6 Information Skills Survey

Overview: Perhaps the most striking single finding in the information skills survey is that 96% of year 8 students report that they usually find information by going to the internet, twice the number reporting going to the second most popular source, their parents. This number is only slightly lower at year 4 (77%) and has risen substantially in both groups from 2001. Students enjoy seeking out information, with 80% saying they like it "heaps" or "quite a lot" at year 4, and 71% giving those responses at year 8. Four out of five students at each year level feel that they are good at finding information.

The information skills survey asked students about their strategies for, involvement in, and enjoyment of information-gathering activities. The questions were the same for year 4 and year 8 students. The survey was administered to the students in an independent-task session (four students working individually on tasks, supported by a teacher). The questions were read to year 4 students and also to individual year 8 students who requested this help.

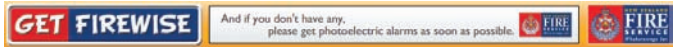
The survey included eight questions which invited students to record a rating response by circling their choice and two questions which invited students to tick up to three options from a list (including an "other" option where students could describe an additional response).

One item asked students to indicate where they usually go when trying to find information. They could tick up to three options. Their responses are shown here, in order of popularity for year 4 students, with 2001 and 2005 percentages for comparison.

For both year 4 and year 8 students, the internet was the most popular source by a substantial margin. This represented a very significant increase in popularity over the past eight years. Next most popular were "parents" followed by "books at home" or the "school library". Both the "school library" and "books at home" have slipped in popularity since 2001, especially for year 8 students.

WHERE STUDENTS USUALLY FIND INFORMATION	year 4 2009 ('05) ['01']	year 8 2009 ('05) ['01]
internet	77 (61) [47]	96 (88) [72]
parent	43 (45) [45]	48 (43) [45]
books at home	33 (37) [41]	21 (30) [38]
school library	32 (46) [51]	35 (53) [57]
town library	29 (22) [22]	29 (22) [27]
teacher	21 (25) [19]	22 (14) [10]
friend	20 (17) [17]	13 (12) [12]
DVD/CD-ROM	13 (7) [15]	3 (6) [24]
other (written in)	4 (6) [3]	2 (4) [2]

WHEN STUDENTS CAN'T FIND INFORMATION		year 4 2009 ('05) ['01] {'97}	year 8 2009 ('05) ['01] {'97}
Strategy:	keep looking	64 (71) [67] {67}	59 (58) [64] {54}
	ask a parent	50 (54) [55] {45}	51 (58) [64] {54}
	ask the teacher	38 (40) [43] {47}	52 (52) [51] {49}
	ask an expert	37 (-) [-] {-}	29 (-) [-] {-}
	ask a librarian	34 (40) [33] {35}	27 (41) [38] {50}
	ask a friend	29 (36) [34] {35}	28 (31) [38] {31}
	give up	10 (8) [7] {9}	10 (11) [10] {8}
	other (written in)	4 (6) [2] {5}	6 (7) [7] {2}



Another item asked students to indicate what they do when they can't find information they need. They could tick up to three options. Their responses are shown here, in order of popularity for year 4 students, with 2005, 2001 and 1997 percentages for comparison. The option "ask an expert" was added in 2009.

Compared to year 4 students, year 8 students placed more emphasis on asking their teacher. There has been little change in the responses over the eight years since the first survey in 1997, except for the large decline with year 8 students for "ask a librarian" (which may relate to the new option).

The remaining eight items used a rating format. The percentages of students choosing each response to these eight questions are shown in the two tables opposite. Where available, 2005, 2001 and 1997 percentages are shown for comparative purposes.

YEAR 4 INFORMATION SKILLS SURVEY 2009 (2005) (2001) {1997}

	heaps	*quite a lot*	*sometimes*	*never*
1. How often do you have to find information for a study (inquiry/research topic/project)?	15 (14) [13] {13}	29 (31) [32] {33}	52 (50) [52] {53}	4 (5) [3] {1}
2. How often do you have a really interesting study for which you have to find information?	16 (15) [12] {14}	29 (29) [31] {27}	47 (47) [51] {51}	8 (9) [6] {8}
3. How often do you look for information because you want to, not because you've been told to?	17 (17) [17] {15}	22 (20) [22] {23}	42 (43) [45] {45}	19 (20) [16] {17}
4. How often have you used a library catalogue?	21 (17)	21 (24)	37 (37)	21 (22)
5. How much do you like hunting for information?	41 (39) [42] {38}	39 (37) [34] {38}	15 (15) [15] {14}	5 (9) [9] {10}
6. How good do you think you are at hunting for information?	36 (32) [33] {•}	45 (42) [43] {•}	14 (19) [17] {•}	5 (7) [7] {•}
7. How much do you like sharing with others the information you find?	52 (50) [51] {•}	26 (27) [25] {•}	15 (13) [15] {•}	7 (10) [9] {•}
8. How much do you like writing down what you find out?	41 (42) [43] {41}	29 (28) [25] {32}	18 (15) [19] {14}	12 (15) [13] {13}

YEAR 8 INFORMATION SKILLS SURVEY 2009 (2005) (2001) {1997}

	heaps	*quite a lot*	*sometimes*	*never*
1. How often do you have to find information for a study (inquiry/research topic/project)?	20 (15) [18] {18}	45 (48) [47] {52}	33 (37) [34] {29}	2 (0) [1] {1}
2. How often do you have a really interesting study for which you have to find information?	9 (6) [7] {8}	30 (25) [28] {27}	56 (64) [61] {61}	5 (5) [4] {4}
3. How often do you look for information because you want to, not because you've been told to?	7 (5) [8] {9}	25 (18) [19] {19}	53 (60) [58] {60}	15 (17) [15] {12}
4. How often have you used a library catalogue?	11 (11)	24 (31)	51 (44)	14 (14)
5. How much do you like hunting for information?	17 (12) [17] {18}	54 (48) [51] {51}	24 (33) [25] {24}	5 (7) [7] {7}
6. How good do you think you are at hunting for information?	24 (18) [23] {•}	57 (52) [52] {•}	16 (22) [20] {•}	3 (8) [5] {•}
7. How much do you like sharing with others the information you find?	27 (31) [37] {•}	46 (42) [41] {•}	21 (20) [17] {•}	6 (7) [5] {•}
8. How much do you like writing down what you find out?	19 (16) [23] {16}	32 (34) [37] {35}	36 (32) [24] {34}	13 (18) [16] {15}

A substantially greater proportion of year 8 than year 4 students reported that they had to find information for a project or inquiry topic "heaps" or "quite a lot" (question 1). Perhaps as a consequence of being given such tasks more frequently, year 8 students were much less inclined than year 4 students to be highly enthusiastic about hunting for information (question 5) and about writing down the information they found (question 8). While year 4 students responded similarly to questions 1 and 2, the pattern was quite different for year 8 students, suggesting that many of the information-finding projects which year 8 students were asked to attempt were not viewed as "really interesting". About 75% of students are quite happy to share with others the information they have found (question 7). Where comparisons with 2005, 2001 and 1997 responses are possible, the results in 2009 are very similar to the results of the earlier surveys.