**9. Which of the following library resources/services have you used?**

- Information Desk
- Inter Library Loan
- Photocopiers
- Reserved a Book
- Attended a Library tour
- Attended and Information Skills training session

**10. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the scale below.**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The library is a friendly and welcoming environment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The library staff are helpful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The library staff are welcoming.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**11. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the scale below.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Disagree				

I find the library catalogue easy to use

I can find the information I need in the library without difficulty.

I would like more help in finding Information in the library.

I would like printed guides in my own language.

**12. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the scale below.**

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neither Agree nor    Disagree    Strongly Disagree  
Disagree

I find it difficult to write assignments in English.

☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐

I sometimes find it difficult to communicate in English.

☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐

I have difficulties reading English.

☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐

## **Appendix 4: Online Questionnaire**