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Building solid foundations: graduate students and researchers in the basic sciences and the library

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Objective
As graduate students and researchers in the basic sciences carry out their work, they can benefit from library services and resources. This project aims to provide librarians with insight into information needs of students and researchers at different points along their careers, and suggest possible ways to improve services, communication, and resources.

Methods
We are investigating the information needs of basic science graduate students and researchers through the ongoing Genomics Information Needs Project. Students and researchers are asked a series of survey questions to learn about their research background and genomic educational history, their database and software use and preference, their library use, and how they stay current with developments in their field, among other related topics.

Results
Basic science graduate students and researchers feel they benefit from a variety of library services and resources. A review of survey data from the ongoing Genomics Information Needs Project indicated that students and researchers desire support in areas such as:

- assistance with statistics, measurement methods, and research design
- receiving software training
- accessing free software
- keeping track of developments in their field

The library has many options in fulfilling these needs, such as providing direct support, arranging training sessions through outside groups, or making connections with departments on campus to provide support to students.

Conclusions
Undertaking graduate studies and pursuing a research career in the basic sciences is not an easy task. Students and researchers face long hours working on difficult coursework or designing and carrying out experiments in the laboratory. They also face deep competition during their career. The library can support students and researchers by acting as a respite from the lab, offering sessions with insight on topics of interest, and supporting needs for certain database and software tools.