

# When Librarians Rank Last



## First-Year Student Research Readiness, Library Intimidation & High School Experiences

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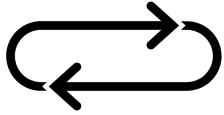
**We have some questions for you!**

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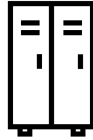
**[Menti.com](https://www.menti.com)**



# Introduction



This study builds on a previous study conducted in 2019.



Ideally, students receive instruction on research methods in high school that prepare them for college-level research.



Ohio's public school funding model was declared unconstitutional by the State Supreme Court in 1997

In 2021, a constitutional formula was finally added to the state budget, but must be renewed every 2 years

# Ohio School Librarian Data

## **607** public school library media specialist FTEs

- **92.5** employed in Columbus City Schools
- **47** in Akron City Schools
- **23%** total from those 2 districts



- Wide distribution across districts
- Some have 1-2
- Some have 0

# Research Questions

How does high school experience impact first-year students' college readiness?

What is the correlation (if any) of high school typography with college readiness?

What was the impact of Covid-19 and remote learning on students' readiness?

# Why we conducted the study

Before becoming an academic librarian, I worked in K-12 schools - one was an elite private school, and one was a very small rural school in Ohio. The differences available resources were striking. — *AM*

At my previous college near Philadelphia, I worked with students from the richest and poorest school districts in the state. Seeing the steep variances in our students' preparedness firsthand as a result of this dichotomy was a real eye opener for me — *JY*

I've noticed an apprehension among students asking for help. I've had a hard time convincing them that it's my job to help them. They often timidly approach my desk and apologize for "interrupting me" when they have a question. I wanted to know why and how I can help. — *JV*



# Literature Review Overview

## Library Anxiety: A Grounded Theory and its Development (Mellon, 1986)

### Library Anxiety

- "... when confronted with the need to gather information in the library for their first research paper many students become so anxious that they are unable to approach the problem logically or effectively." (p. 163)

### Feelings of incompetence

- Especially when compared to peers' perceived competence

### Lack of preparation in high school

- "They never taught me how to use the library. I guess they thought I would already know." (p. 163)



# Literature Review Overview

## Undergraduate Perceptions of Information Literacy: Defining, Attaining, and Self-Assessing Skills (Gross & Latham, 2007)

### Perception of skills

- People incompetent in a skill:
  - Tend to overestimate their ability
    - Less likely to seek help
  - Are less likely to recognize experts

### Where do students go for help?

- Internet
- Other people:
  - Established relationships > authority figures
  - Approachability
  - Prefer people to online guides/tutorials





# Literature Review Overview

## Psychosocial Reasons Why Patrons Avoid Seeking Help From Librarians: A Literature Review

(Black, 2016)

### Why not seek help from a librarian?

- Don't realize help is needed
- Admission of inadequacy
- Worried about wasting the helper's time
- Unwilling to take charge of one's learning
  - Used to being taught, not used to learning
- Need to build up a relationship with the librarian, which takes time



## The Student Connection: Thinking Critically on Library Anxiety and Information Literacy

(Blecher-Cohen, 2019)

### Who is the least likely to utilize library resources?

- Those who had no experiences with library services in high school
- First-generation college students
- Nonwhite students
- Students from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds
- ESL students

# Research Context

## Miami University

Oxford, Ohio - rural campus

~16,500 undergraduate population

Emphasis on traditional residential college experience

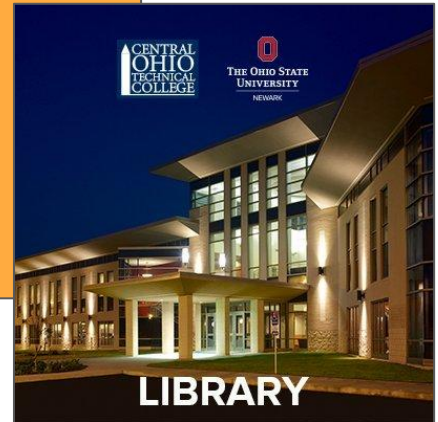


## OSU-Newark

Newark, Ohio - suburban campus

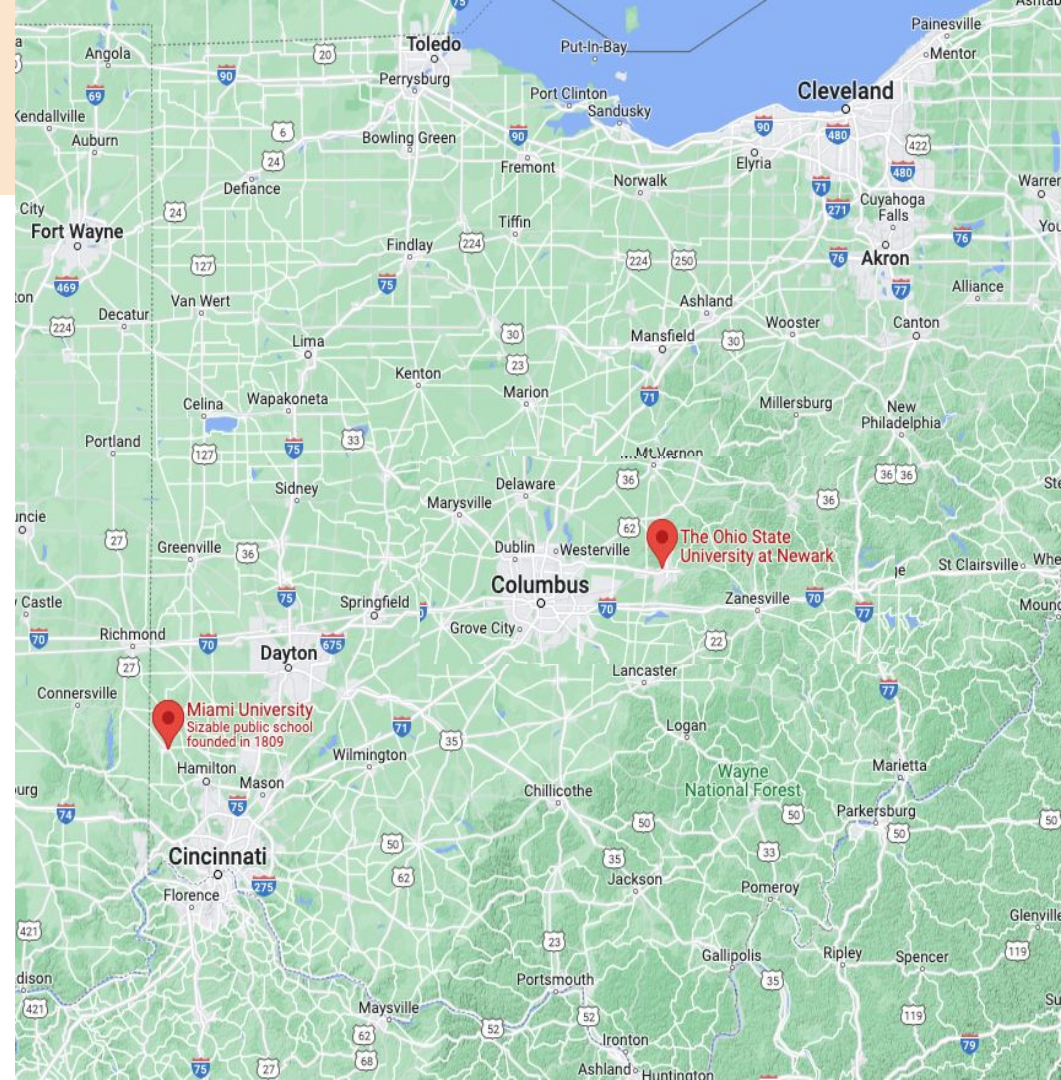
~ 2,750 undergraduate population

Regional campus



# Methodology

- **First-year students only**
  - 18 years or older
  - Attended high school in Ohio
- **Survey of 20 questions**
  - 10-15 min. to complete
  - Participants invited by email
  - Lists created by each schools' institutional research office.
  - Available early September until October 1, 2021
- **222 responses received**
  - 168 from Miami — 2,827 sent
  - 54 from OSU-N — 1,499 sent
  - No incentive offered.



# Questions asked...

## **We started with Likert-scale questions:**

- I feel prepared to do college level research...
- I feel confident that I know how to find academic research articles for my classes...
- I find my college library intimidating...
- I find my college library staff to be intimidating...

# Questions asked...

## **About their high school research experience...**

- Did your school have its own library?
- During high school, did someone teach you how to do research either in your class or in your library?
- How often did you use your (school and public) libraries for research?
- How often did a librarian help you with research during high school?
- If I had a question about research, the first person I would go to would be...

# Questions asked...

## **About the pandemic...**

- Did you attend high school remotely in 2020 or 2021? If yes, was it full time or part time?
- If you received research instruction, how was that instruction delivered?
- Did remote learning make you feel more or less prepared for college level research?

# Questions asked...

## **We closed with an open ended question...**

- "How do you think a college librarian could help you?  
If you don't know, make your best guesses."



# Survey Results

- Students are anxious and feeling unprepared for college research
- What variables cause this?
- What variables have positive influence?
- Surprises in the results?



***Typology of Ohio School Districts*** was created by the Ohio Department of Education to aid research.

| <b>Typology</b> | <b>District Type</b> | <b>Poverty</b> | <b>District Size</b> |
|-----------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| 1               | Rural                | High           | Small                |
| 2               | Rural                | Average        | Very Small           |
| 3               | Small Town           | Low            | Small                |
| 4               | Small Town           | High           | Average              |
| 5               | Suburban             | Low            | Average              |
| 6               | Suburban             | Very Low       | Large                |
| 7               | Urban                | High           | Average              |
| 8               | Urban                | Very High      | Very Large           |
| -               | Private-Parochial    |                |                      |

# District residential density

Rural to urban

| Typology | District Type     | Poverty   | District Size |
|----------|-------------------|-----------|---------------|
| 1        | Rural             | High      | Small         |
| 2        | Rural             | Average   | Very Small    |
| 3        | Small Town        | Low       | Small         |
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| -        | Private-Parochial |           |               |

# Poverty

Very low to very high

| Typology | District Type     | Poverty   | District Size |
|----------|-------------------|-----------|---------------|
| 1        | Rural             | High      | Small         |
| 2        | Rural             | Average   | Very Small    |
| 3        | Small Town        | Low       | Small         |
| 4        | Small Town        | High      | Average       |
| 5        | Suburban          | Low       | Average       |
| 6        | Suburban          | Very Low  | Large         |
| 7        | Urban             | High      | Average       |
| 8        | Urban             | Very High | Very Large    |
| -        | Private-Parochial |           |               |

# District Size

Very small to very large

| Typology | District Type     | Poverty   | District Size |
|----------|-------------------|-----------|---------------|
| 1        | Rural             | High      | Small         |
| 2        | Rural             | Average   | Very Small    |
| 3        | Small Town        | Low       | Small         |
| 4        | Small Town        | High      | Average       |
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**Together they  
allow you to  
evaluate  
complicated  
demographic  
distribution of  
Ohio's school  
districts**

| <b>Typology</b> | <b>District Type</b> | <b>Poverty</b> | <b>District Size</b> |
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| -               | Private-Parochial    |                |                      |

Here's our sample demographic distribution based on this typology

| Typology | District Type     | Poverty   | District Size | # students | Percentage |
|----------|-------------------|-----------|---------------|------------|------------|
| 1        | Rural             | High      | Small         | 10         | 4.9        |
| 2        | Rural             | Average   | Very Small    | 9          | 4.4        |
| 3        | Small Town        | Low       | Small         | 17         | 8.4        |
| 4        | Small Town        | High      | Average       | 12         | 5.9        |
| 5        | Suburban          | Low       | Average       | 39         | 19.3       |
| 6        | Suburban          | Very Low  | Large         | 63         | 31.2       |
| 7        | Urban             | High      | Average       | 12         | 5.9        |
| 8        | Urban             | Very High | Very Large    | 14         | 6.9        |
| -        | Private-Parochial |           |               | 26         | 12.9       |

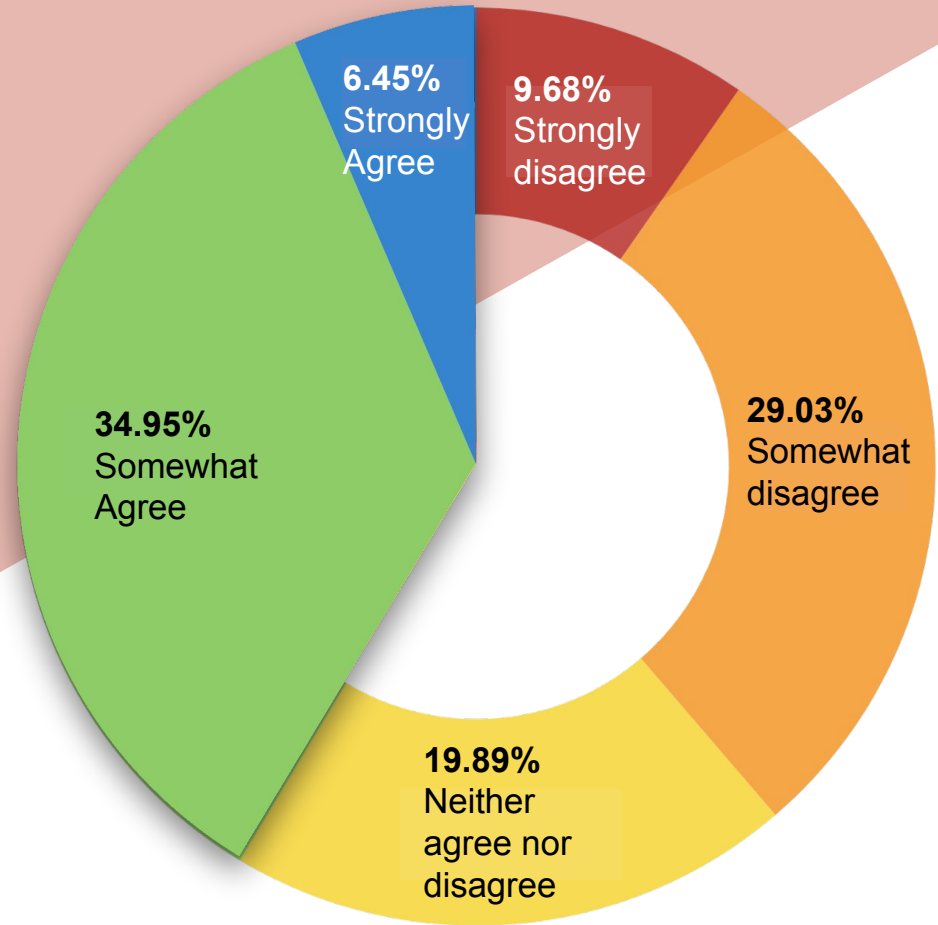


On to our results

**drum roll please...**

# Students uneasy about research.

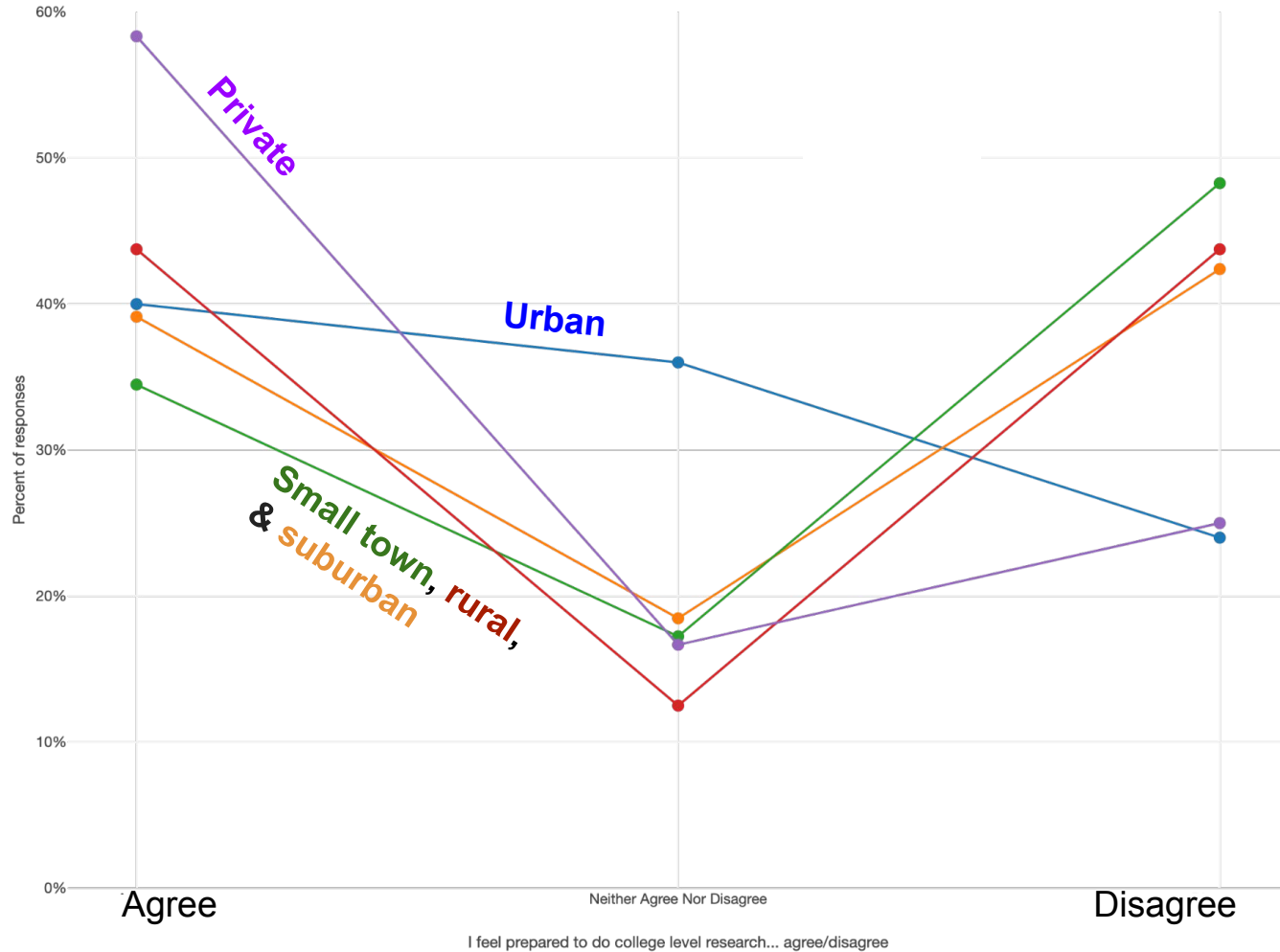
Only 41.4%\* felt "prepared to do college-level research"



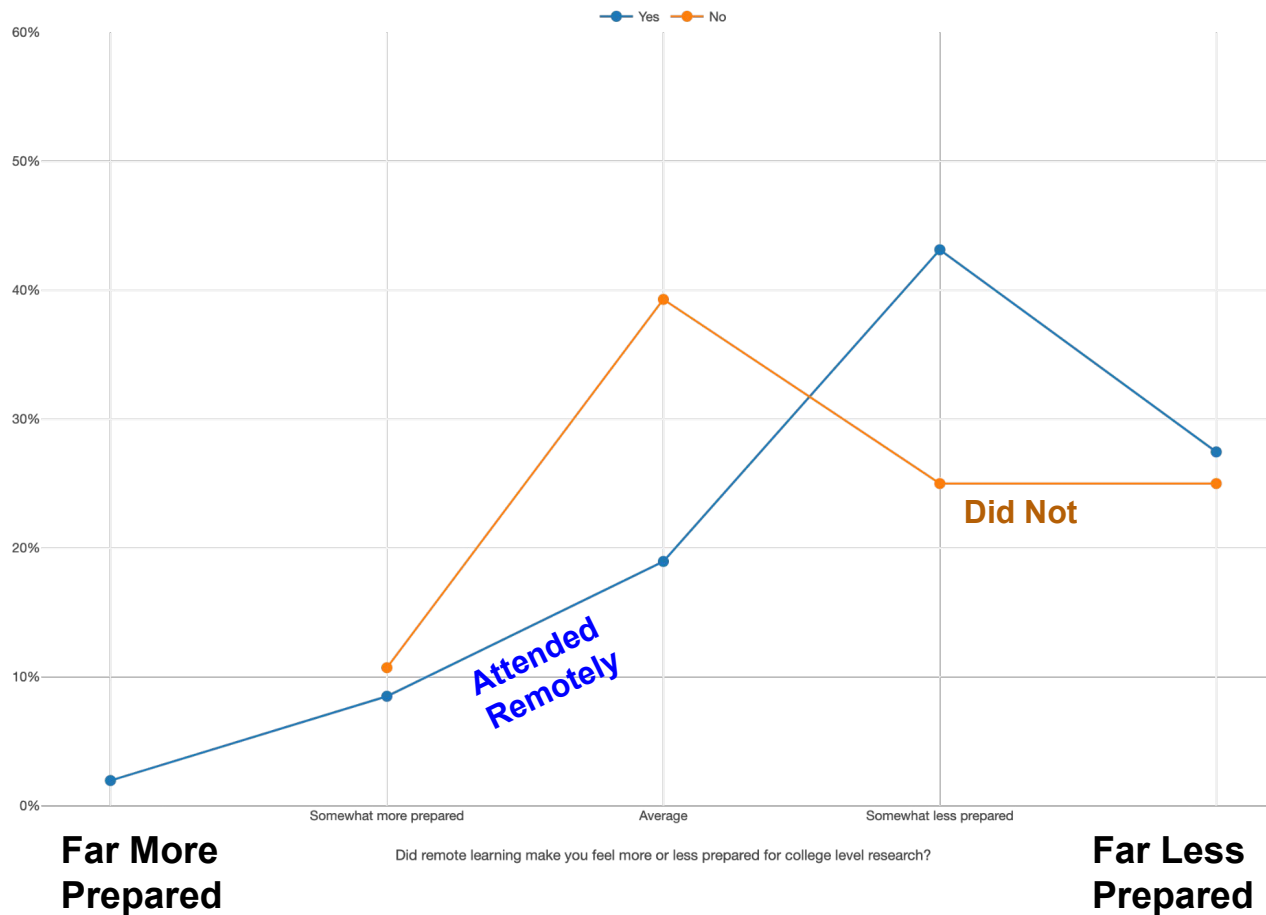
\* Public school students alone agreed 38.9%

Typologies had commonalities, but not correlations.

This chart is by district size.

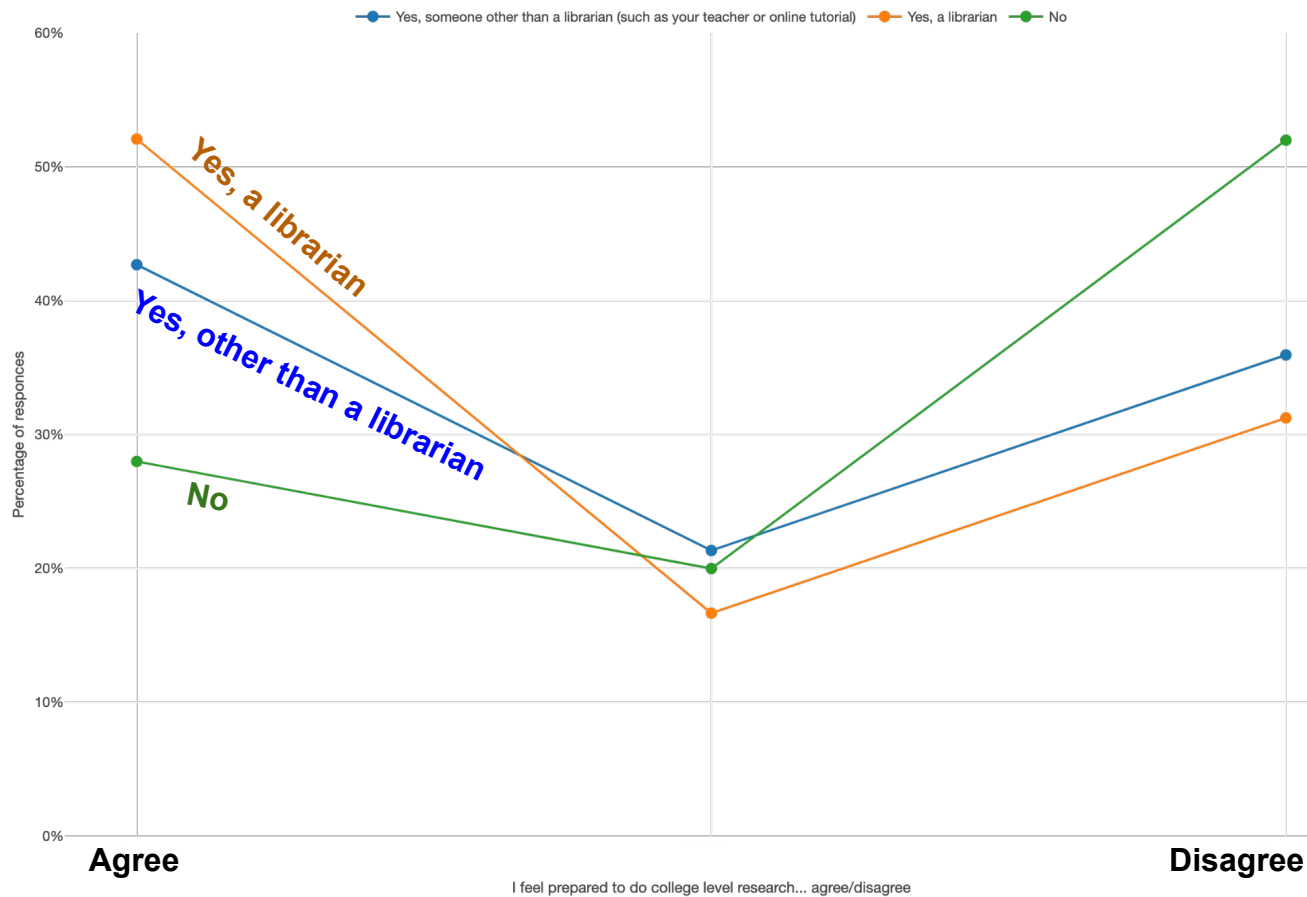


**Did attending remotely make student feel more or less prepared for college level research**

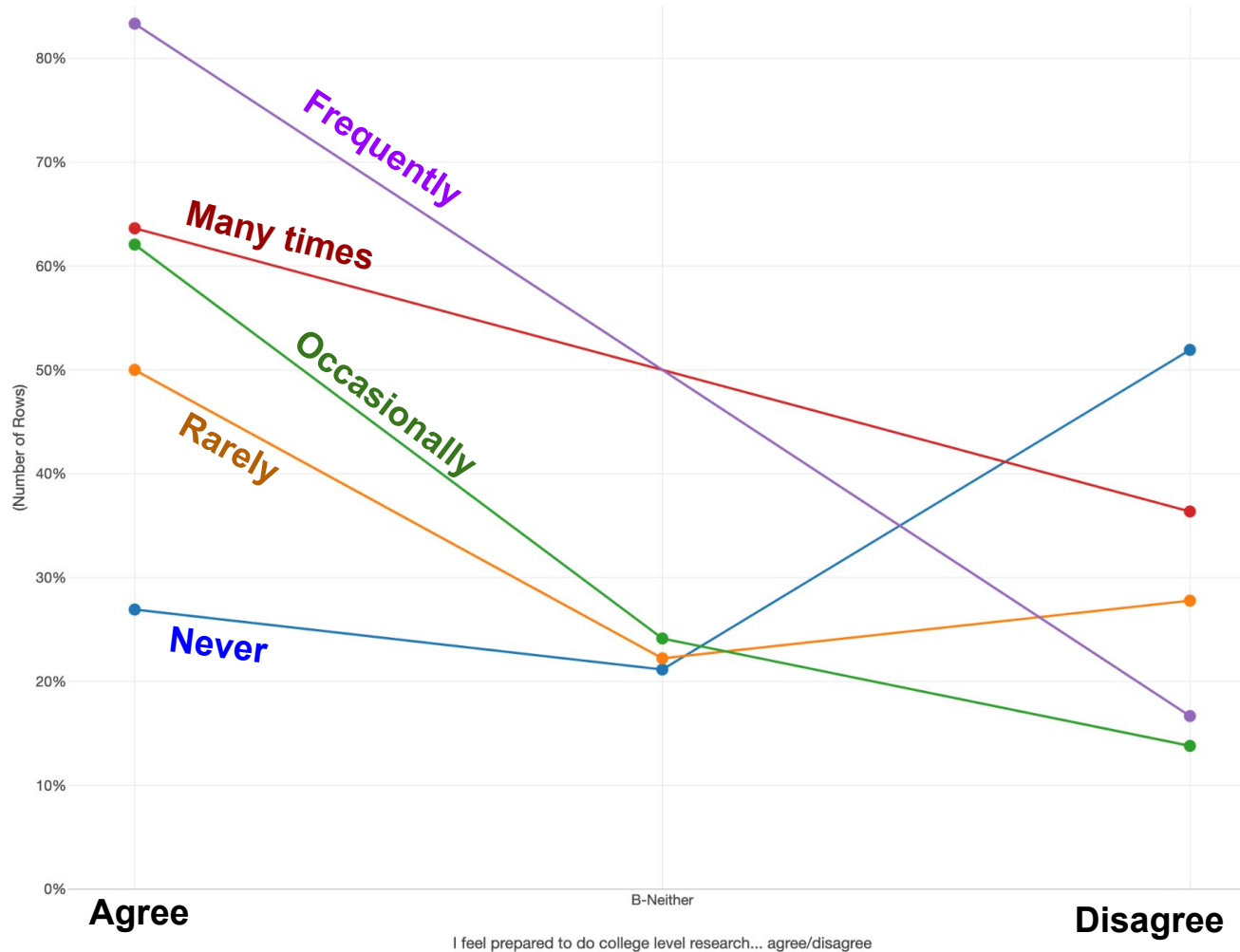


What makes a difference?  
**Librarians**

# Who taught students research skills in high school...



How often did the student receive help from a librarian with research during high school?

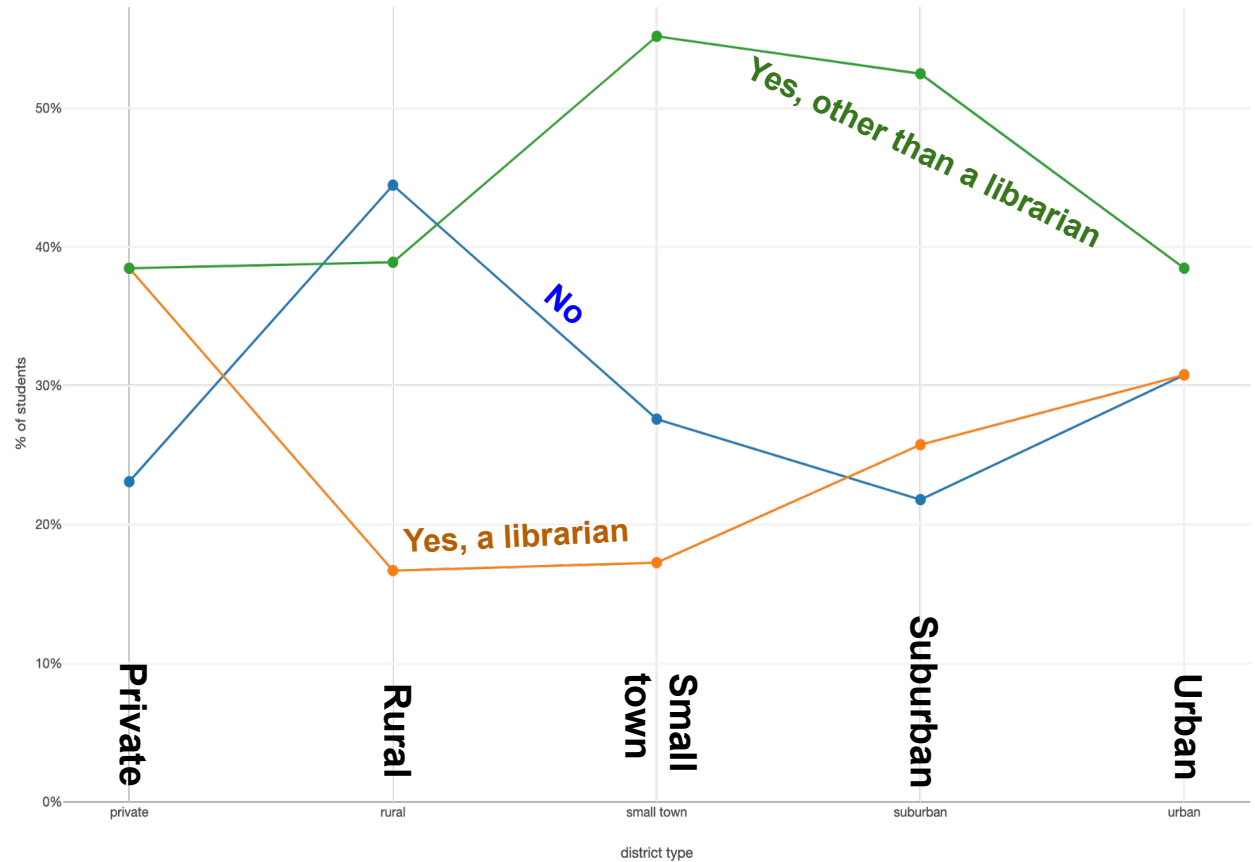




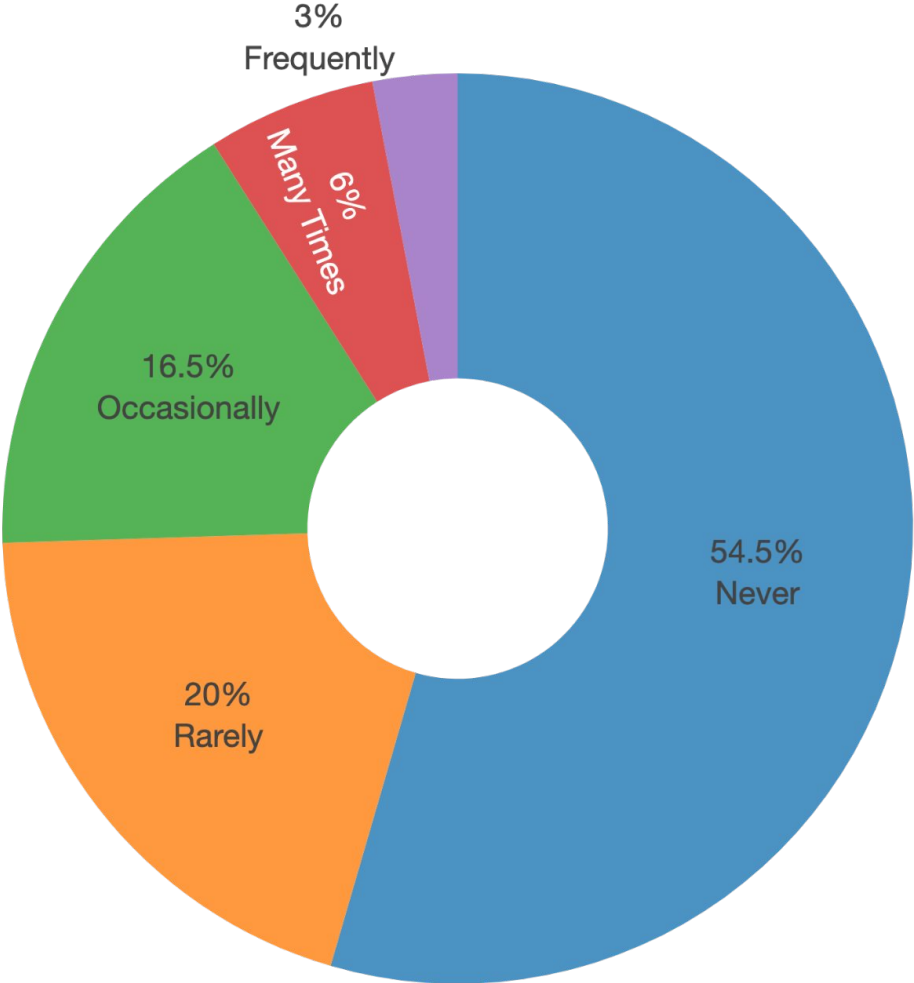
Access to librarians is  
**hit & miss**

# Who taught students research skills in high school?

Here's the answer by district type.

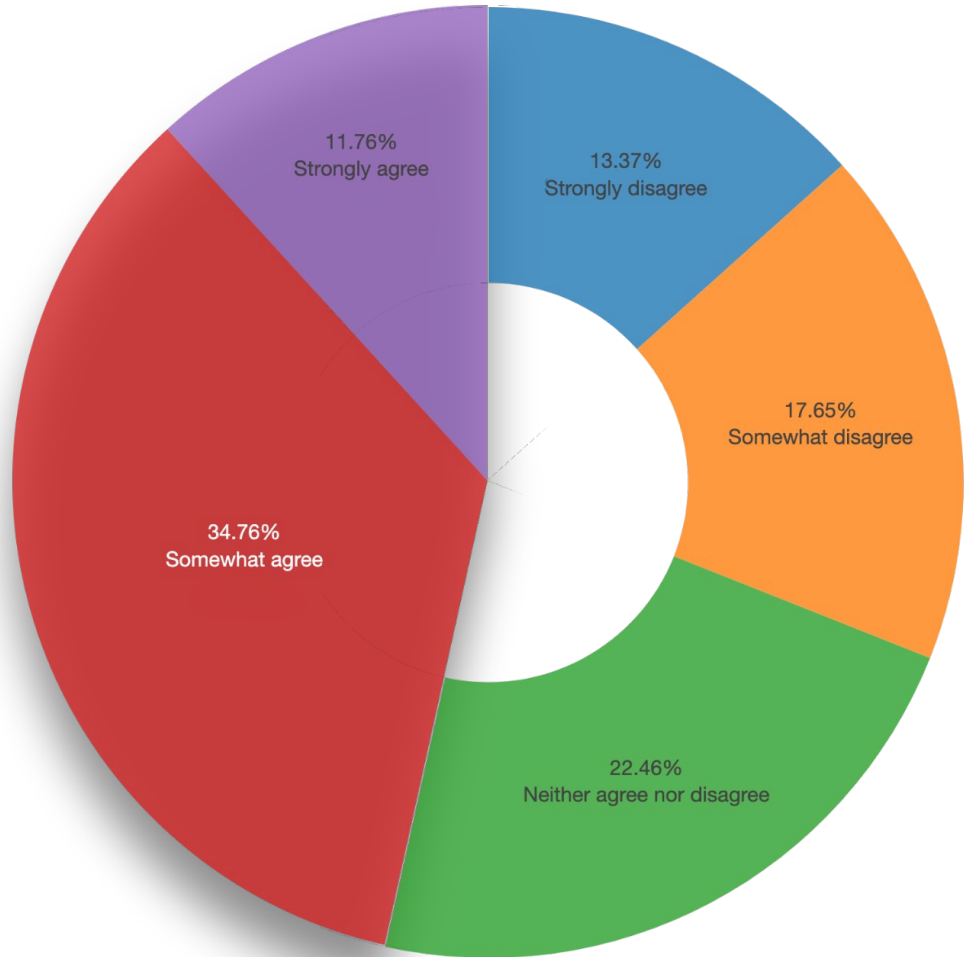


**54.5% never received librarian help on research during high school?**

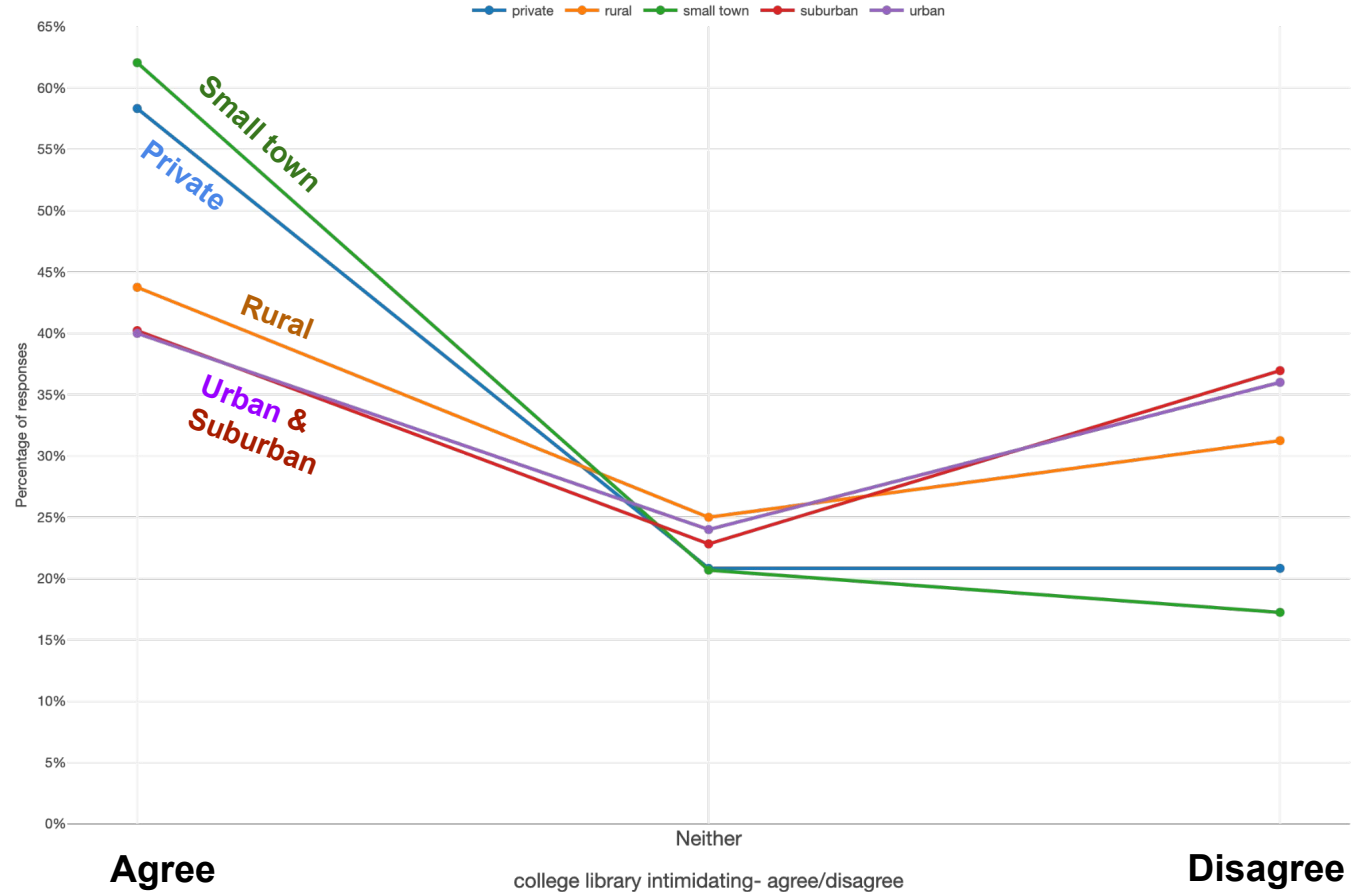


# Library **Anxiety**

**46.5% find  
their college  
library  
intimidating**



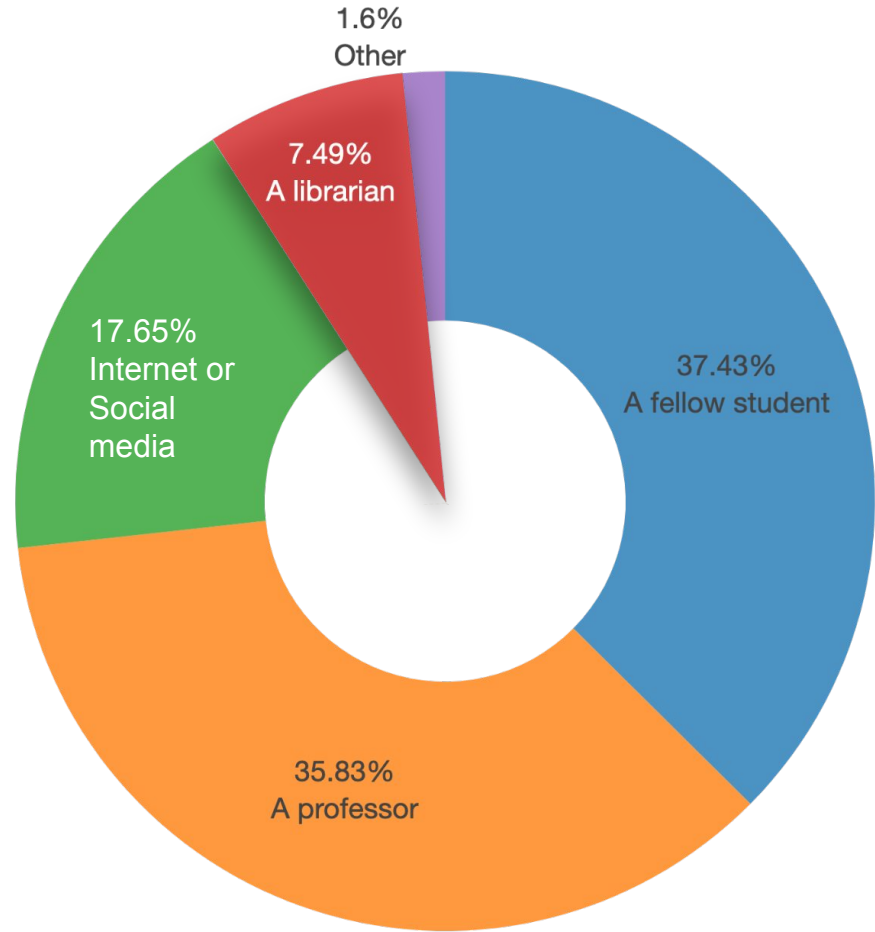
**Large majority  
of small town  
and private  
school  
students find  
the college  
library  
intimidating**



# Survey **Surprises?**

We asked:  
**"If I had a question about research, the first person I would go to would be: Be honest!"**

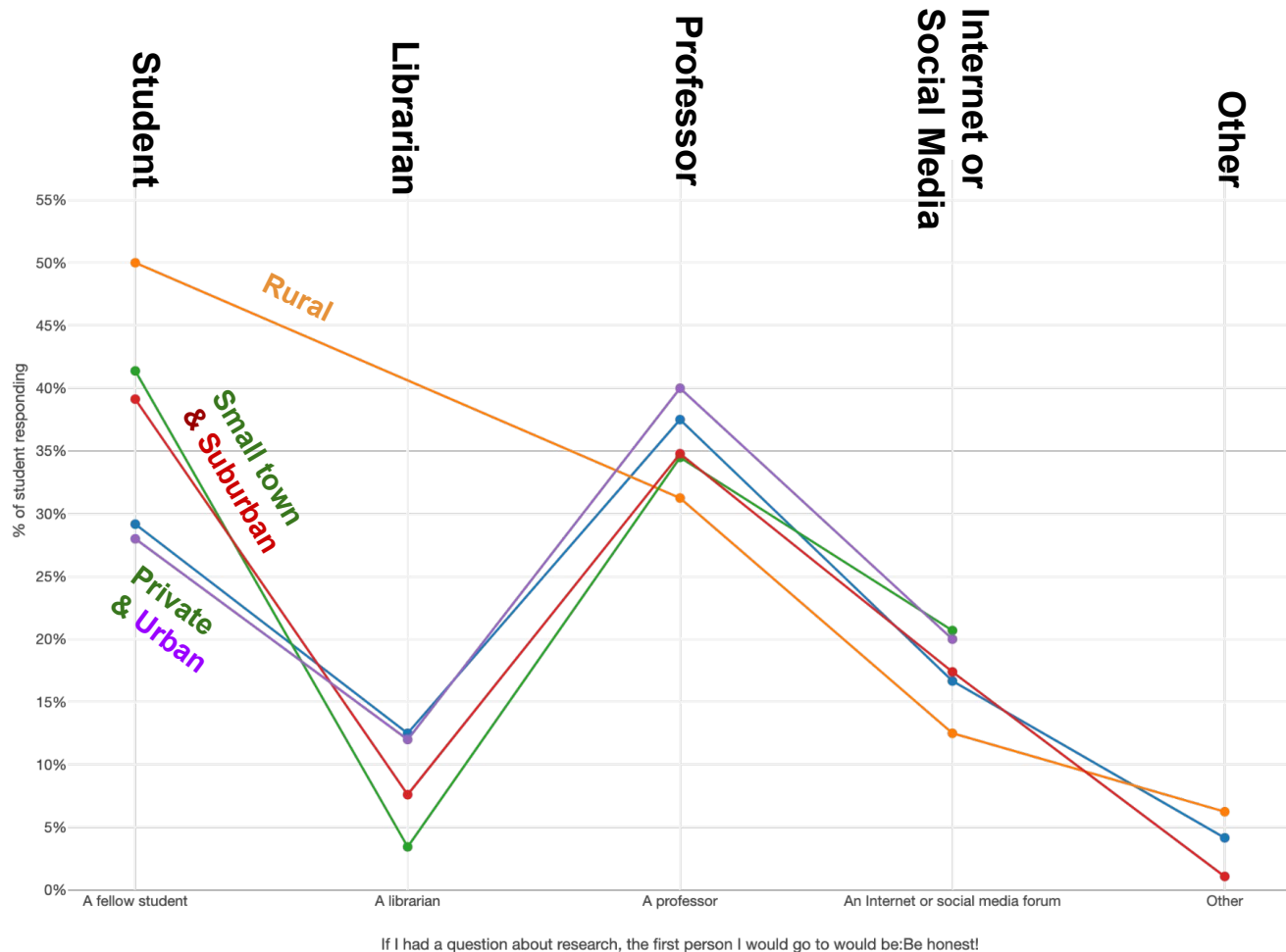
They were honest and librarians ranked last



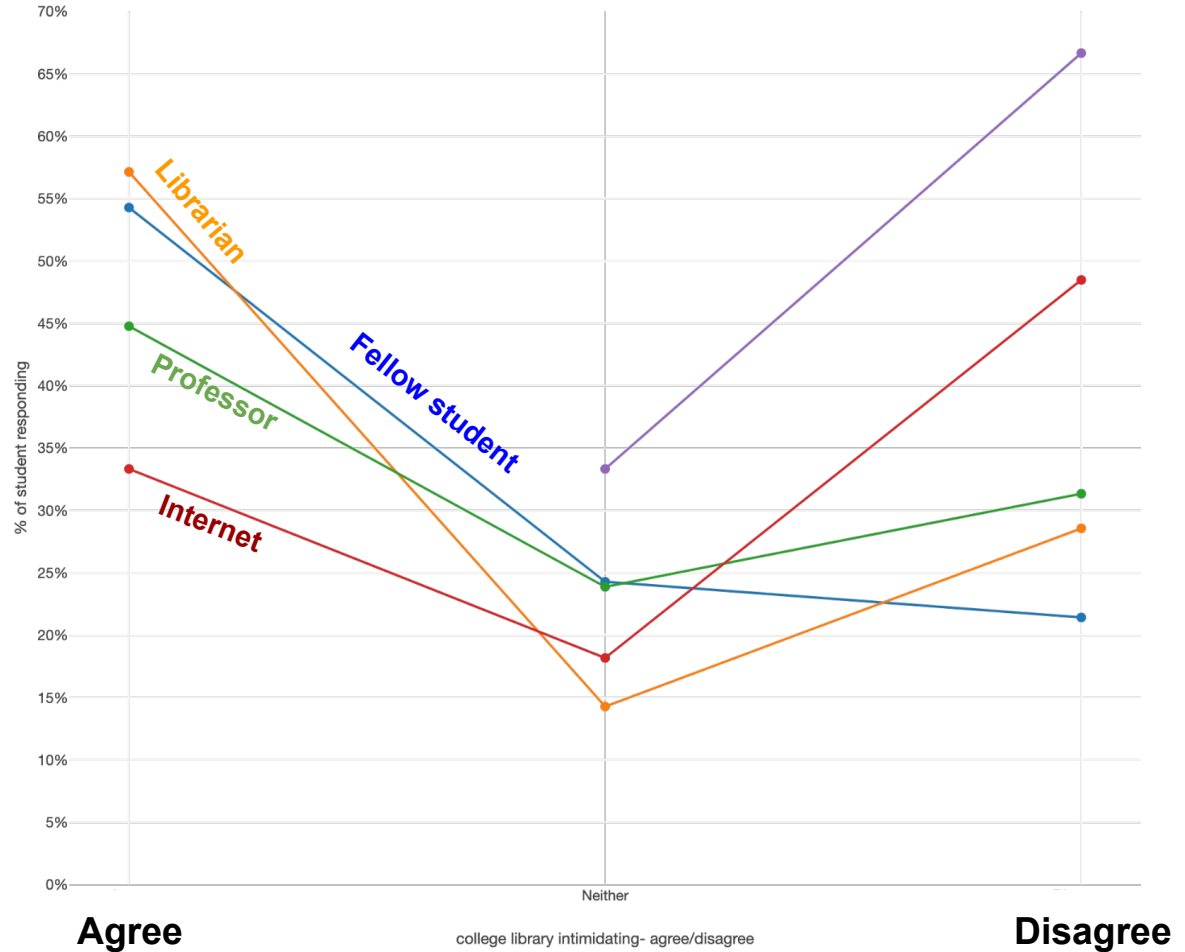


Private and Urban students most likely to ask a librarian at 12-12.5%

No rural student responded librarian!



**Students who find libraries intimidating most likely to ask a librarian for help**



How do students think  
**librarians can help**

# Word cloud





# So what?

What are the implications  
for practice?

# Instruction Librarian

Changed one-shot sessions and library signage to avoid using library jargon.

- Experimenting with slowing down the one-shot instruction sessions to foster more of a relationship with the students rather than cramming in as much information as possible.

# Web services librarian

- Avoiding jargon on library online services
- Makes web tools more equitable, accessible, and user-friendly
- Committed to usability testing.



# Liaison Librarian

Modified instruction sessions with first-year students

- Include more time for how to use the library's website starting from Google (which is where most students begin)
- How to find books using call numbers

# Discussion

Please visit:

**[menti.com](https://www.menti.com)**

Why do you think students have library anxiety?

How can we lessen library anxiety?

# Thank you!

Questions?

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# References

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# Slide Resources

**Title photo** - cottonbro:

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**Introduction icons** - The Noun Project

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