ABSTRACT
Bawden and Robinson (2009) state: “[t]here is no single generally accepted definition of information overload. The term is usually taken to represent a state of affairs where an individual’s efficiency in using information in their work is hampered by the amount of relevant, and potentially useful, information available to them.” (pp. 182-183) We concentrate on the subjective dimension of information overload, defining it as: distress associated with the perception that there is too much information. We utilize psychometric scale development procedures to measure information overload and correlate it with demographic and psychological variables. Our poster reports preliminary findings that information overload is correlated significantly with gender (being female); age and year in college (positively); and measures of life satisfaction (negatively).

Keywords
Information overload, information anxiety, psychometrics, life satisfaction

INTRODUCTION
The evidence on the relationship between information overload and gender has been mixed. (Chowdhury and Gibb; Allen, 1997; Walsh and Mitchell, 2004; Kim et al., 2007) Likewise, some studies have found a positive relationship between information overload and age, whereas others have found none. (Chowdhury and Gibb; Jansen et al, 2008; Kim et al., 2007) We studied the relationship between information overload defined as an affective construct and gender, age, and demographic roles played by subjects. We also investigated the relationship between Information Overload and life satisfaction. The affective dimension of IO has been investigated in the form of information anxiety (Wurman, 1989) and library anxiety (Mellon, 1986; Kwon, 2007). Our definition is distinct from these concepts in that it does not depend on context, and it deals just with distress associated with the perception that there is too much information. Similarly to Blom (2011), we believe that information overload is associated with feelings such as “exhaustion, anxiety, or disinterest.” (p. 27) We developed a fifteen-item scale to measure the construct of IO using standard psychometric scale-construction techniques (Kline, 2000), and we investigated the following relationships:

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
• What is the relationship between Information Overload and age?
• What is the relationship between Information Overload and gender?
• What is the relationship between Information Overload and demographic roles played by participants?
• What is the relationship between Information Overload and Life Satisfaction?

METHODS
Our survey sample of 193 subjects included information sciences students, library staff, and introductory psychology students. Human subjects consent was obtained. Our instrument was the Information Overload Scale, with a reliability of .90. The Information Overload Scale is provided below.

Information Overload Scale
• I have to manage so much information in my daily life that it takes me a long time to complete even simple tasks.
• I regularly feel overwhelmed by too much information these days.
• It is sometimes hard for me to concentrate because of all the information I have to assimilate.
• There is so much information available on topics of interest to me that I have trouble choosing what is important and what’s not.
• I have to process so much information that it frequently takes me too long to get things done in a timely manner.
• I feel overwhelmed learning a new subject or topic because there is so much information.
• I am confronted by an avalanche of Email, phone and text messages each day.
• When I search for information on a topic of interest to me, I usually get too much rather than too little information.
• I have so much information to manage on a daily basis that it is hard for me to prioritize tasks.
• I am stressed out by the sheer volume of information I have to manage on a daily basis.
• It seems like the volume of information available is increasing exponentially in a relatively short period of time.
• I feel like I can’t keep up with all the new developments in my area of expertise.
• I sometimes feel numb and incapable of action because of all the information I have to process on a daily basis.
• I feel like my attention span is becoming shorter and shorter because of information overload.
• I regularly feel pressed for time because of all the information I have to deal with.

RESULTS
As can be seen in Table 1, Information Overload was significantly positively correlated with being female (gender), age, and year in college. It was negatively correlated with all measures of life satisfaction. Information Overload was unrelated to any other demographic study variables.

DISCUSSION
The positive correlations between IO and the demographic variables, age and year in college, are understandable from a lifespan developmental perspective: Individuals have greater demands as they progress in academic settings and have greater work/life demands as they age. Many of these demands are information-related, as students must undertake increasingly complex assignments or workers must deal with increasingly information-rich job environments, thus experiencing higher levels of information overload.

Information Overload was not significantly correlated with marital status, number of children, number of hours worked, and other factors contributing to role overload, thus role overload does not appear to be a contributive factor in IO.

Information Overload was negatively correlated with all measures of life satisfaction, which is consistent with the proposition that IO is detrimental to life satisfaction. However, we do not know if IO has a causal relationship with life satisfaction, or if there are other underlying factors.

The present finding that females reported higher levels of information overload than males is at variance with other studies (e.g., Allen 1997) which have found males to have higher levels of information overload. Further research is needed to shed further light on this discrepancy.

FUTURE RESEARCH
We plan to reduce the number of items in our scale while preserving reliability. To do this, we will examine item-total correlations and delete less promising items. We also plan to factor analyze the data to determine whether there are different dimensions within the construct. In addition, we plan to administer the scale to a wider range of personality traits to extend the construct validity of information overload.

REFERENCES


**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender</td>
<td>0.216</td>
<td>.004 **</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Age</td>
<td>0.183</td>
<td>.014 *</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Marital status</td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
<td>.800</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Have children</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>.350</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Number of children</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>.475</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Highest level of education</td>
<td>0.125</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Year in college</td>
<td>0.213</td>
<td>.008 **</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Overall GPA</td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
<td>.817</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Likelihood of withdrawing from school in next 12 months</td>
<td>0.128</td>
<td>.125</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Work status</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>.236</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Participation in other activities outside of school</td>
<td>0.110</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Number of activities outside of school</td>
<td>0.127</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Number of Facebook friends</td>
<td>(0.037)</td>
<td>.634</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. How much fun you are having</td>
<td>(0.308)</td>
<td>.000 **</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. What you are accomplishing in your life</td>
<td>(0.191)</td>
<td>.010 *</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. The things you do in your free time</td>
<td>(0.172)</td>
<td>.021 *</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Your social life</td>
<td>(0.204)</td>
<td>.006 **</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Your life as a whole</td>
<td>(0.349)</td>
<td>.000 **</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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