



Research Support and Instruction for International Graduate Students

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International Graduate Students and the Library

International graduate students (IGSs) face unique challenges when it comes to library use and research support.



Unfamiliarity With Library Resources

Despite the relative ubiquity of information technology, “the **unfamiliar structure** of the American academic library” poses difficulties for many students.²



Cultural Differences

Many IGSs demonstrate an **unwillingness to ask for help** due to embarrassment or lack of confidence in approaching a librarian.¹

Academic culture also affects students’ research experience and capabilities. Several studies mention that US advanced degree programs are **much more research intensive** than international programs, which are more focused on testing.²

How Can Librarians Help?

Library Orientation

Pros: Gives students a quick overview of library resources; easy to implement and coordinate.

Cons: Relies heavily on the student to retain what they learned in a one-off session; does not provide any advanced research or citation training.

Collaborative Instruction

Example: Thesis course co-taught by academic faculty, subject librarian, and writing center instructor.

Pros: Connects students with several important support services while validating them through association with their departmental advisors; helps students develop relationships with librarians and writing coaches that can last their entire academic career.

Cons: Requires considerable planning and buy-in from multiple departments.

Online Resources

Example: Instructional videos or an international graduate student library page.

Pros: Students can access services asynchronously from their homes; resources can be provided in multiple languages.

Cons: Might be costly due to the need for extensive translation; could detract from in-person use of programs and services.

Benefits of Library Instruction

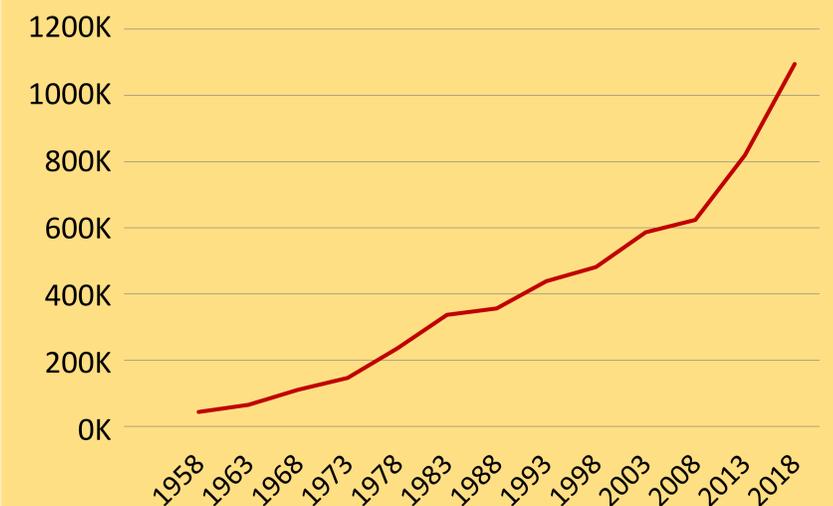
“**Reduces anxiety** and **increases motivation** to use library resources” for IGSs.¹

International graduate students...

Place higher value than domestic students on the library’s role in providing guidance about ethical use of information.⁴

Are more likely than domestic students to find library workshops helpful.¹

International Graduate Student Enrollment in the United States



Note: Data from “International Student Enrollment Trends, 1948/49-2017/18,” by Institute of International Education, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Data/International-Students/Enrollment>.

The number of IGSs in the US is increasing exponentially each year. Failure to provide these students with a comprehensive overview of library services and resources can leave them unequipped to tackle the research demands of their advanced degree.

1. Click, A. B. (2018). International graduate students in the United States: Research processes and challenges. *Library & Information Science Research*, 40(2), 153-162.
 2. Cooper, L., & Hughes, H. (2017). First-year international graduate students’ transition to using a United States university library. *IFLA Journal*, 43(4), 361-378.

3. Ibraheem, A. I., & Devine, C. (2016). Saudi students, American academic library: A survey. *Library Review*, 65(4/5), 267-280.
 4. Yu, J., Trei, K. J., & Carlstone, J. (2018). International STEM graduate students: Reaching a deeper understanding. *Performance Measurement and Metrics*, 19(3), 153-165.