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**Patron Profiles**

**ACADEMIC LIBRARY EDITION**

**2012**  
**Report**

Understanding the behavior and  
preferences of U.S. academic library users

Data provided by [Bowker Market Research](#)



# Patron Profiles: Academic Library Edition

October 2012

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# PREFACE

*Library Journal Patron Profiles: Academic Library Edition* is the first *Patron Profiles* report exclusively designed for academic libraries. Building upon the model of the multipart *Patron Profiles* for public libraries, this stand-alone report delivers an inside look at the shifting needs and preferences of academic library users in the context of changing times and new technologies.

*Patron Profiles* focuses on who uses libraries, why they use libraries, and how that use may change. Knowing library patrons' preferences and use of content—including discrete products and services—are critical to libraries as they plan for the long term. The *Library Journal Patron Profiles* reports place library patrons within their larger ecosystem as researchers and consumers of content. Through this lens, we can explore the relationship among the library, the academic institution, and the researchers they support.

## RELATED RESEARCH

### LIBRARY JOURNAL PATRON PROFILES: PUBLIC LIBRARY EDITION

October 2011

*Usage Patterns of Library Patrons and the Ebook Reader*

January 2012

*Mobile Devices, Mobile Content, and Library Apps*

April 2012

*Library Websites and Virtual Services*

July 2012

*Media Consumption and Library Use*

Working together with Design Think Do consulting, Beacon Hill Strategic Solutions, Bowker, and a best-in-class advisory board, the academic library survey instrument used to form *The Patron Profiles: Academic Edition* was developed and deployed during August–September 2012. Respondents include 2,516 undergraduate and graduate students and 751 faculty members from community colleges, colleges, and research universities. Respondents, all from U.S. academic institutions, complet-



ed an online questionnaire that included branching questions for additional inquiry. Open-ended questions allowed respondents to share comments. The survey asked actual usage and perceived value of their academic libraries, with an emphasis on products and services both available now and ideally in the future, in the context of digital and emerging technology trends.

Each sample demonstrates normal variances in specific categories. It should not be assumed to be representative of the market of all U.S. students or all U.S. faculty in higher education. Rather, the focus in this report is how segments within each space compare with one another. Please note that percentages have been rounded to the nearest integer.

*Patron Profiles: Academic Library Edition* provides a snapshot of academic libraries and their patrons. Each survey fielding and report will yield data and observations that answer many questions while generating new questions to be explored in future surveys. We aspire to present the data and analyses clearly and transparently and welcome your feedback. Please direct all suggestions and sponsorship inquiries to Ian Singer, VP, Group Publisher, Library Journal ([isinger@mediasourceinc.com](mailto:isinger@mediasourceinc.com)).

While this report attempts to capture the most important findings of the academic *Patron Profiles* survey, it is not possible to represent everything in detail in one report. For those seeking greater depth of results, access to specific responses to each individual question presented in the survey instrument are available. For more information, please contact Ian Singer ([isinger@mediasourceinc.com](mailto:isinger@mediasourceinc.com)).

# INTRODUCTION

Libraries today have an increasingly important role in understanding academic patrons' (students, researchers, and faculty) emerging expectations regarding how to access and interact with research content, as well as the factors influencing their decisions. Such information is essential for determining a long-range strategy for collections and resources, for developing and maintaining viable service models for the academic library of the future, and for demonstrating the value and role of academic libraries today.

*Library Journal Patron Profiles: Academic Library Edition* provides a wealth of fresh data to inform planning, implementation, and experimentation when it comes to defining and refining services for returning users and taking a leap forward in attracting new users to the academic library.

- What draws patrons to the library?
- What prompts them to visit the building or the website?
- What resources do they seek?
- How likely are they to return or to seek resources elsewhere?

Answers to these questions and more are explored in this report, which is designed to help academic librarians determine strategic priorities, understand the relationship between patron perceptions vs. library objectives, and discover how academic libraries presently meet patron preferences, with an aim toward identifying opportunities and establishing new markers of success. This report covers the following topics in the context of academic libraries, resources, and operations:

**Experience**—When participants last used the academic library, on-site or online, and what were the activities and outcomes?

**Perceptions**—What expectations shape student and faculty awareness of the library's services, effectiveness, and role?

**Preferences**—How can the library expand or modify what's offered to be more relevant and useful to academic library patrons?

**Value**—When it comes to demonstrating and delivering value, what do students and faculty want most?

# SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

## With Google available 24-7, who's using the academic library?

The library may well be considered the heart of the university, but, in 2012, it is no longer the center of the research community. Increasing pressure from online sources, particularly Google, Wikipedia, and social media platforms, present academic libraries with a formidable dilemma—how, when, and where to invest resources to keep users interested and engaged, while still delivering the best available scholarly resources, collections, and services essential to support academic success.

Google and other free platforms offer convenience and immediacy—

and that's just the right combination of price and value to make them an alluring first choice for beginning researchers. For experienced academics, there's a deeper awareness of the unique value of the academic library, yet convenience and efficiency are equally important for those juggling the demands of academic life.

We begin with descriptions and comparisons of the two survey groups: students and faculty. The institutional affiliation charts (Figure 1 and Figure 2) show the distribution of the 2,516 students and 751 faculty members among the full range of higher education institutions. As we progress through this report, we will see differences in the ways that students and faculty members characterize their institutions and activities, structure their research activity, and value the outcomes. Many differences can be attributed to the perspectives from which students and faculty view the library. Students look through the lens of research, coursework, and assignments, while faculty may be more inclined to categorize their institutions by teaching and professional research. Because of its size and institutional breadth, the student group is overall more representative of the U.S. higher education market.

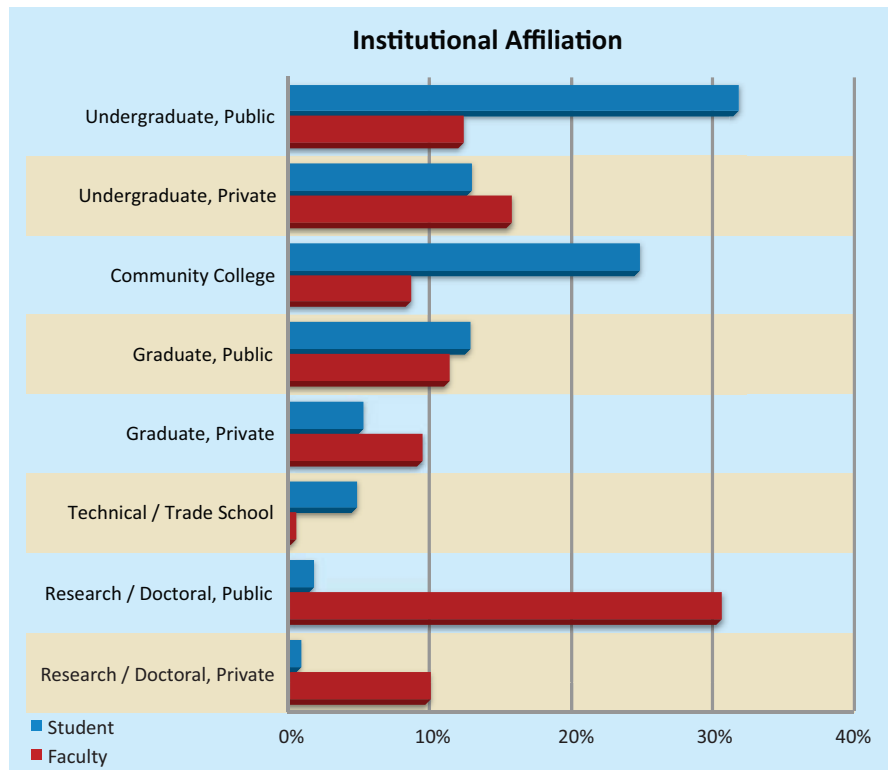


Figure 1

The student respondent group has a good distribution of students from first-year freshman to graduate students. The college-student group (public and private) represented nearly half of student respondents, closely followed by community college students and graduate students, respectively. This data enables us to compare student perspectives about their academic libraries and capture differences in attitudes and expectations over time.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, the national percentage of full-time students is 61% in 2012. Therefore, our student response group had somewhat more full-time students than the national average (Figure 3). However, only 30% reside on campus—the group for which the on-site library is of greatest proximity—whereas 70% of students reside off-campus, commute, or take classes exclusively online (Figure 4).

Because proximity to campus impacts on-site library usage, it is important to represent appropriate participation in all four categories. Overall, the majority of students reported that most of their learning and studying is done on campus, regardless of their residence (Figure 5).

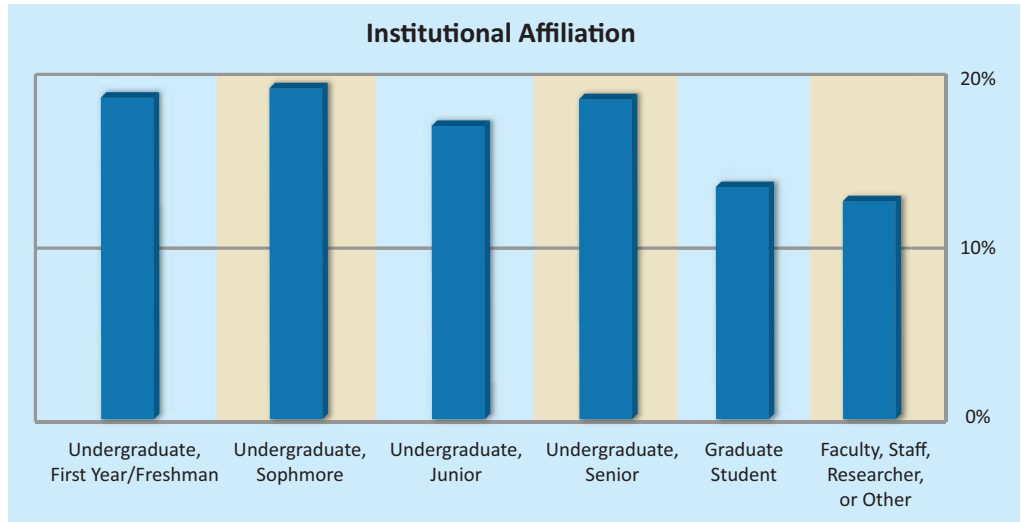


Figure 2

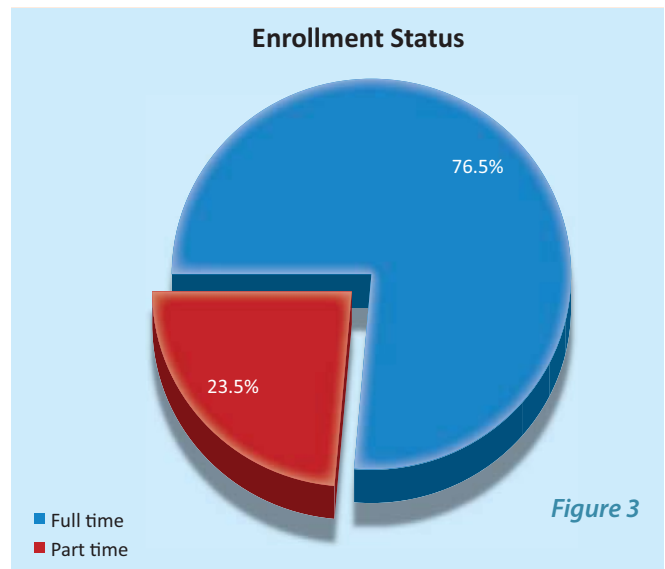


Figure 3

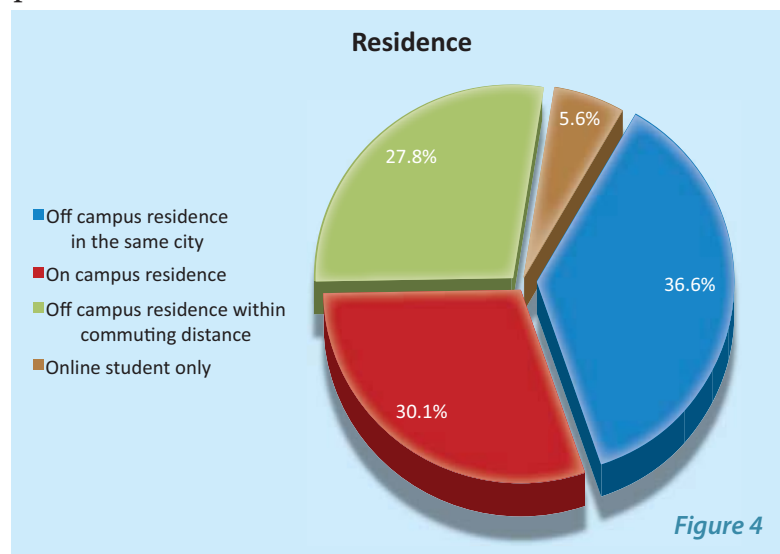


Figure 4

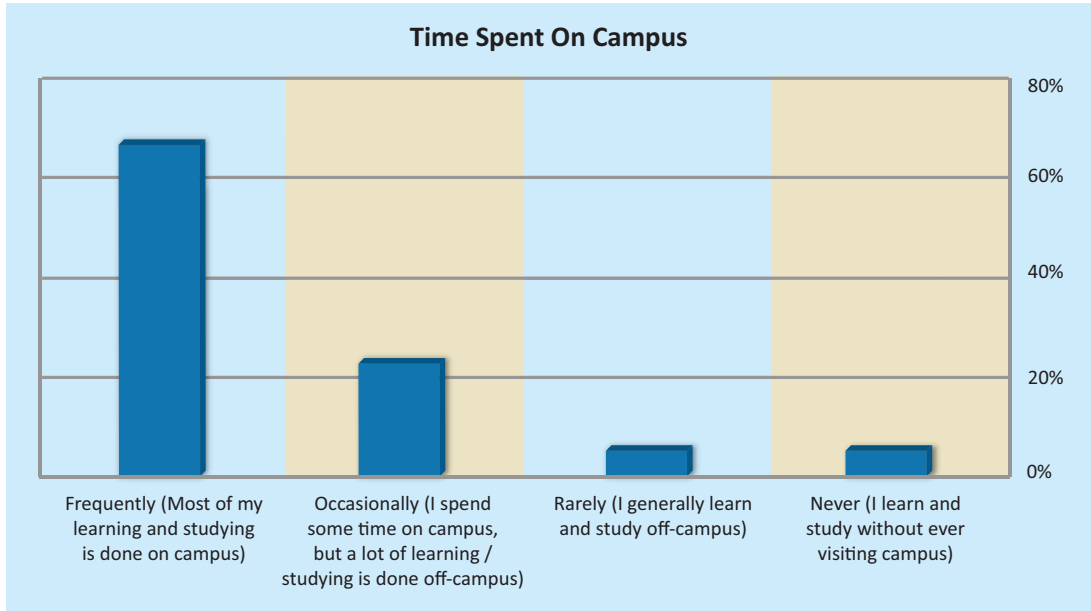


Figure 5

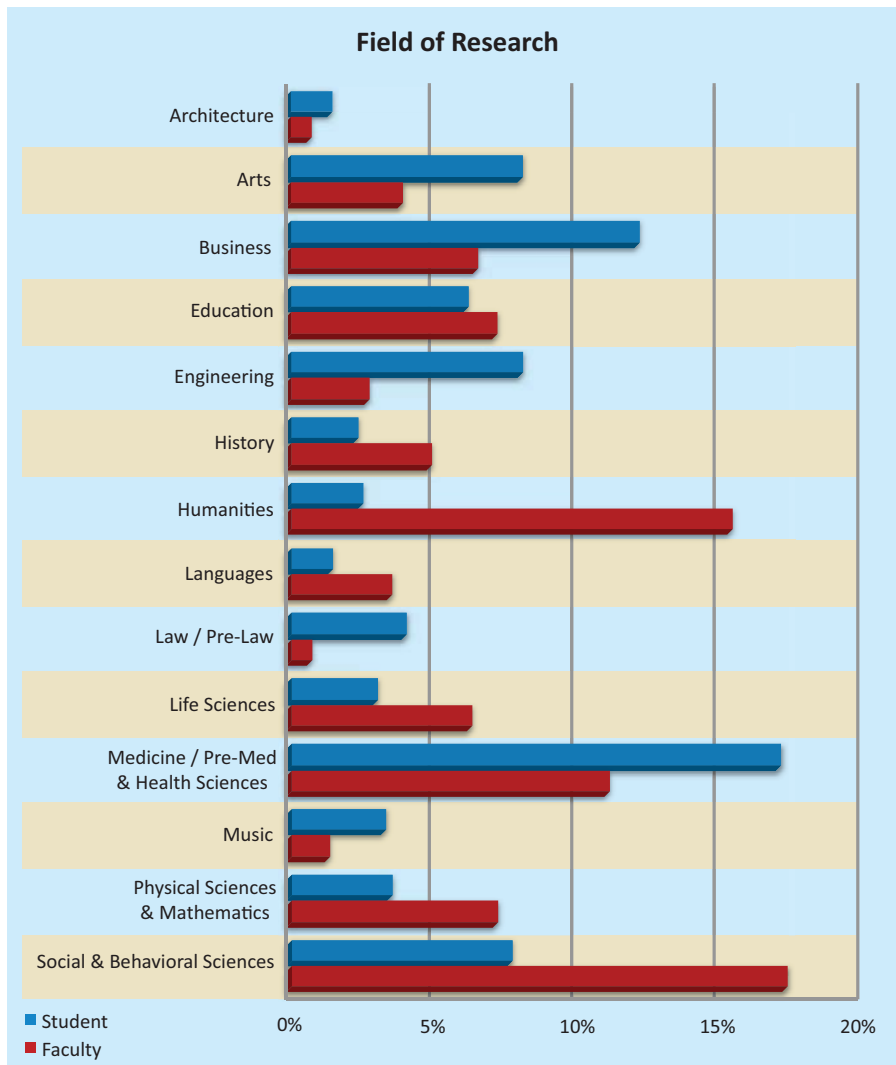


Figure 6

Regarding field of interest, both the student and faculty groups display solid diversity. The student respondents have the strongest participation in the career disciplines such as business, education, engineering, and medicine and health sciences, while the faculty respondents more strongly represent the humanities and social and behavioral sciences (Figure 6).

## ACTIVITIES & OUTCOMES

### “Welcome to the library! What are you doing here?” (And how can we help you?)

Understanding what students are trying to achieve is a priority of academic librarians. When asked, “Which of these activities did you do for the first time over the last 12 months”—survey results indicated that approximately one-fifth of the students had made their first visit to the library in person, and slightly fewer were new to using online journals and the library website (Figure 7). While some students reported using ebooks at the library, or accessing textbooks on course reserve, only one out of ten reported accessing ebooks on their own laptop, or seeking course reserve material other than textbooks from the library.

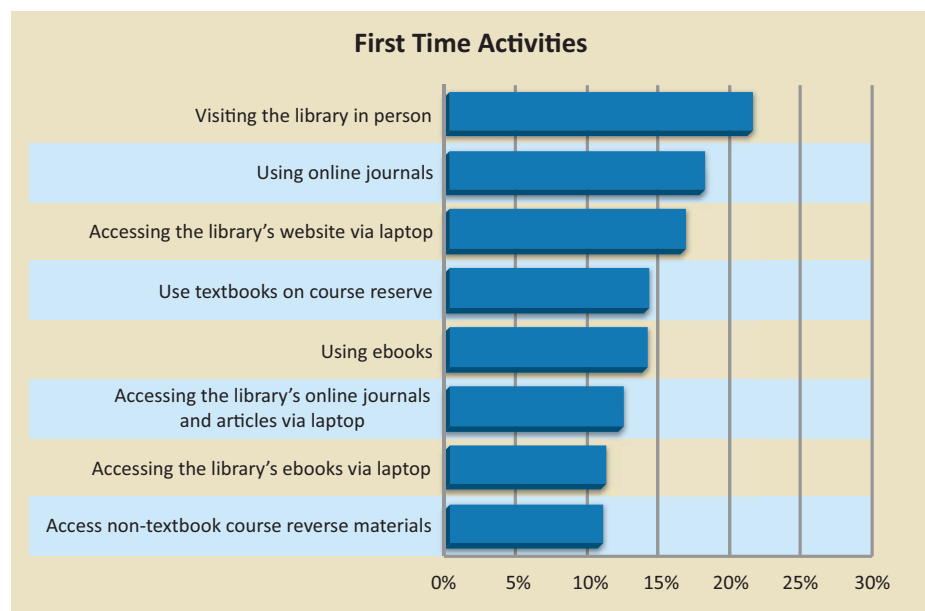


Figure 7

Students often struggle to access library ebook collections because licensing and platforms present obstacles to seamless search, discovery, and use.

How do students find out about the collections, resources, and services offered at the academic library? Visiting in person is the leading method, followed by remote access of platforms and course assignments. In the 2012 ACRL report “Connect, Collaborate, and Communicate,” Charles Blach, director of the Center of Inquiry at Wabash College and the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium, “emphasized that good teaching and learning practices are essentially about relationships, not data.” While relationships may be in-person experiences and transactions at the academic

library, or in the form of digital communications, such as with email, virtual reference, and social media, the consistency and effectiveness of student and faculty relationships with the academic library bear significant results. This concept is explored in subsequent sections of this report.

While many students find the information they need via social media, of particular note here is that Twitter leads course assignments and teacher requirements, email, the library’s website, and even Facebook as the second leading form of academic library information for students (Figure 8).

Students and faculty alike are receptive to academic libraries’ increasing use of Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ for information sharing, along with newly popular forms of social media, such as Pinterest and Tumblr (Figure 9). Students reported an outstanding level of interest in connecting with the academic library on Facebook. Note that this varies from the last point in that slightly more students reported receiving information about the library from Twitter than from Facebook. Here, students identified Facebook as the primary social media channel from which they would be interested in receiving academic library updates, if available.

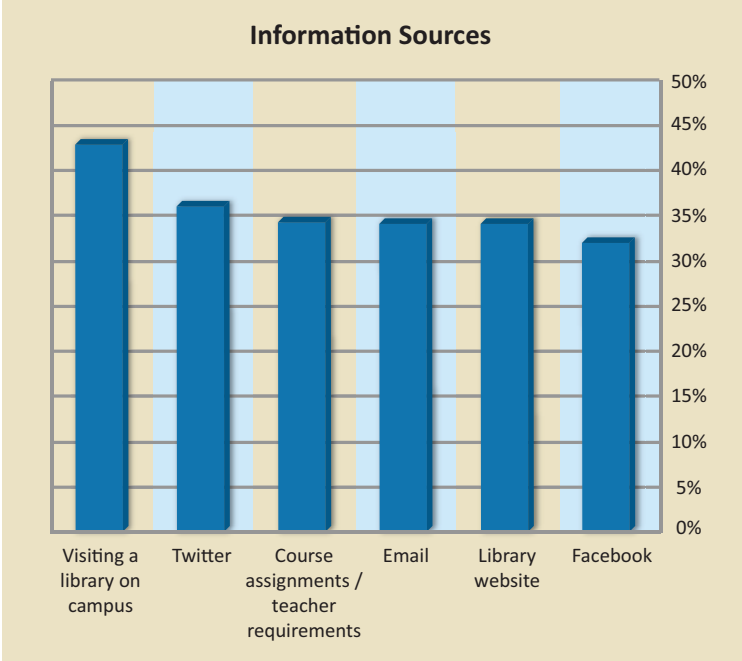


Figure 8

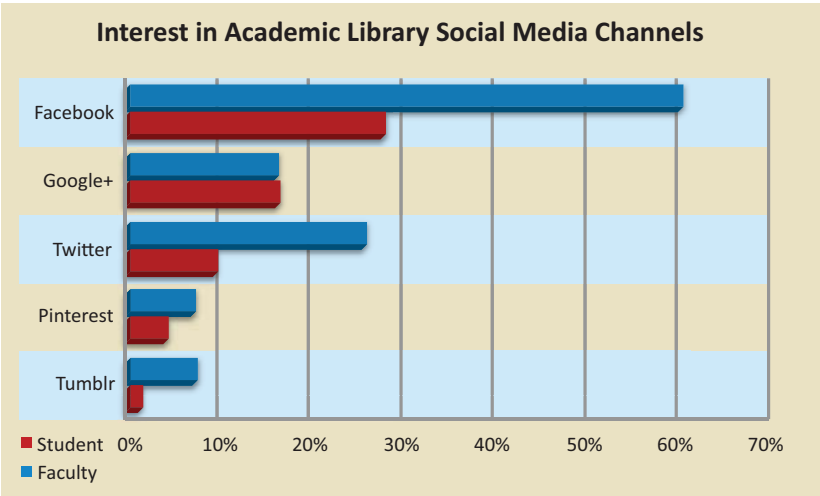


Figure 9

The latest Pew data (<http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Online-Pictures/Main-Findings.aspx>) on adult use of social media platforms, concurrent with the fielding of this study, reports that 66% of online adults use Facebook, compared to:

- 16% who use Twitter
- 12% who use Pinterest
- 5% who use Tumblr

The survey responses indicate Facebook to be a leading platform of interest to students which libraries should employ when establishing social media priorities, but the media platforms should not be overlooked, as each one provides unique opportunities and value and attracts a distinct community. Tumblr and Pinterest are gaining ground in academic communities for just these reasons.

The 2012 NMC Horizon Report which focuses annually on technology trends and challenges in the context of higher education notes “institutional barriers” obstruct the exploration and implementation of emerging technologies. “Much resistance to change is simply comfort with the status quo,” it states, “but in other cases...experimentation with or adoptions of clearly innovative applications of technologies is often seen as outside the role.” Academic libraries have an opportunity to lead the change toward redefining the role by using innovative applications in support of teaching and learning on campus and demonstrating the value of connecting with students and faculty via social media, beyond simply marketing.

## RELATED RESEARCH

### WHAT ARE WE DOING WITH SOCIAL MEDIA? | FROM THE BELL TOWER

“For those of us not already doing so, it’s time to start approaching social networking and the use of social media more strategically to connect its use to specific outcomes. The days of dabbling and experimenting should lead us to a new phase, one in which social media is used with intentional design to improve our libraries.”—Steven Bell



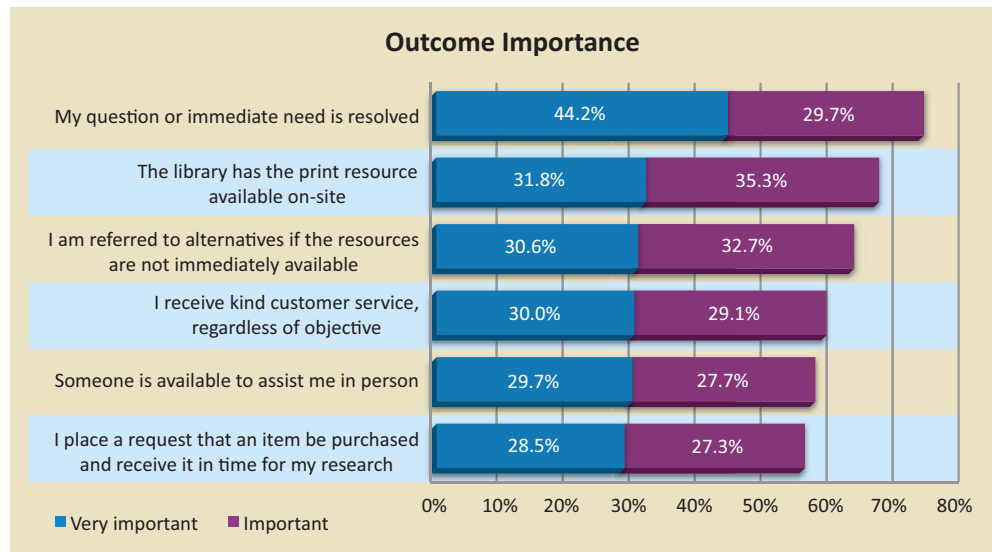


Figure 10

What do students perceive to be the most important outcomes when using the academic library? A clear majority of students indicated that it's "very important" or "important" that their question or immediate need is resolved (Figure 10). Beyond that, approximately 67% of students stated that the library having a particular print book or referring them to alternatives if needed (63%) and having someone available to assist in person and provide kind service (59%) were very important outcomes. Not surprisingly, quick fulfillment of a request is the leading important outcome. However, two-thirds of students still visit libraries seeking print books, and nearly the same number seek assistance in the form of interpersonal support.

Students at research universities were most concerned with having the immediate need resolved, followed by community college students and undergraduates. Having the print resources available at the library on-site was a top concern of community college students (37%), although just over one-third of graduate students and undergraduate students concurred. Those in graduate programs at research institutions ranked successfully obtaining what they needed via online resources as a very important outcome (34%), compared to one-quarter of undergraduates (27%) and community college students (26%).

When it came to having someone available in person to assist with inquiries and the role of kindness as an outcome, 38% and 35% of community college students felt these were very important, respectively, and about one-third of graduate students agreed. Just over one-fourth of undergraduates also ranked these as a top priority.

Dr. Blauch’s observations, as reported in the 2012 ACRL report, underscore the value of these findings, especially related to consistent and positive interactions with students: it’s “important for traditional-age students to develop relationships with caring adults—whether faculty or otherwise—and to develop ‘academic intimacy.’” According to the survey, students anticipate considerate, supportive interactions from the academic library, and these relationships directly influence student learning and success (ACRL 2012).

A closer look at student reasons for consulting library staff (Figure 11) mirrors the students’ priority of having an immediate need resolved; in this case, finding a specific item needed for research or finding any suitable item available. Between 10%–20% of students report seeking library-staff assistance for an assignment; for guidance and resources toward achieving a good grade; for instructions for using the library’s online resources, print collections, or technology; or for other support increasing students’ confidence and self-sufficiency as researchers. This is an area worthy of increased attention and improvement.

Blauch provides examples of “Good Practices and Conditions from the Wabash National Study” that are relevant to academic library planning, strategy, and instruction. Academic librarians can use these examples as a checklist for evaluating practices, in library instruction classes, information services, and in other service areas.

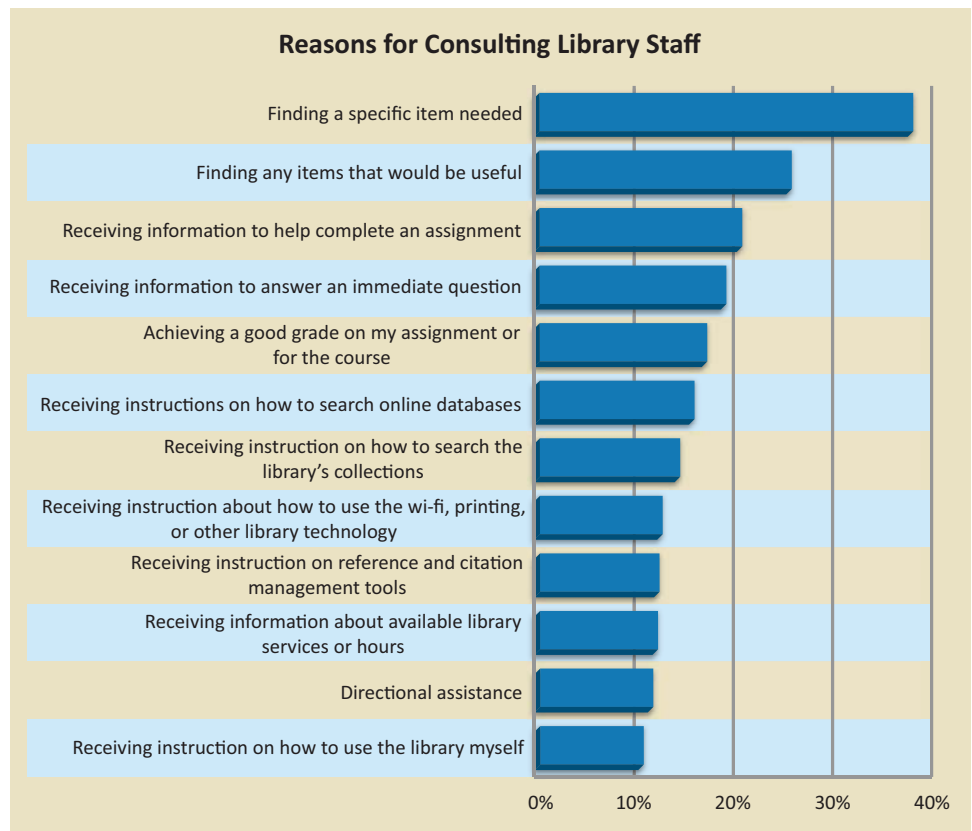


Figure 11

## FROM GATHERING TO USING ASSESSMENT RESULTS: LESSONS FROM THE WABASH NATIONAL STUDY

### Having faculty and staff who:

- Have a genuine interest in teaching and are interested in helping students grow in more than just academic areas
- Provide timely feedback
- Check to see if students learned the material before moving on to new material
- Design clear explanations of their course or program goals and requirements
- Develop organized classes and presentations
- Provide clear explanations of course goals and requirements
- Engage in high-quality nonclassroom interactions that influence students' growth, values, career aspirations, and interest in ideas
- Ensure that students work hard to prepare for their classes and are required to read and write a substantial amount of material
- Challenge students to analyze and synthesize information and make judgments about ideas, experiences, and theories
- Ask students to integrate ideas and information from different sources and to include diverse perspectives in their work
- Ask students to examine the strengths and weaknesses of their ideas and to understand someone else's view by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective

Students have access to a variety of resources for finding the information needed to complete their assignments, in addition to those directly provided by the library. Students report that Google plays a prominent role in providing information and/or serving as a starting point for research. Other selections reported are divided among alternate resources provided by the academic community—academic bookstores, faculty recommendations, and course management systems—and independently sought resources at online and local bookstores (Figure 12).

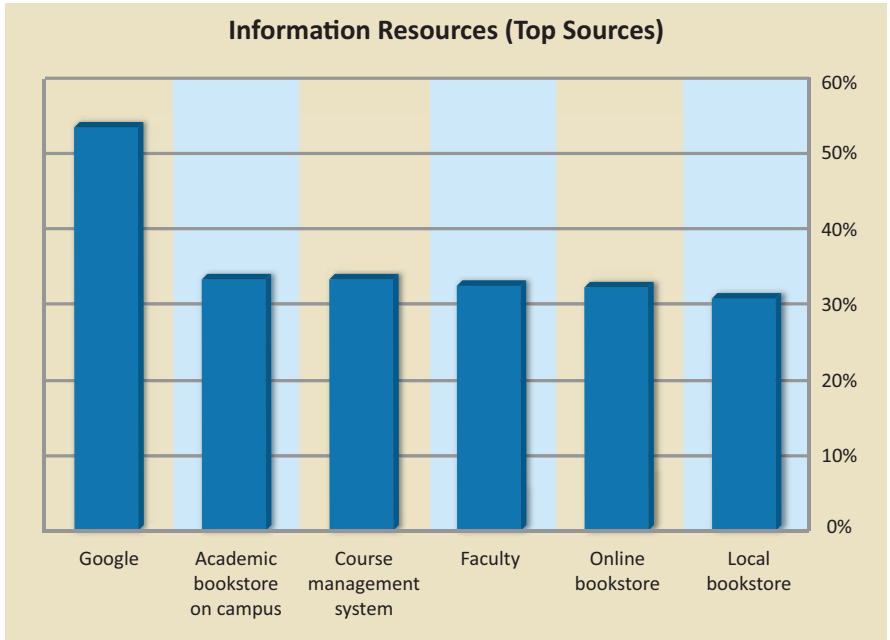


Figure 12

Google provides a quick information scoop, but used alone it's an insufficient substitute for academic research: more than half of students who reported using Google as one of their top three information sources beyond the academic library also selected these information sources among their responses, suggesting a hybrid, bolstered approach to research.

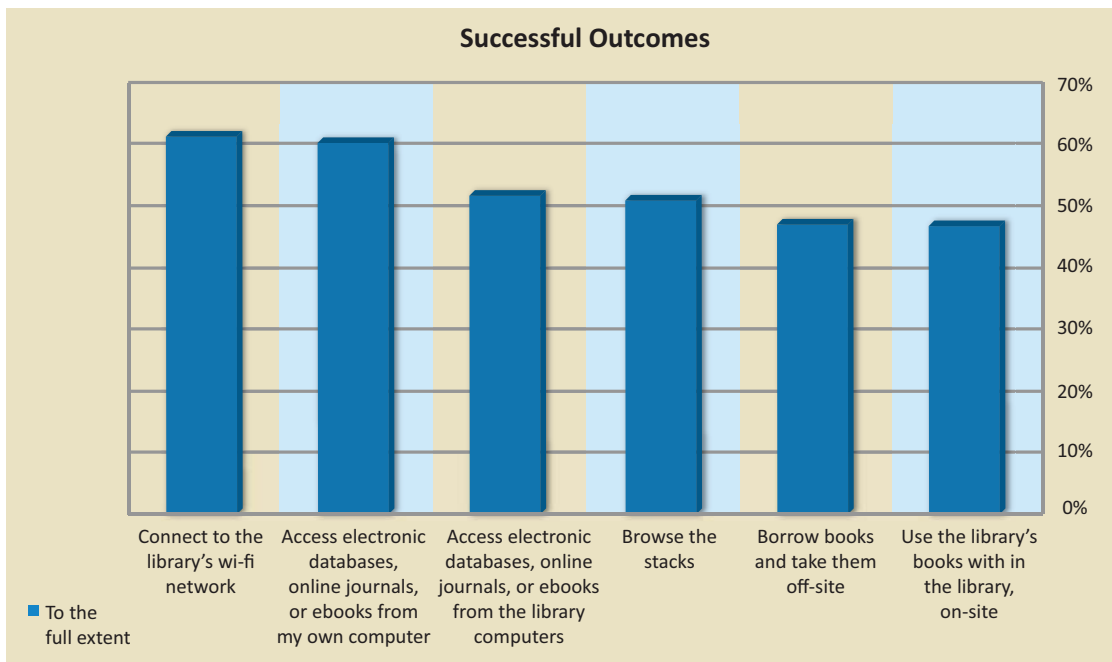


Figure 13

When asked about a specific incident, 60% of students were able to connect successfully to the library’s Wi-Fi network and access online resources using their own computer, “to the full extent.” Approximately half were able to access online resources from the

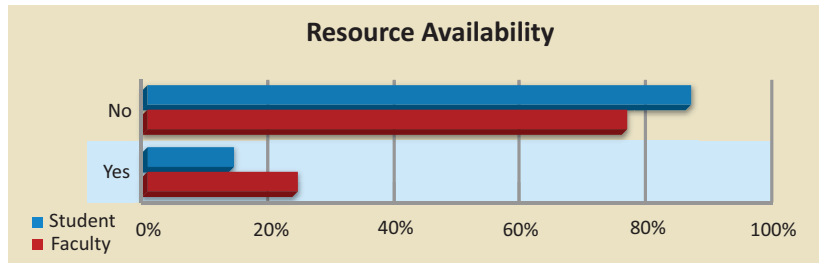


Figure 14

library’s computers, and slightly less than half reported successfully browsing the stacks and using print collections (Figure 13). It seems 35% of students consulted a subject librarian, 33% used AV

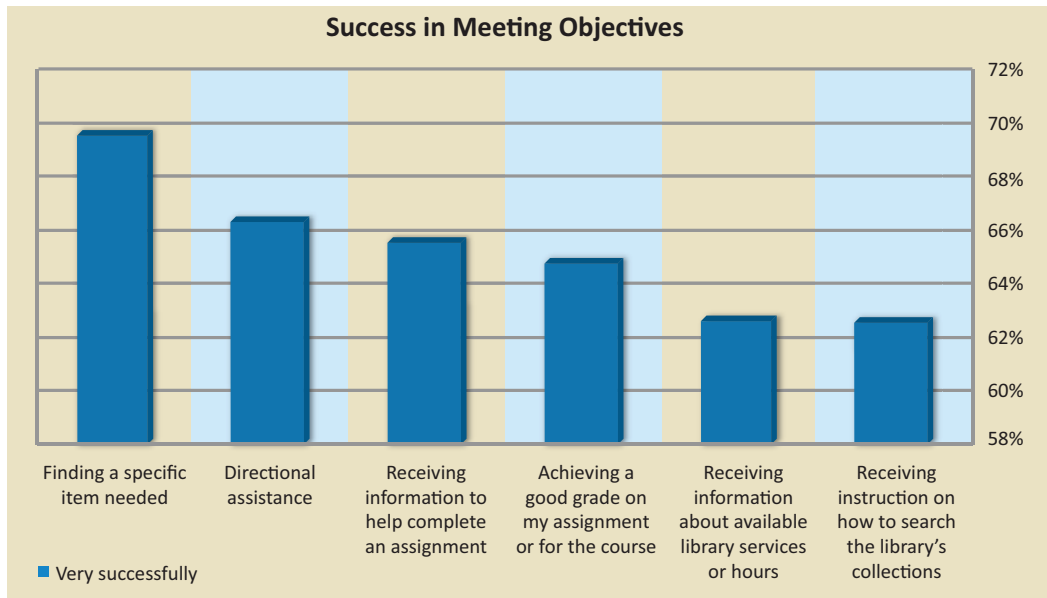


Figure 15

equipment offered by the library, 32% performed research in special collections, and 29% reported successful outcomes obtaining and using materials that were shelved at an off-site location.

In fact, when asked, “The last time you used the academic library, were there resources or services that you were seeking that were not available?” 86% of students and 76% of faculty said NO—an indicator that academic libraries are favorably meeting immediate objectives (Figure 14).

Nearly 70% of students reported their immediate objective was finding a specific item, followed by 66% seeking directional assistance, and 65% seeking information to help complete an assignment or achieve a good grade. Responses were strong in all categories, with over 55% of students reporting success in meeting objectives when they last used the academic library, on-site or online (Figure 15).

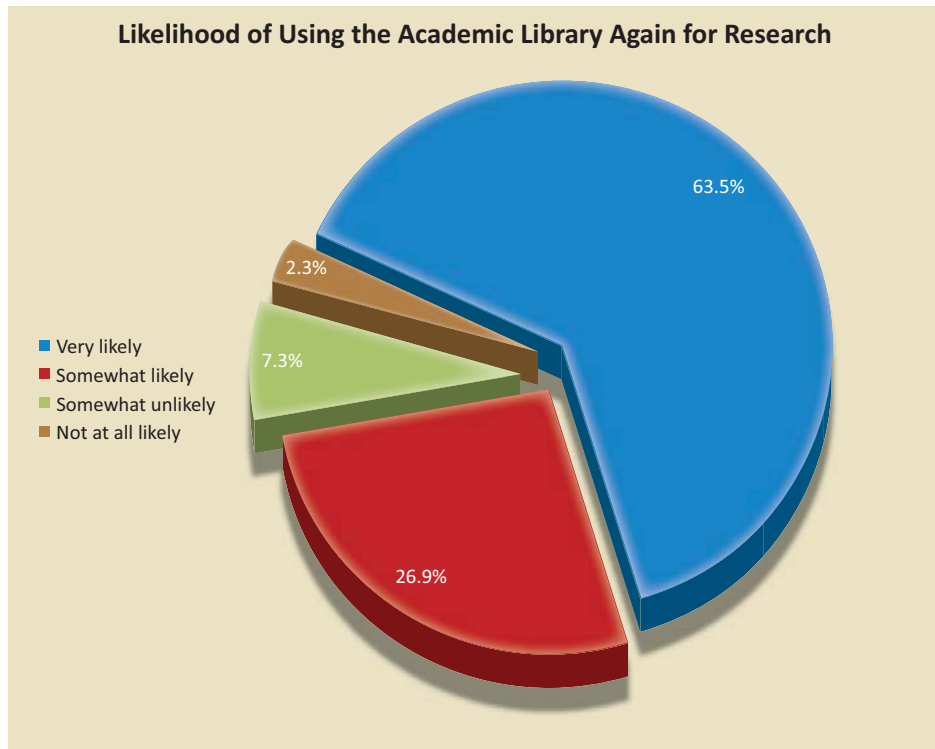


Figure 16

Students reported a high likelihood (63%) of returning to the library again for research after the last use. Yet almost 30% indicated that they would be “only somewhat likely” to use the library again. One out of ten students indicated that they were less than eager to return after their last interaction (Figure 16). How can academic libraries more effectively reach out to this group?

Trends covered in the 2012 Horizon Report offer insight into potential differences and considerations to meet evolving expectations:

- People expect to be able to work, learn, and study whenever and wherever they want to.
- The world of work is increasingly collaborative, driving changes in the way student projects are structured.
- The abundance of resources and relationships made easily accessible via the Internet is increasingly challenging us to revisit our roles.
- There is a new emphasis in the classroom on more challenge-based and active learning.

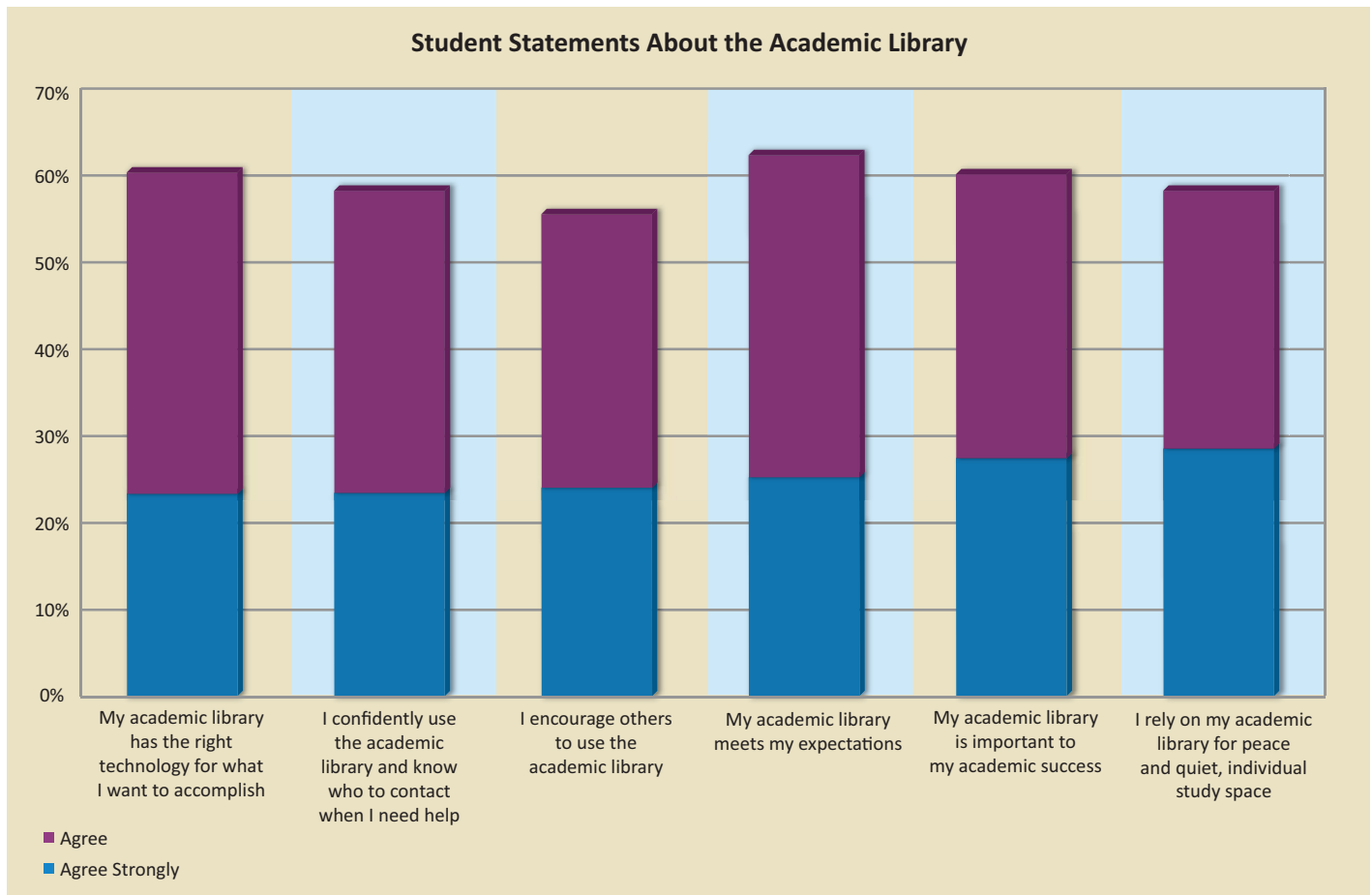


Figure 17

Students were further asked to rate their level of agreement with various statements about their academic library, by selecting one: agree strongly, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree. Strong agreement with these statements is the equivalent to the excellent service ratings that tend to drive repeat visits, led by a desire for peaceful study space. One in four students reported strong confidence that the academic library is important to their academic success, meets expectations, and is worthy of personal endorsement to peers. Likewise, 25% felt strongly that they were able to use the library and knew whom to contact, as well as that their library offered sufficient access to technology (Figure 17).

While academic libraries may well provide immediate research objectives, student responses about the library's role in their creative development and inquiry indicate a decrease over the undergraduate years, a critical finding of the study. Statements with diminishing agreement:

- My academic library is an innovative and creative place to learn and study
- I actively seek opportunities to use the academic library

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your academic library:							
(Percentage of respondents who replied "Agree Strongly")							
	Total	Undergraduate, First Year / Freshman	Undergraduate, Sophomore	Undergraduate, Junior	Undergraduate, Senior	Graduate Student - Masters program	Graduate Student - Doctoral program
My academic library is important to my academic success	27.4%	29.0%	28.2%	25.8%	26.2%	33.1%	38.8%
I confidently use the academic library and know who to contact when I need help	23.4%	24.3%	23.0%	24.0%	19.8%	28.0%	27.2%
My academic library has the right technology for what I want to accomplish	23.3%	22.6%	26.1%	25.1%	22.1%	23.7%	30.1%
My academic library is an innovative and creative place to learn and study	20.7%	25.2%	23.7%	20.2%	17.2%	20.8%	19.4%
I encourage others to use the academic library	24.0%	25.8%	25.5%	26.3%	22.6%	22.9%	29.1%
I actively seek opportunities to use the academic library	18.4%	21.6%	18.9%	18.8%	14.5%	18.2%	26.2%
I use the academic library for leisure reading, in addition to my research	18.7%	22.4%	19.8%	20.0%	13.8%	19.9%	21.4%
I rely on my academic for collaborative, active, interaction with my peers	18.0%	19.2%	18.9%	18.6%	16.0%	19.9%	28.2%
I rely on my academic library for peace and quiet, individual study space	28.5%	28.3%	28.6%	29.3%	30.9%	27.5%	32.0%
My academic library inspires me with new tools, technologies, resources, and collections	19.0%	22.4%	20.8%	16.3%	14.9%	21.6%	24.3%
My academic library meets my expectations	25.2%	27.5%	26.5%	27.2%	22.6%	26.7%	32.0%
My academic library exceeds my expectations	18.7%	20.9%	22.0%	20.0%	14.9%	20.3%	18.4%
The academic library services and collections help me understand what I learn in class	19.6%	23.9%	22.0%	17.2%	16.8%	21.6%	21.4%
The academic library provides support that I can't get anywhere else on campus	20.9%	22.8%	22.4%	20.0%	18.1%	22.9%	30.1%

Figure 18

- My academic library inspires me with new tools, technologies, resources, and collections
- The academic library services and collections help me understand what I learn in class
- The academic library provides support that I can't get anywhere else on campus

Despite the big push toward first-year library instruction classes to prepare students for research fluency, academic libraries are losing ground as undergraduate students advance in study. Of notable concern is the decrease in assurance that the academic library helps students understand what is being learned in class and offers unique support (Figure 18).

Graduate and doctoral students' replies do not demonstrate a continuation of this trend.



## INNOVATION IN PRACTICE

Academic libraries that cultivate creativity chart a new course for retaining student interest and boosting engagement. The DeLaMare Science & Engineering Library at the University of Nevada, Reno, has been reenergized as a center for creative endeavor, introducing 3-D printing and Maker workshops, prompting a surge of demand for new services, programs, and workshops.

## INNOVATION IN PRACTICE

At the University of Delaware, the Student Multimedia Design Center supports students' development of digital stories and partners with faculty incorporating multimedia literacy concepts into coursework. Visit the UD SMDC with the Great Library Roadshow.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lexOgWqQHZI&feature=plcp>

## TAKEAWAYS: ACTIVITIES & OUTCOMES

- Only 10% of students reported accessing ebooks on their own device. Why? Ebook collections present obstacles to seamless search, discovery, and use of collections owing to licensing and platform restrictions. If your library is heavily investing in ebooks, be sure to invest equally in ebook instruction or consider circulating devices.
- When it comes to social media, Facebook and Twitter win out as the leading platforms to reach students. Slightly more students report receiving information about the library from Twitter than from Facebook; however, more identified Facebook as the primary social media channel from which they would be interested in receiving academic library updates, if available. Be sure to prioritize social media efforts to reach different audiences, and don't forget to explore new platforms, such as Tumblr and Pinterest, as they emerge.
- Building relationships bears results. It's important for students to develop relationships with caring members of the academic community as a contributing factor to their academic success. Students indicate that receiving kind, in-person support at the library is a very important outcome, regardless of whether they achieved any other objective. Track or measure librarian customer-satisfaction relative to direct human interaction to ensure your library is establishing this key linkage with students. Bear in mind, 10% of students said they were less than eager to return to the library after their last interactions and nearly 30% were only somewhat likely to return. Could positive interactions help reach out to this group? Also bear in mind that while about 60% agree or strongly agree that the library is important to their academic success, that leaves a significant percentage of respondents who apparently do not see their success having a strong correlation with library use. Finding successful ways, such as kind service, to reach this group and increase their allegiance to the library could represent a significant opportunity to more securely anchor the library in the academic community.
- More than half of students who reported using Google as one of their top three information sources beyond the academic library also selected academic information sources among their responses, suggesting that Google is used for initial exploration. Make this distinction clear and develop means to further research instruction, i.e., what comes next in the research method, so students will understand where to go and how to evaluate information once they have completed the preresearch with Google.
- Academic libraries are favorably meeting immediate objectives but losing ground as undergrads advance in study. Students require richer engagement with librarians beyond the first year, to be developed through increased collaboration, outreach and social media interactivity, as well as quality service at the library.

# ON-SITE VS. ONLINE

## Library Services & Collections: Here, There, & Everywhere

Students' usage patterns for online and on-site library resources are remarkably similar. This reflects the expanding scope of online resources and greater student sophistication in working online both with library resources and general research tools.

While the time spent on-site and online is quite similar (Figure 19, Figure 20), there are major differences between on-site and online activities. Note that on-site usage is centered on the infrastructure for learning while online usage is all about content resources necessary for learning and research (Figure 21, Figure 22). Students self-select whether it's time to make a visit to the library or do their research online, based on a specific type of activity planned.

Therefore, academic libraries must develop, prioritize, and assess the services and collections being used both on-site and online, make a comparative analysis to identify local trends, and determine effective ways to add value to each approach. It's less about how better to reach students who prefer using

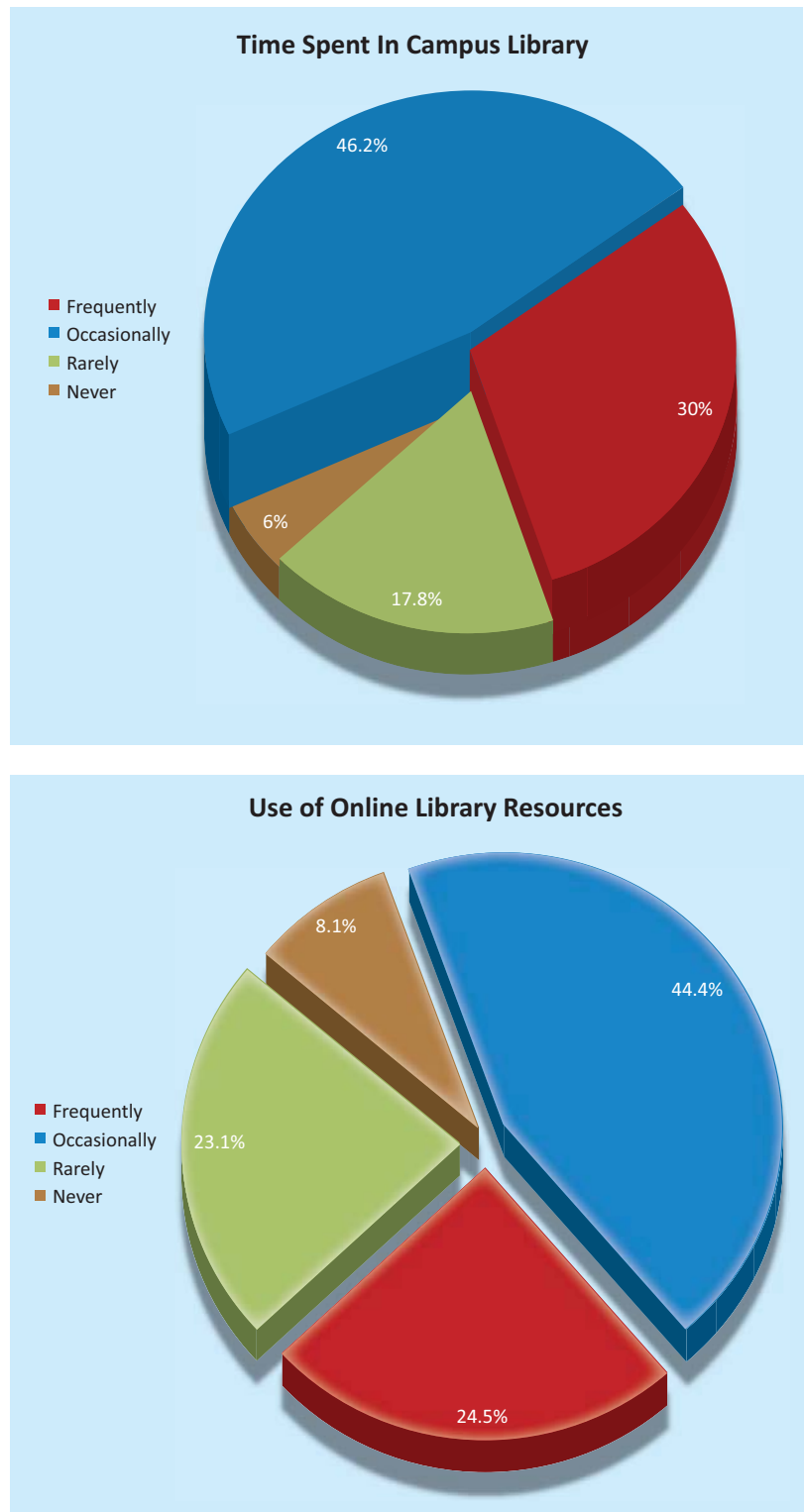


Figure 19

the library on-site *or* online (at the risk of potentially losing relevance or the interest of one audience or another). Rather, it's about how better to market and deliver the services and collections desired, to make relevant, purposeful connections, every time, in every place.

When we think about what traditionally distinguishes academic libraries, it is the breadth and depth of the collections of books, references, journals, and databases and the expertise of subject specialists. Not surprisingly, print books and reference and information services are sought more often on-site, while students access digital products online.

The findings suggest that efforts to design and develop academic library spaces should focus on the experience of place: including quiet and collaborative workspaces; stable, fast Wi-Fi; computing technology that supports creative activity; and research and technology support in close proximity to student study areas (Figure 21). Furthermore, efforts toward supporting online usage should focus on the experience of access: in-

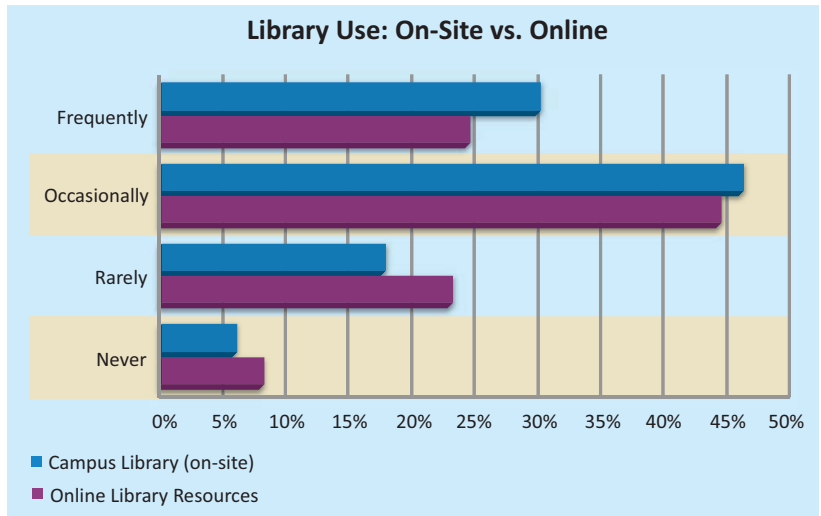


Figure 20

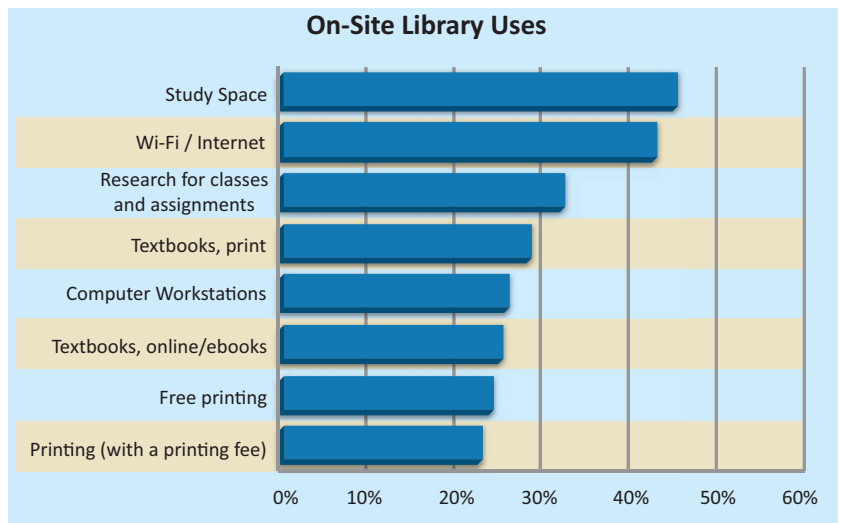


Figure 21

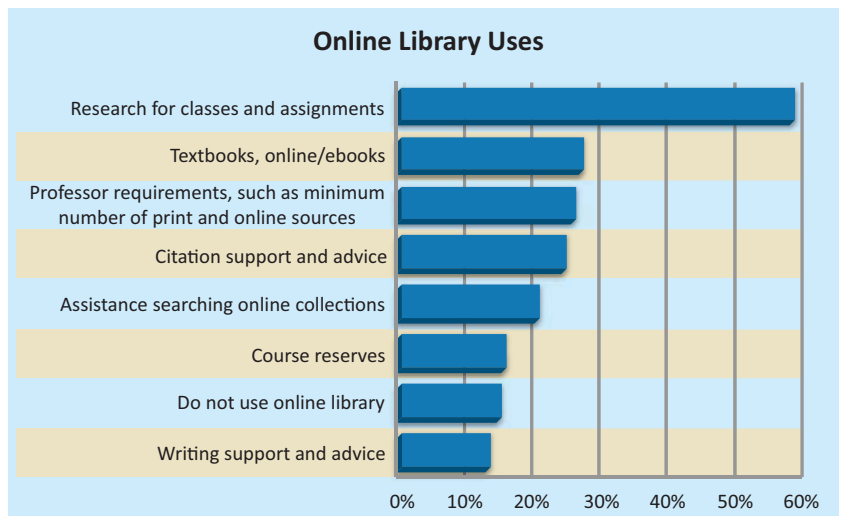


Figure 22

<sup>5</sup> www.ala.org/research/initiatives/plftas/

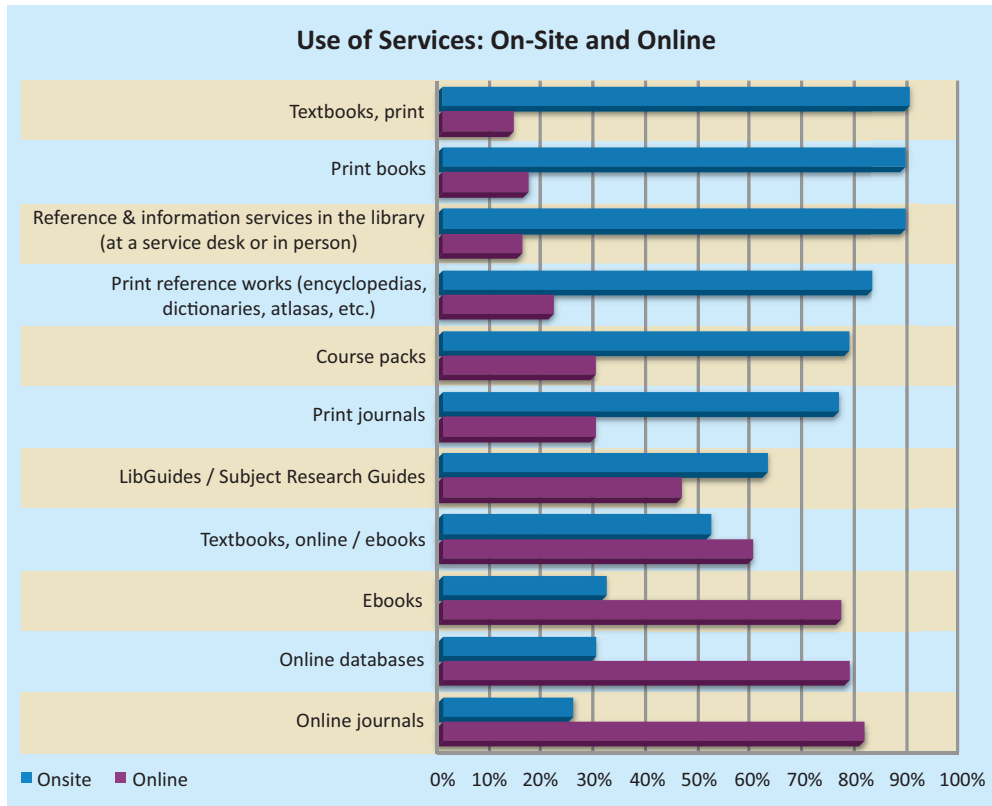


Figure 23

cluding readily available, point-of-need research support and ease of discovering and using online resources (Figure 22, Figure 23).

Not all students use their own campus library. Others may choose to work at other academic libraries on-site or online. When asked why they chose to use the academic library, Wi-Fi, collections, and convenience rose to the top (Figure 24). As before, student replies represent a blend of place, infrastructure, collections in the student’s area of study, and services; as such, the on-site and online offerings of the academic library are quite complementary.

As discussed previously, and as indicated in the public library edition of *Patron Profiles*, there is no substitute for a friendly, knowledgeable librar-

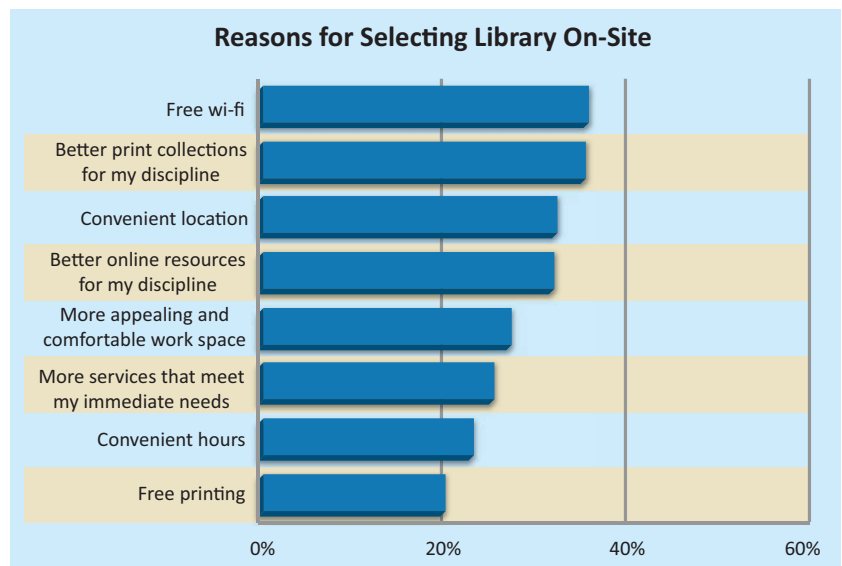


Figure 24

ian, especially for individuals who are learning how to use a library, such as students developing research skills.

Comparatively, students and faculty reported their most recent on-site experience to be successful, efficient, easy to navigate, and friendly—with the faculty reporting a more successful and friendly service experience than the students (Figure 25). However, this lagged when it came to online interactions (Figure 26).

Student responses indicated that frequent library users turn to online resources slightly more often than they do to on-site resources, while the reverse is true for infrequent users (Figure 27).

Students were asked to specify how their use of the on-site and online academic library changed over their academic career. Approximately two out of five students reported that their use of on-site services and

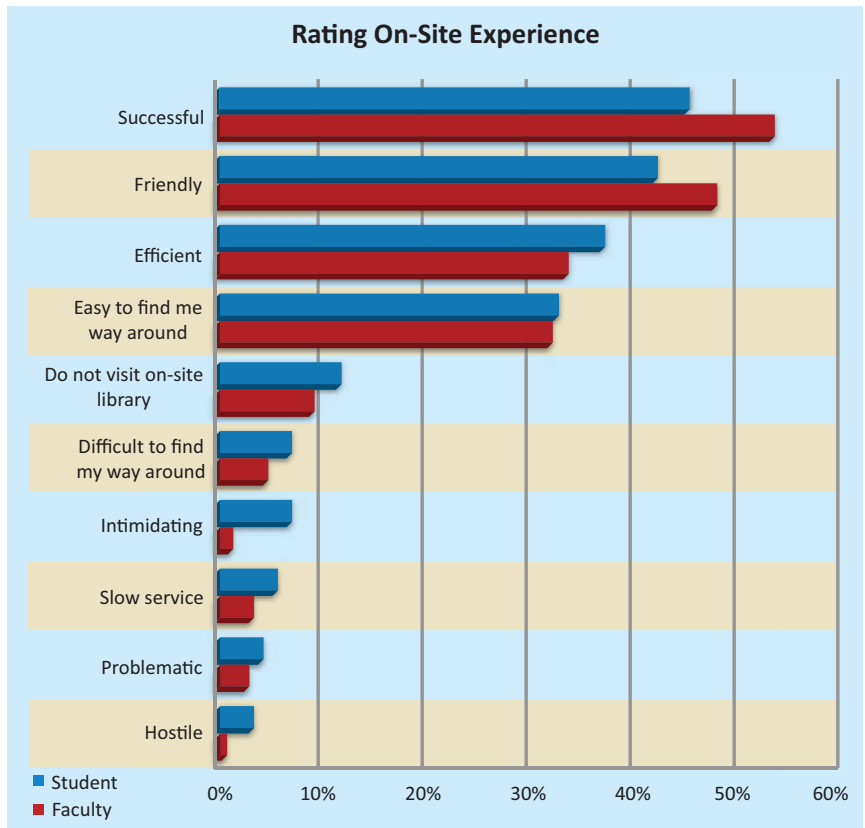


Figure 25

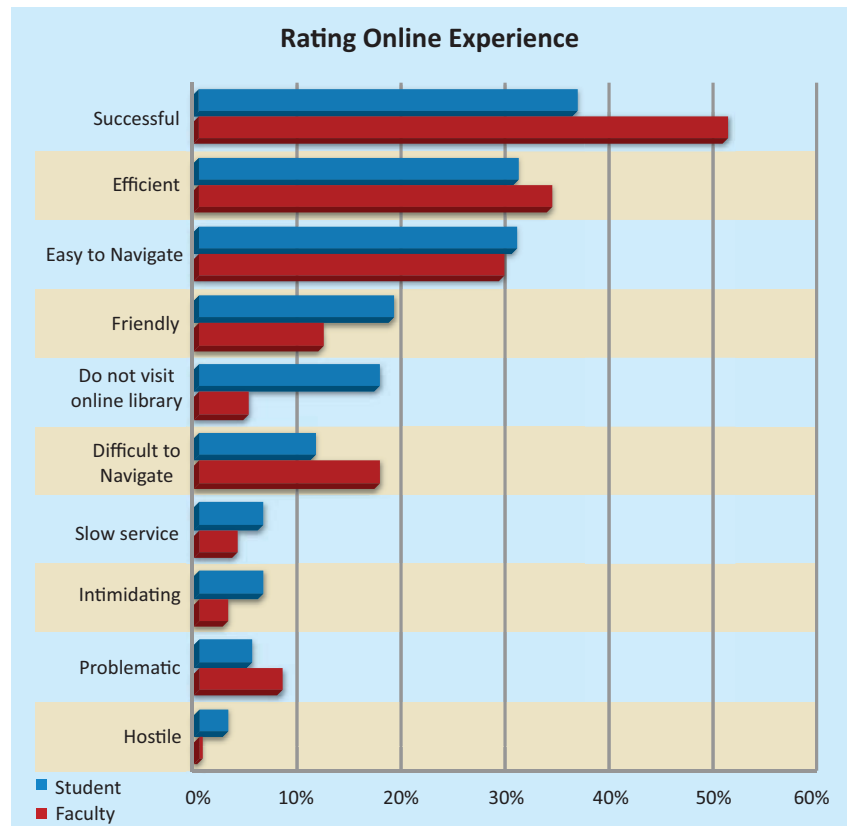


Figure 26

collections had either increased or stayed the same (Figure 28). However, 51% of students reported that their online use had stayed the same, while only 29% reported an increase in the use of online library resources.

When it comes to visiting the library and interacting with staff, checking out books is still the number one activity, followed by on-site reference and information services. Yet, only 30% of students report using the reference services, and even less report using course reserves, interlibrary loan (ILL), library instruction classes, or other information support services (Figure 29).

Academic libraries will benefit from shuffling resources and staff from lesser-used services to give more attention to the core services (circulation and reference), continuing to revise and improve methods of resource sharing (ILL and reserve) and building in time for more experimentation with technologies and innovative programs that are inviting to students. Need ideas? Think like a start-up! Build, measure, learn, and don't be afraid to quit something that isn't successful to free up staff time and resources to try something new.

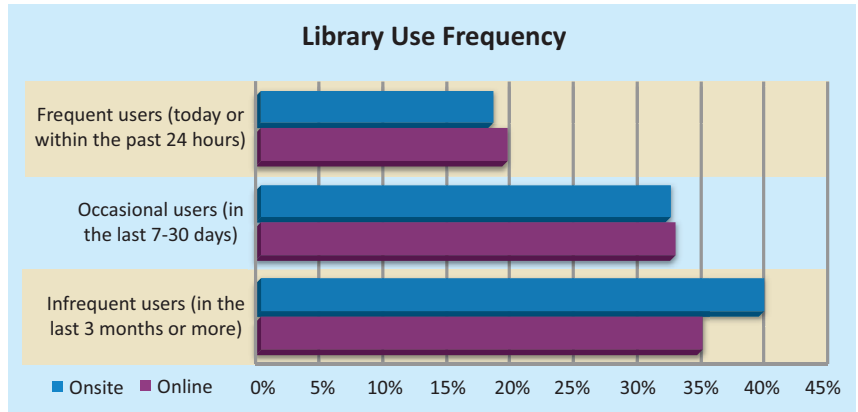


Figure 27

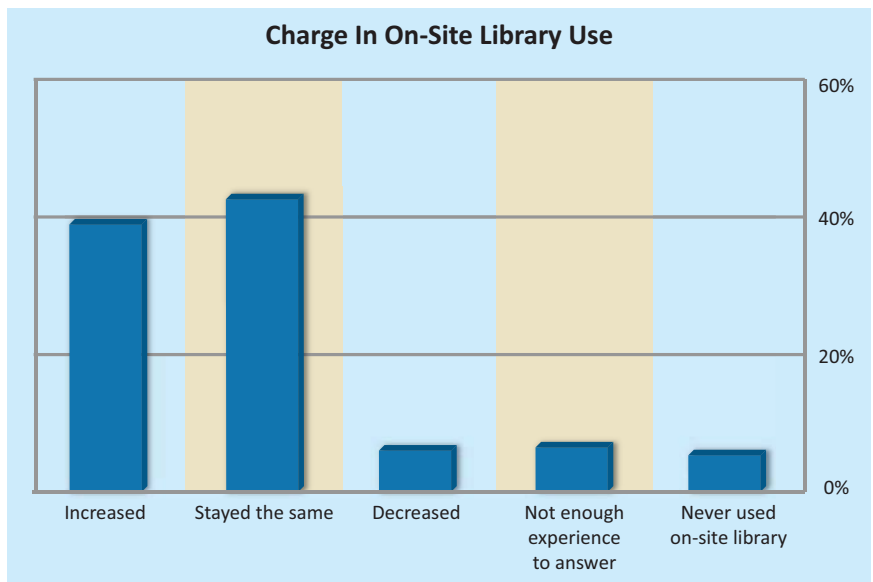


Figure 28

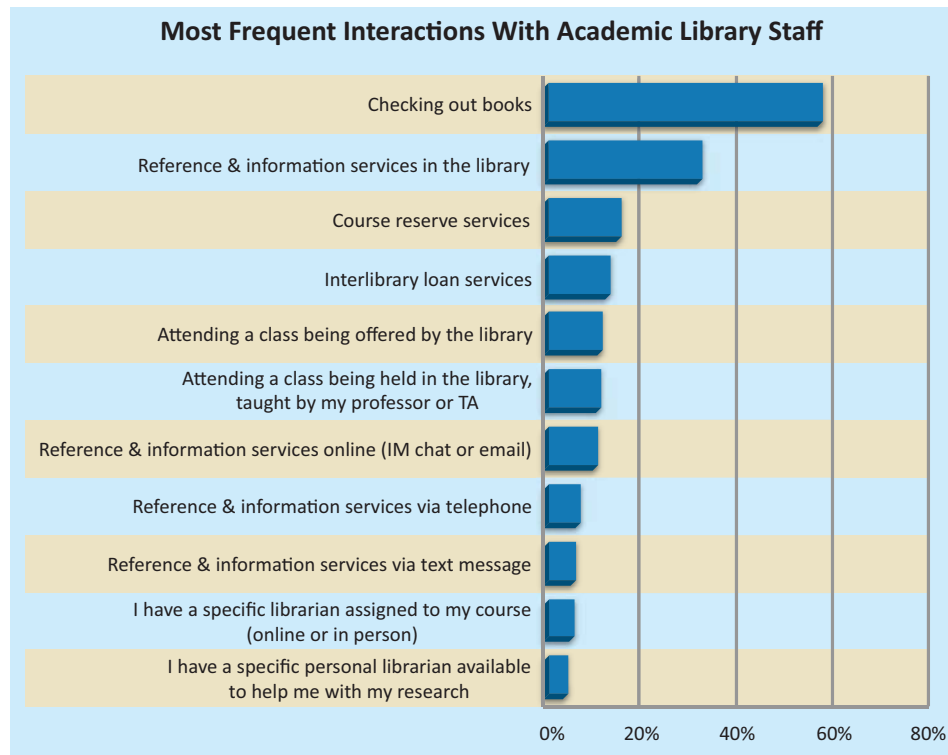


Figure 29

**RELATED RESEARCH**

**THINK LIKE A START-UP: A WHITE PAPER TO INSPIRE LIBRARY ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

**Seven Start-up Lessons for Innovators**

1. Fail Faster, Fail Smarter
2. Good Enough Is Good Enough To Start
3. Feed the Feedback Loop
4. Pivot Toward Success
5. Don't Get Stuck Following Plan A: Instead Get to a Plan That Works
6. Plant Many Seeds
7. Seize the White Space

“Too Much Assessment, Not Enough Innovation”—Brian Mathews



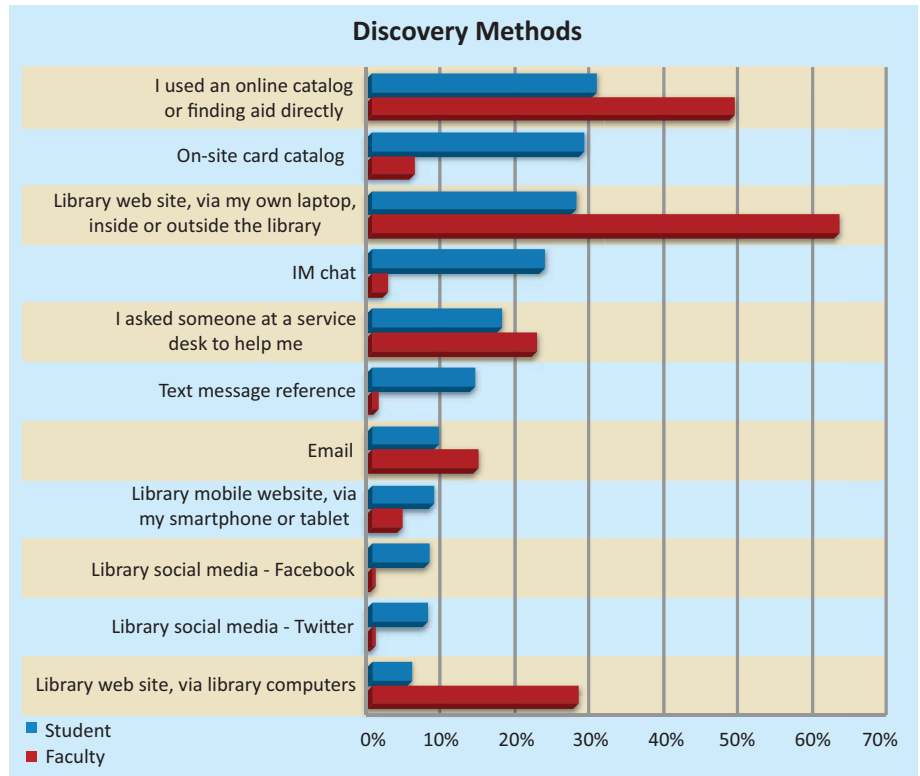


Figure 30

Academic libraries offer a vast array of discovery methods to augment and support research and access to collections. Students rely heavily on the library’s website, online catalog, or on-site catalog, followed by virtual reference, social media, and in-person assistance. Faculty largely use the library website, online catalog, and in-person support, followed by email and mobile discovery methods. Faculty responses demonstrate significantly greater self-sufficiency than students in finding resources. As experienced researchers and fluent library users, faculty members serve an important role in connecting students to the academic library (Figure 30). Faculty members are more aware of the library’s research potential than students, making professors the perfect candidates to be library ambassadors.

## RELATED RESEARCH

### NMC HORIZON REPORT: 2012 HIGHER EDUCATION EDITION

“As lecturers and professors begin to realize that they are limiting their students by not helping them to develop and use digital media literacy skills across the curriculum, the lack of formal training is being offset through professional development or informal learning, but we are far from seeing digital media literacy as an expected norm for academic professionals, nor as a key part of degree programs.” [p. 6]

Librarian and faculty partnerships should be designed toward student engagement with a mentoring approach, offering richer engagement, developing “academic intimacy,” not simply an outcomes-driven, class-related assignment or procedure.

## RELATED RESEARCH

### VALUE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: A COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH REVIEW AND REPORT

“Librarians contribute to faculty teaching in a variety of ways. Librarians provide guest lectures, online tutorials, and LibGuides. They integrate library resources into course materials on a massive scale. They collaborate with faculty on curriculum, assignment, and assessment design. They also provide resources that cover the scholarship of teaching and learning; some libraries also partner in campuswide teaching and learning support centers.” [p. 15]

Here again, when it comes to self-service, faculty responses reflect the confidence of an experienced academic researcher, with steady use of the library’s website, interlibrary loan, and patron account

features. While students report significant use of the library’s website, too, self-service activity in the other categories is less than 20% (Figure 31).

A sizable number of students, nearly 40%, report that they have used or would use a mobile device to access scholarly research articles (Figure 32); 33% of students reported use of a mobile device to access their library account and renew books, and 28% reported use of a mobile device for searching the library’s website. Also, 20% of students report use of a mobile device for receiving library alerts or learning about special events, and only 16% report use of mobile devices for text-message reference.

What mobile services are less appealing to students? Roughly 30% report that they would not use, even if available, library podcasts/vodcasts, IM reference, or text message

reference services. Another nearly 30% of students indicated that the library offers text message reference and IM chat, but they haven’t used it. Also, 23% and 18% said they’d likely use text message reference or IM reference, but it’s not available. Approximately 25% of students reported no interest

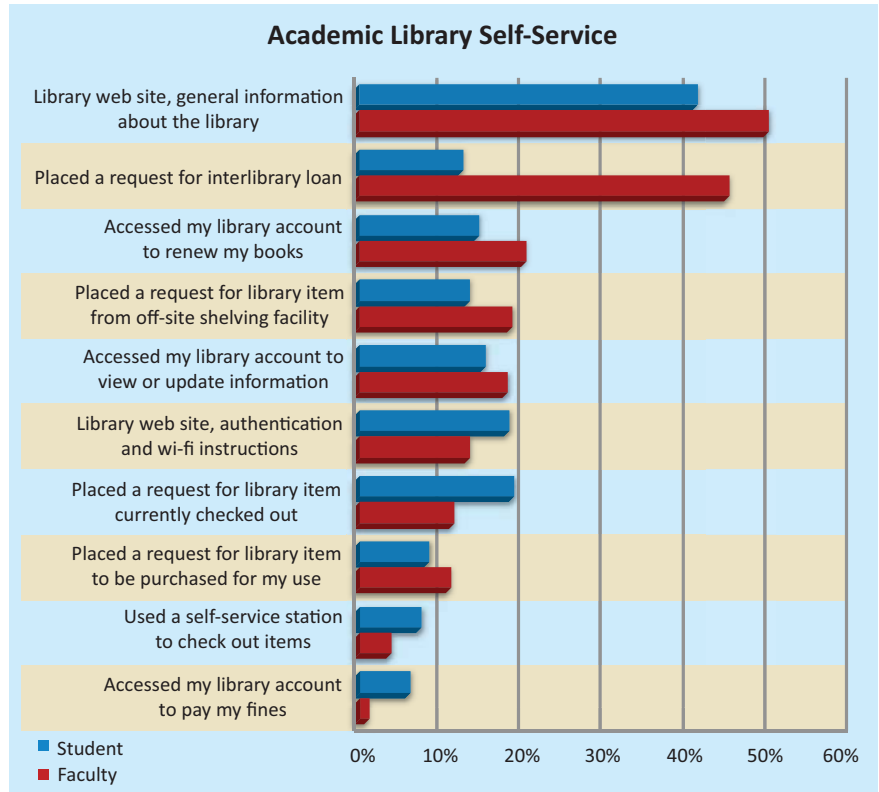


Figure 31

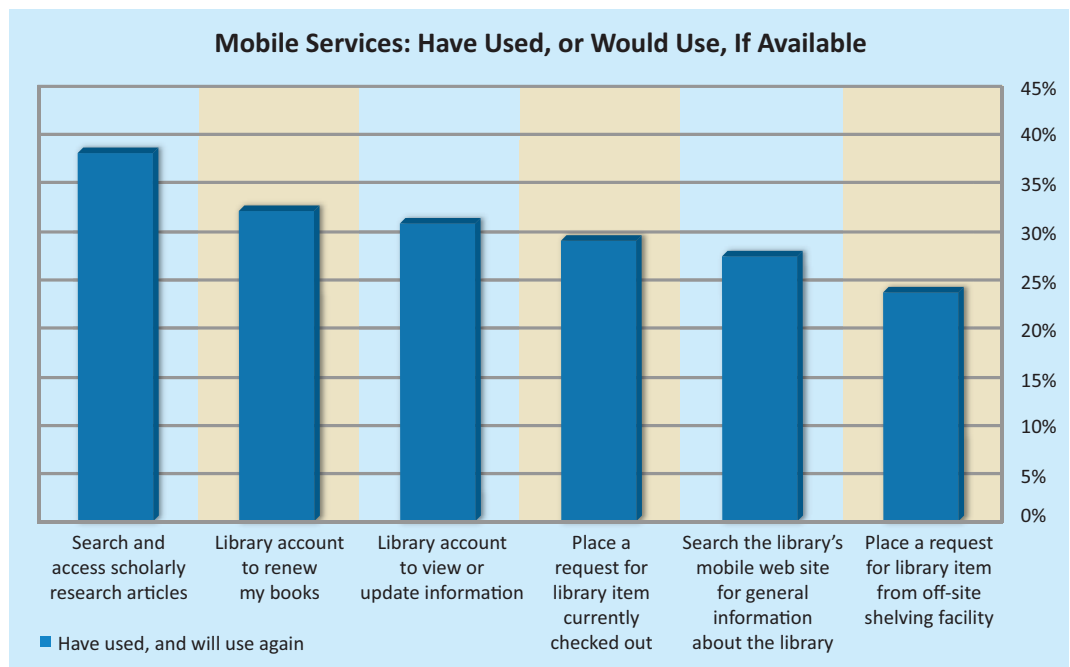


Figure 32

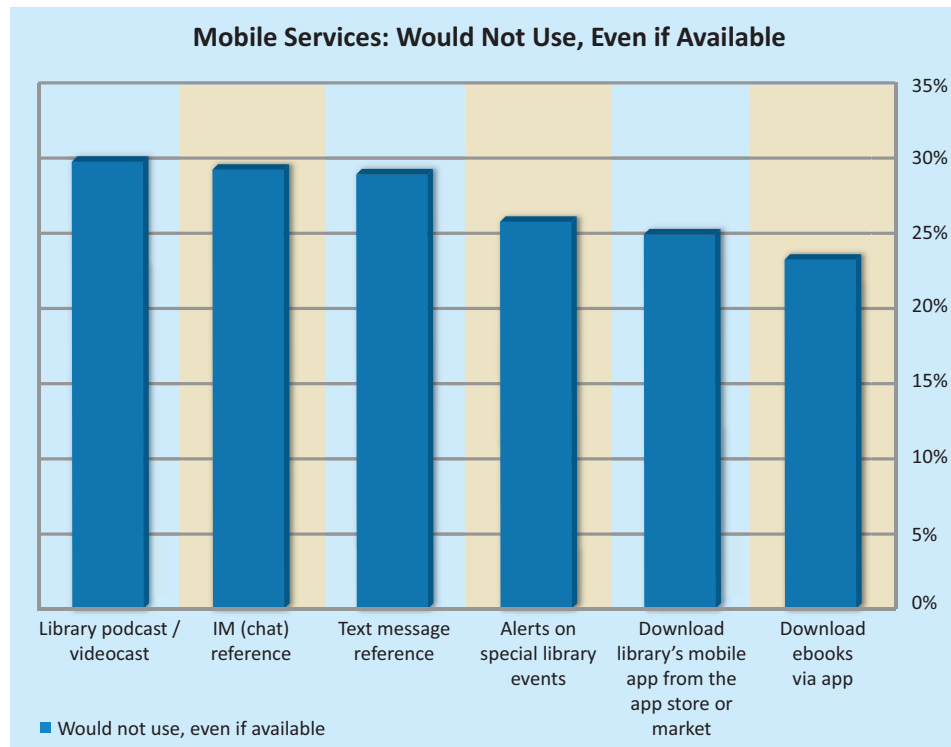


Figure 33

in library alerts, downloading the library's mobile app, or downloading ebooks. And 14% report no interest in accessing scholarly research articles via a mobile device (Figure 33).

### TAKEAWAYS: ON-SITE VS. ONLINE

- On-site usage is centered on the space and place for learning, while online usage is all about content resources necessary for research.
- Academic library efforts on-site should focus on the experience of place; academic library efforts toward online services should focus on the experience of access. Develop critical instruction beyond the "pre-research" value of Google.
- Shuffle resources and staff from lesser-used services to give more attention to revising and improving core services and building in time for experimentation with new technologies and innovative programs that are inviting to students and researchers. Only 30% of students report using reference services and only about 15% report using interlibrary loan.
- As experienced researchers and fluent library users, faculty members serve an important role as ambassadors in connecting students to the academic library.
- Think mobile, with a measured approach. Roughly one-third of students are using text message and IM chat/virtual reference, but about the same number are choosing not to seek this type of support. Approximately 20% would be interested, if available.
- About 40% of students report an increase in use of on-site services while only 29% reported an increase in the use of online library resources.

# RESEARCH BEHAVIORS & NEEDS

For graduate students and advanced researchers, the most important purposes of students' academic research reported are the creation of research papers, dissertations, and scholarly articles (49%). Fact-checking also plays a key role in these endeavors (32%) (Figure 34).

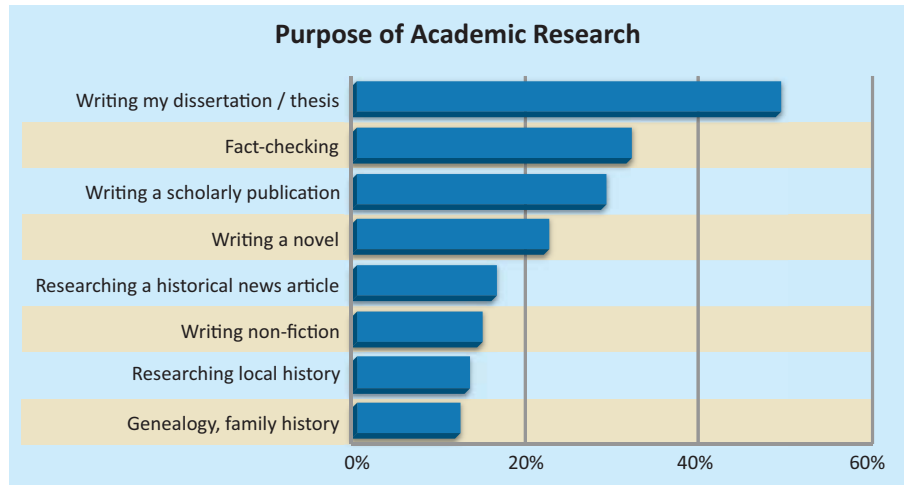


Figure 34

When asked specifically about their primary objective during their use of the academic library, 73% of students reported visiting the library to obtain most recent resources in support of their research, 69% consulted with a subject librarian, and 66% simply wanted to browse and explore the library's offerings. For students who last visited the library online, 68% were using the library's electronic collections, 67% were researching a local or current news article, and 61% were fact-checking (Figure 35). Only a little over 40% explored the library's offerings online.

Students indicated a preference for Google as an initial source. Not surprisingly, 73% of students use Google to familiarize themselves with a topic before they turn to their library for deeper exploration of more curated academic resources, while 56% of students turn to the combined resources

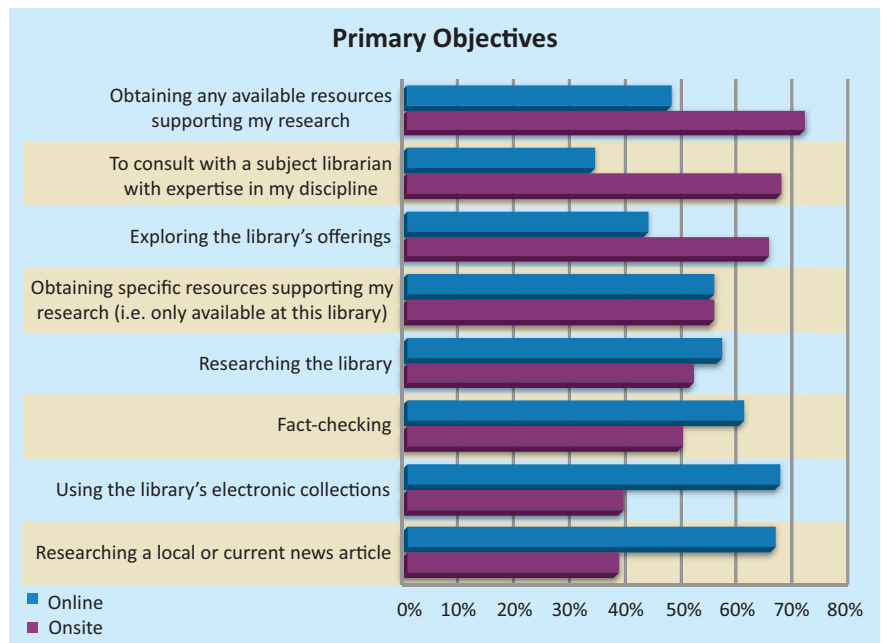


Figure 35

available from the academic library, on-site and online (Figure 36).

As students delve deeper into research, they rely most often on online, scholarly articles (46%); other online resources freely available (45%); and online resources licensed by the library, requiring authentication (41%). Print books are still in steady demand, according to 43% of students, compared to 18% who report frequent use of ebooks. Consider that 28% of students use print journals or newspapers in support of their research activity; 16% frequently use special collections and on-site archives; and 16% report regular use of digital special collections (Figure 37).

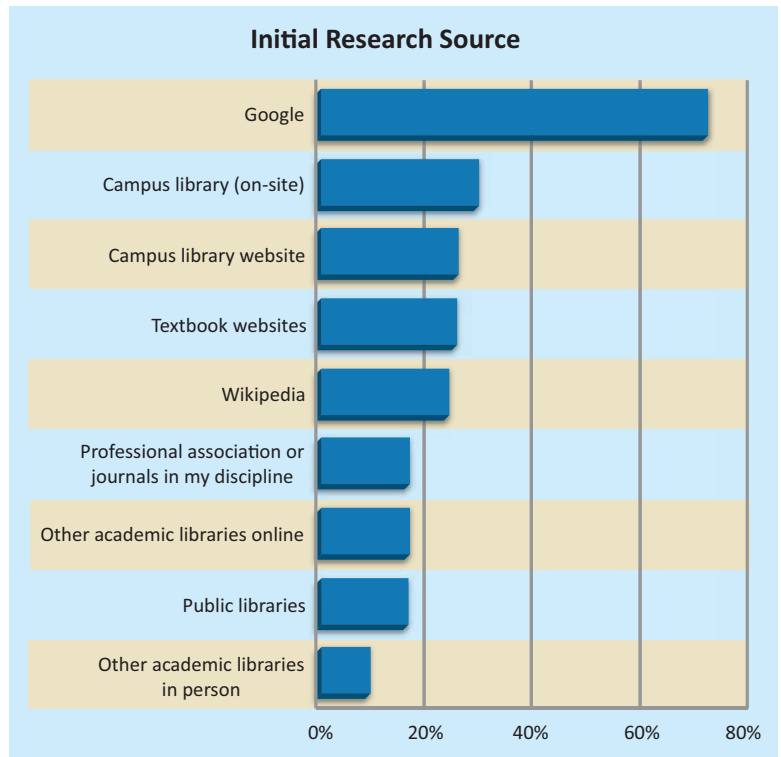


Figure 36

Students are also satisfied with the results from Google, which is comparable to answers concerning the academic library resources on-site and online. Additionally, 44% of students report satisfaction

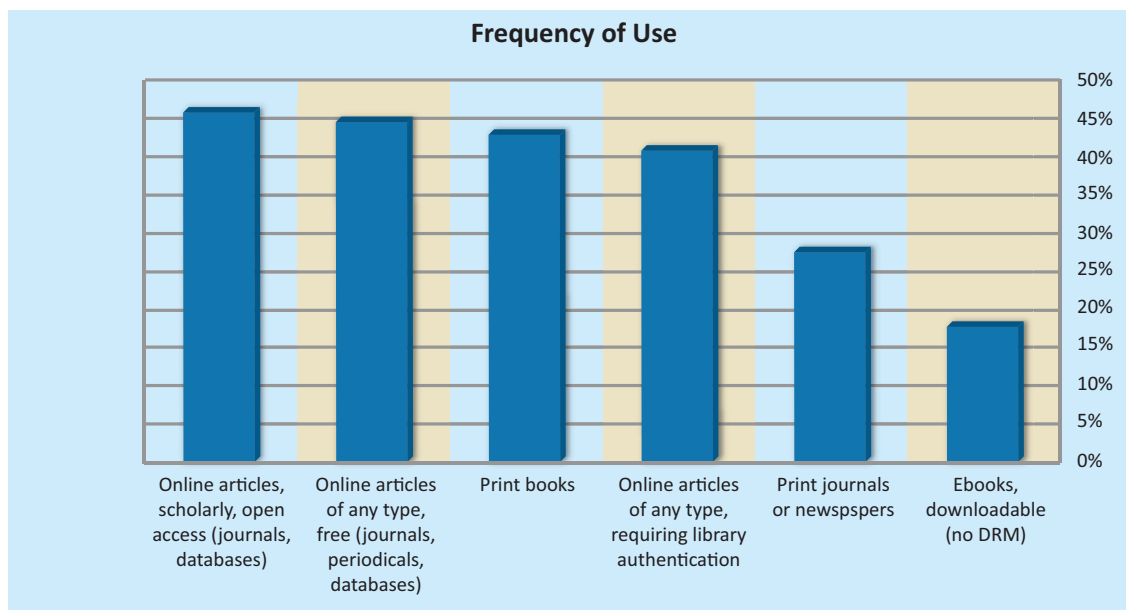


Figure 37

with Wikipedia. It's less clear whether their objective with using Wikipedia is for initial research or fact-checking; a critical point of discernment (Figure 38).

Nearly 68% of students and 88% of faculty report making use of information across media formats at the academic library, as well as exploring archival information (Figure 39).

Once students locate the information that they need, most choose to gather that information into their digital workspace for future reference. In most cases, they save it in a digital format or print the information as they are getting ready to use it; 25% indicate a preference for saving files to cloud-based storage platforms, and a mere 8% report sharing files via social media (Figure 40). This may be an opportunity for libraries supporting future research by enabling/empowering best practices in data storage.

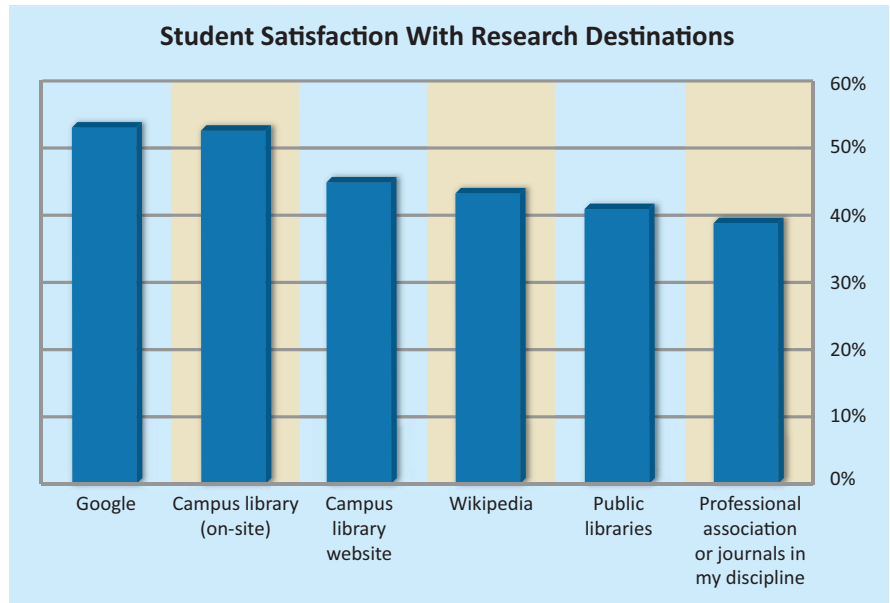


Figure 38

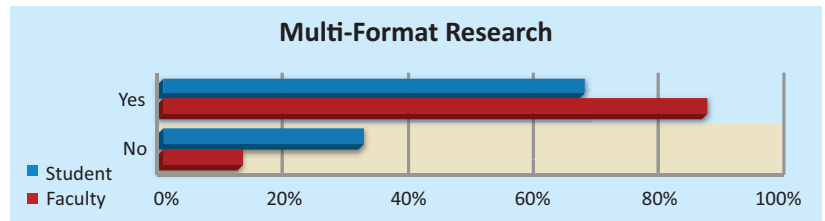


Figure 39



Figure 40

## TAKEAWAYS: RESEARCH BEHAVIORS & NEEDS

- For advanced researchers, the most important purposes reported are the creation of research papers, dissertations, and scholarly articles and fact-checking.
- Students report that Google plays an important role in initial research, and they are equally satisfied with the result which may provide an opportunity for greater information literacy instruction. These findings are comparable to answers concerning the academic library resources on-site and online. Online articles requiring authentication lag slightly behind these other resources which may be an opportunity to ensure students understand the purpose of web-scale discovery services.
- Researchers make use of resources across formats, although more faculty than students do so. Faculty ambassadors can help librarians bridge this gap to ensure that novice researchers are fully aware of multiformat collections, including special collections, that offer unique research value
- One-fourth of all students are using cloud-based storage to save their library research. Less than 10% are endorsing what they find via social networks—this is an opportunity for librarians to connect with researchers on social media. Ask, ‘What’s the best article you discovered at the library this week?’ ‘Where’d you find it, and how?’



## FACULTY PERSPECTIVES

Faculty respondents held their respective academic libraries in high regard and were well experienced in navigating the libraries' resources in support of research, teaching, and learning; 82% of faculty respondents recommended their libraries' websites to students to a high or moderate extent, compared with 77% who reported the same for the on-site facility (Figure 41).

Increased partnerships between academic librarians and faculty, across the levels of the academic curriculum, should strive to make this 100%.

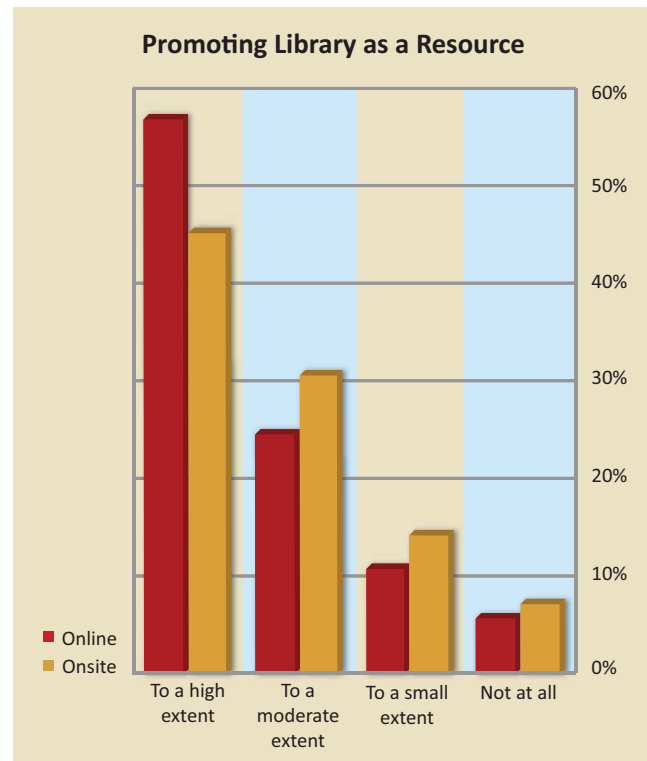


Figure 41

### RELATED RESEARCH

#### **CONNECT, COLLABORATE, AND COMMUNICATE: A REPORT FROM THE VALUE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES SUMMITS**

Areas of Academic Library Impact on Student Learning and Success:

- Impact of Information Literacy
- Core Competencies
- Beyond Borders
- Student/Faculty Interactions
- Learning Outside the Classroom
- New Programs
- Curriculum Design

The number of faculty reporting placing course material on reserve for students at the library was fairly high, at 58% (Figure 42). However, just under 40% indicated that students could access course reserve material online (Figure 43), and 43% of faculty felt that students were very or somewhat successful in accessing on-line materials (Figure 44); however, only approximately 10% of students reported using course reserve services.

Online study resources—both those offered by academic libraries and oth-

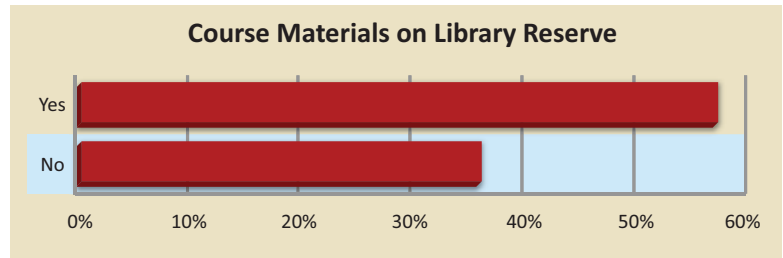


Figure 42

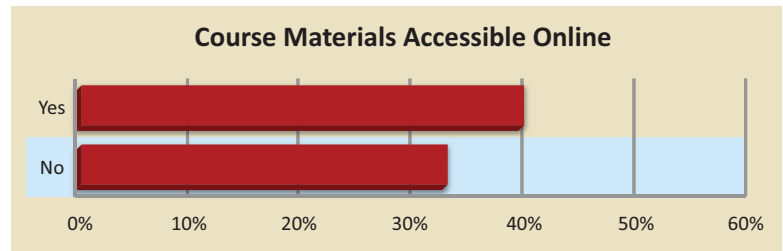


Figure 43

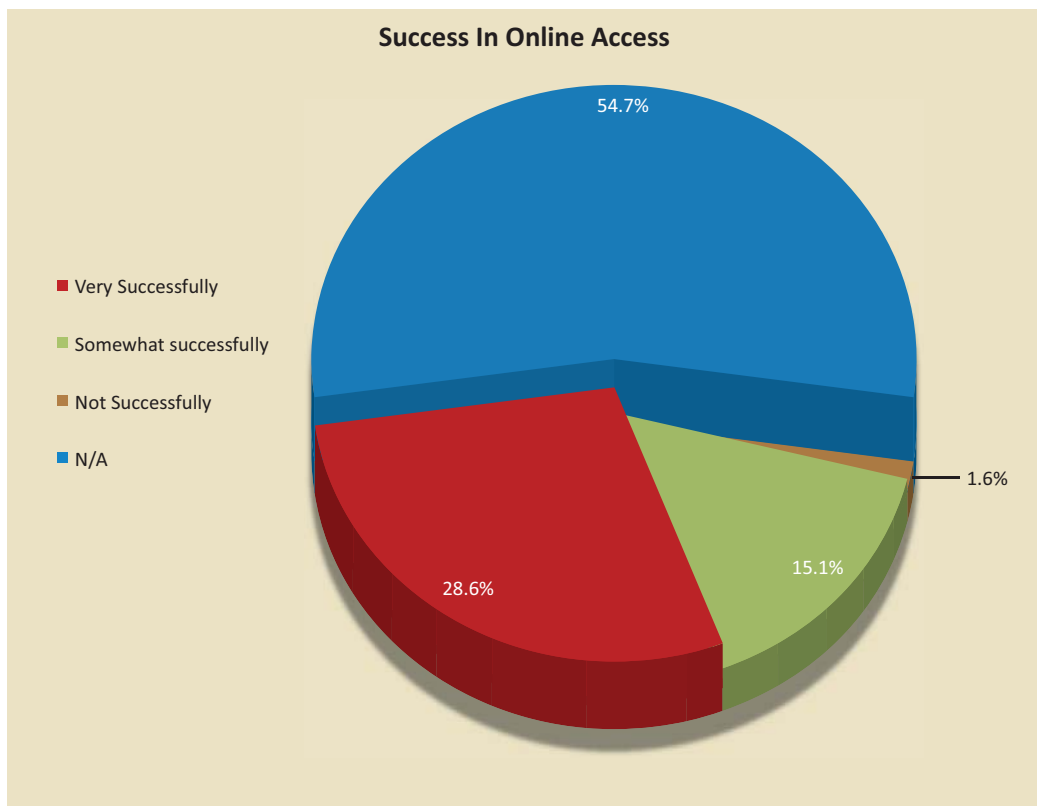


Figure 44

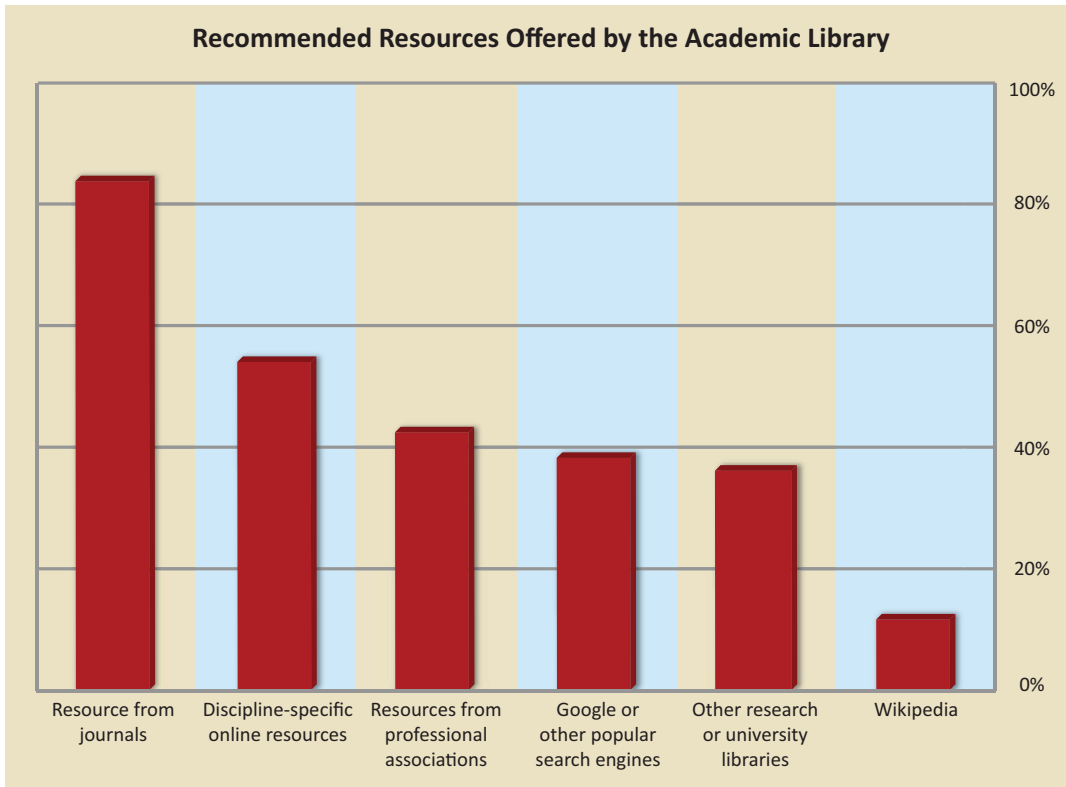


Figure 45

ers—have varying support from faculty members. Resources from journals were most often recommended, at 84%, followed by discipline-specific resources (Figure 45). Nonlibrary resources fared much worse, with professional associations, the top category, recommended by only 27.6% of faculty respondents (Figure 46).

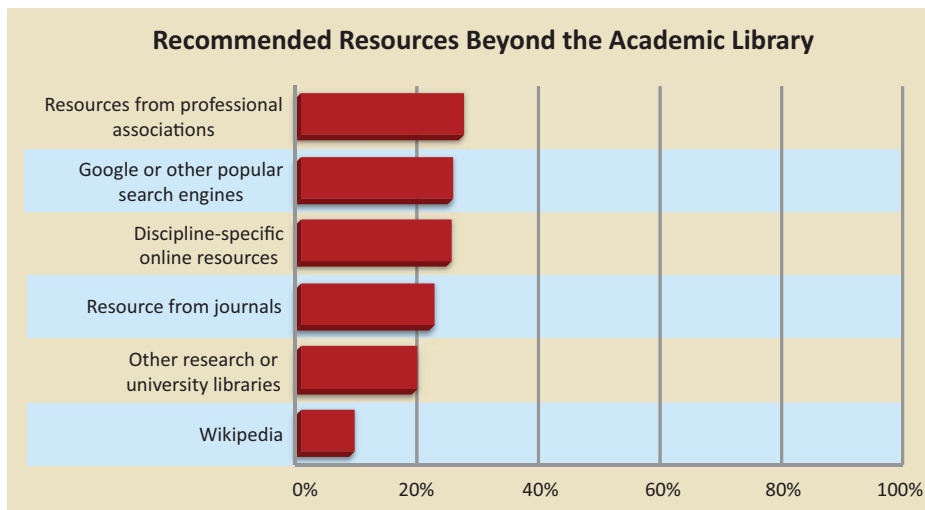


Figure 46

Over 86% of faculty respondents use academic libraries extensively for academic research in addition to normal course-work (Figure 47), with the vast majority, over 79%, doing so for contributions to scholarly publications (Figure 48).

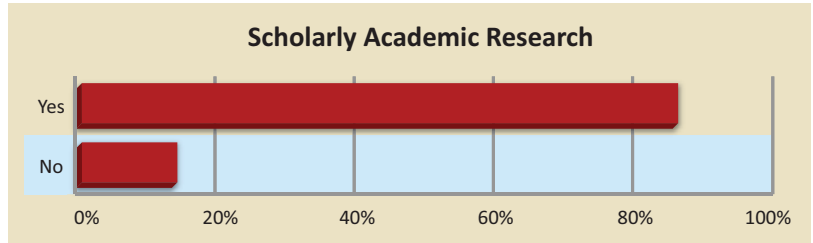


Figure 47

Faculty research objectives varied widely, especially between on-site and online library usage. Consultation with subject librarians with specific subject matter expertise was the most frequent objective for on-site research, at 74.9% (Figure 49) Obtaining research support resources and fact-checking topped the list for online research at 78.5% and 77.2%, respectively. Personal research was the top reason for faculty use of online academic resources, at over 90% of respondents, followed by course design at only 65.1% (Figure 50). Collaborative course design, with increased emphasis on library engagement, would be an excellent opportunity for academic libraries to explore via faculty expanded outreach and partnerships.

A variety of research resources was frequently cited by faculty respondents. As with students,



Figure 48

Google emerged as a top choice (77%), followed by resources from professional associations (66%) and journals (65%) and discipline-specific resources. Printed books were well represented (58.8%) but decidedly secondary to online articles. Over 40% of faculty sought resources from other academic libraries as needed (Figure 51).

Faculty reported relying heavily on laptops (66%) and desktops (68%) for accessing

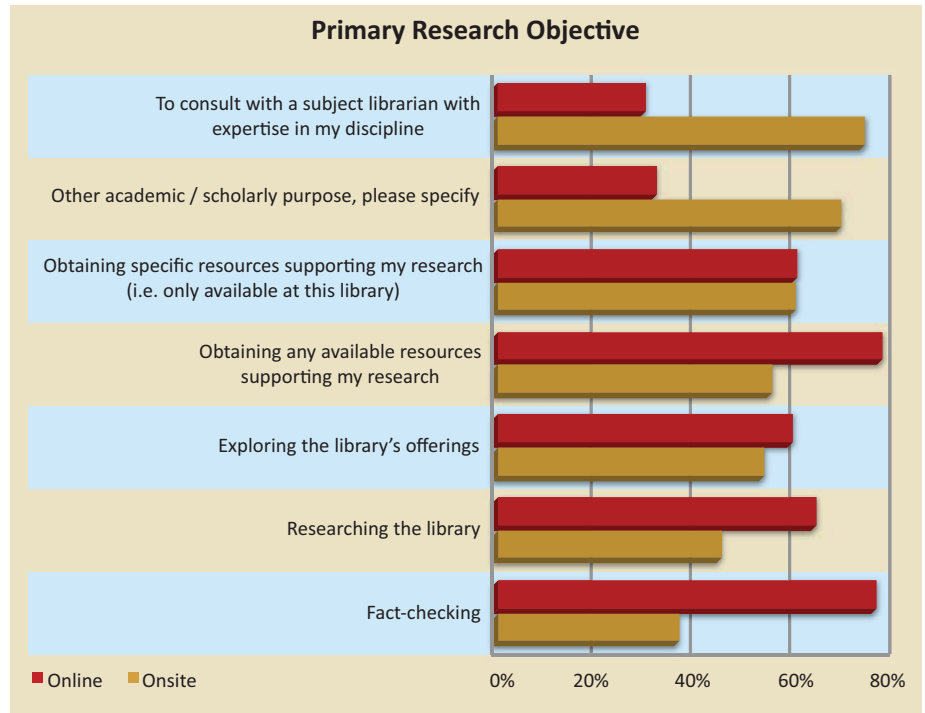


Figure 49

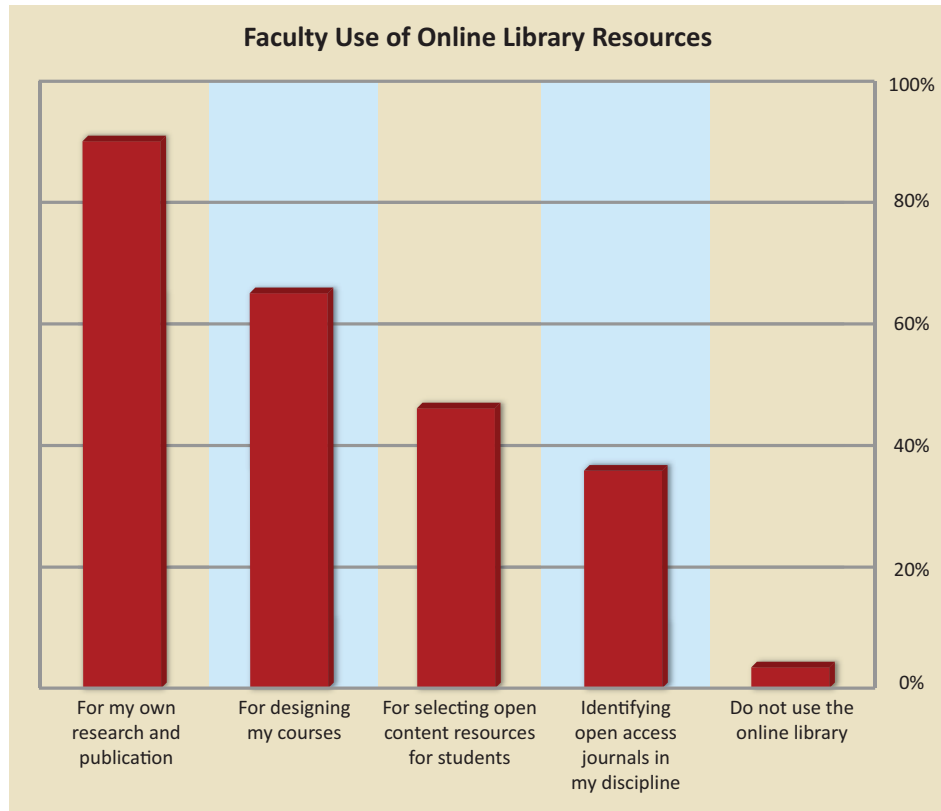


Figure 50

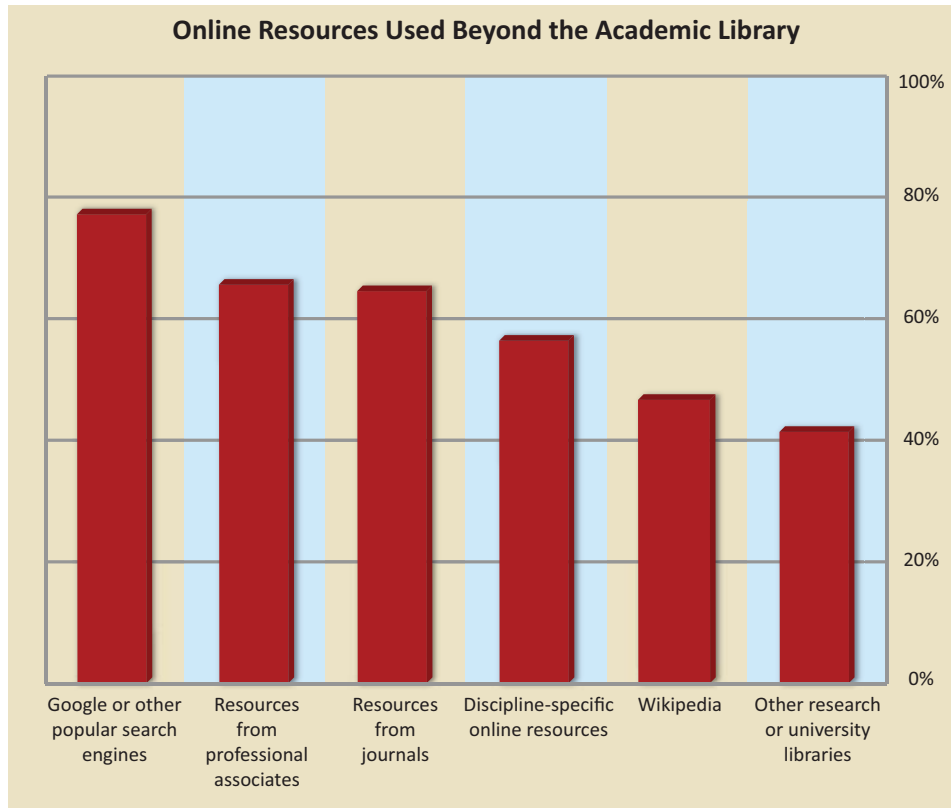


Figure 51

library resources and information. Students did, too, however the distribution leans more toward laptops (63%) than desktops (45%), and smartphones (33%) and tablets (24%) represent a sizable portion of respondents' devices. The use of ebook reading devices among students was slightly higher than that of faculty, 17% vs. 12%, respectively (Figure 52).

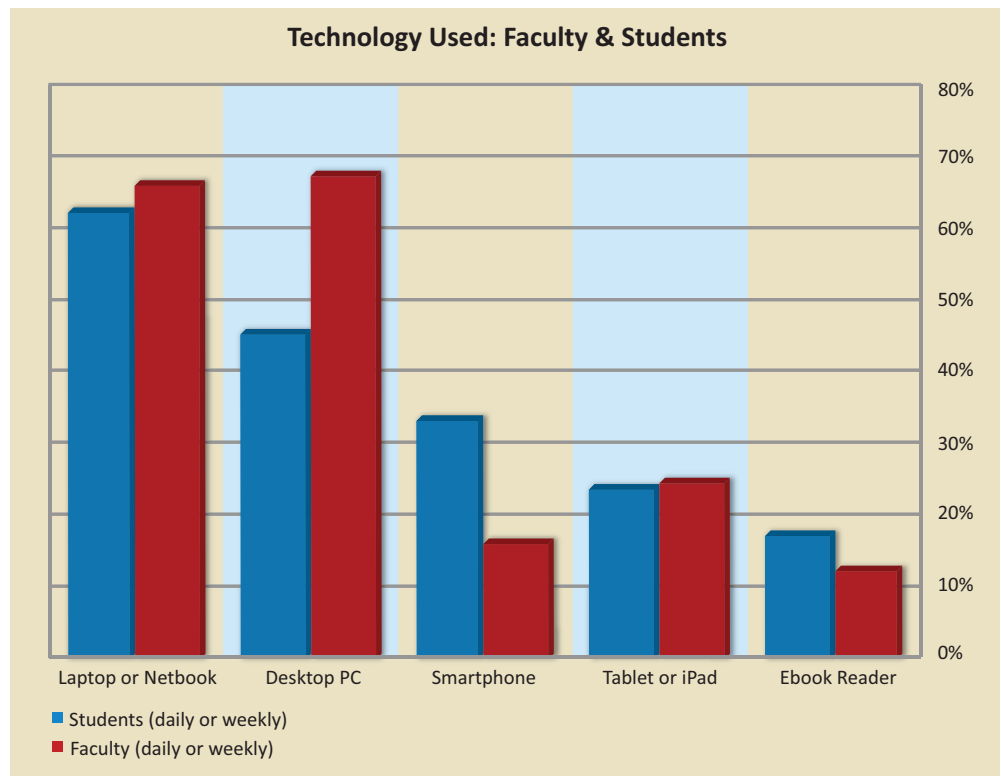


Figure 52

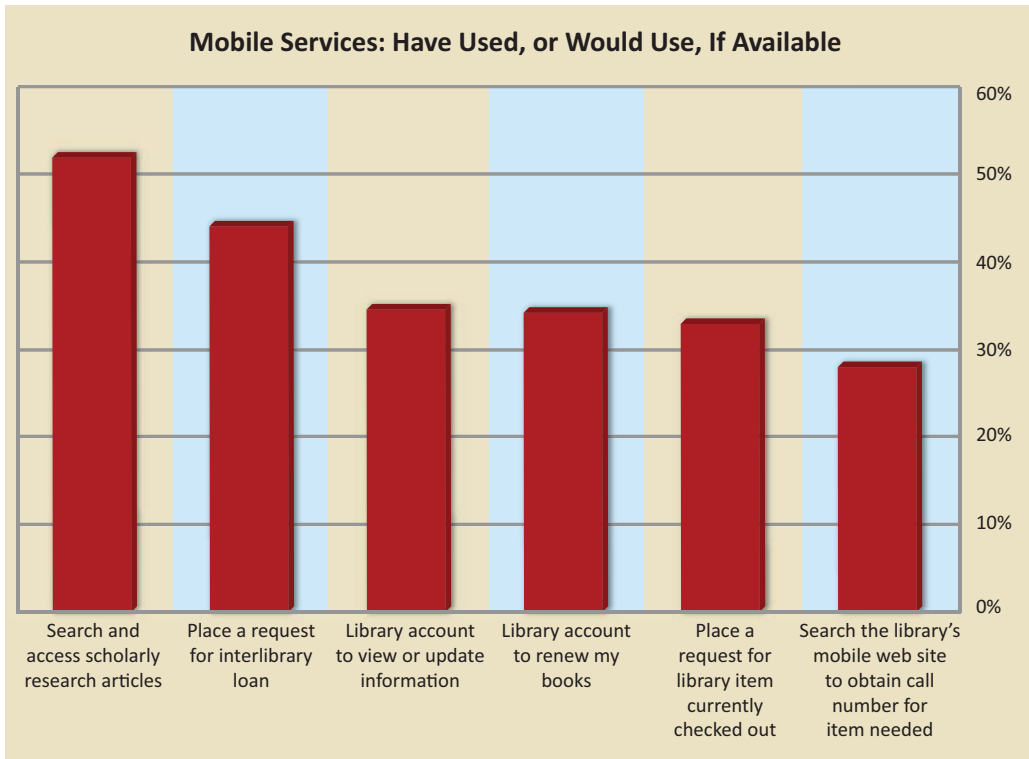


Figure 53

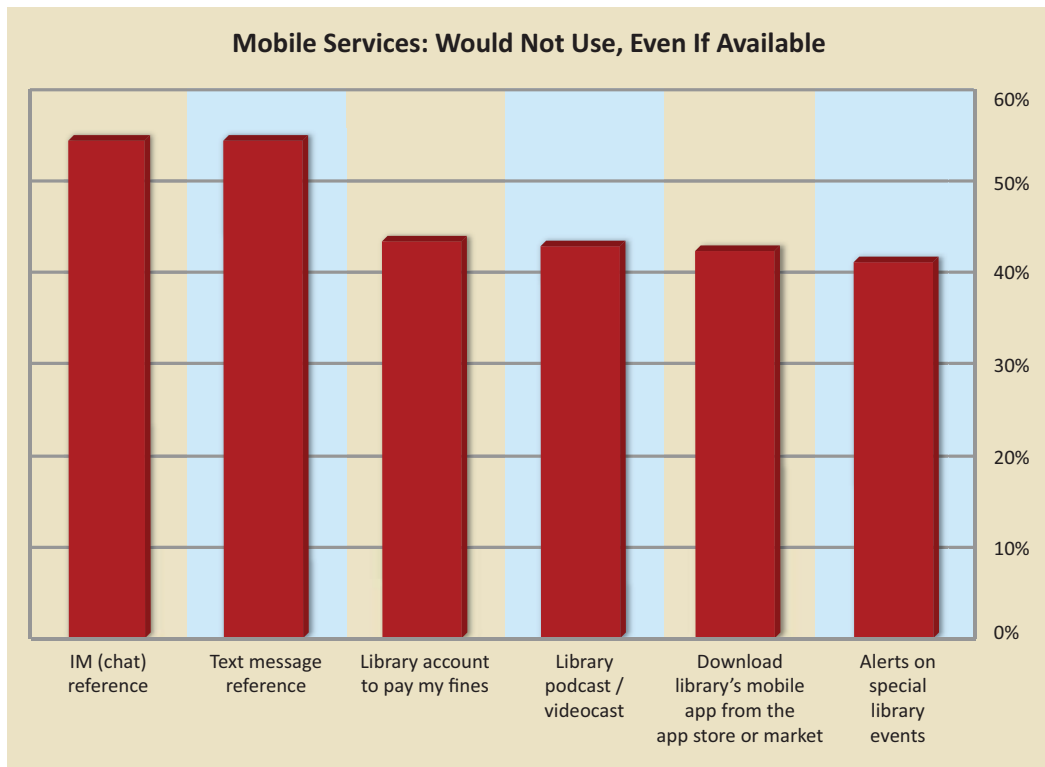


Figure 54

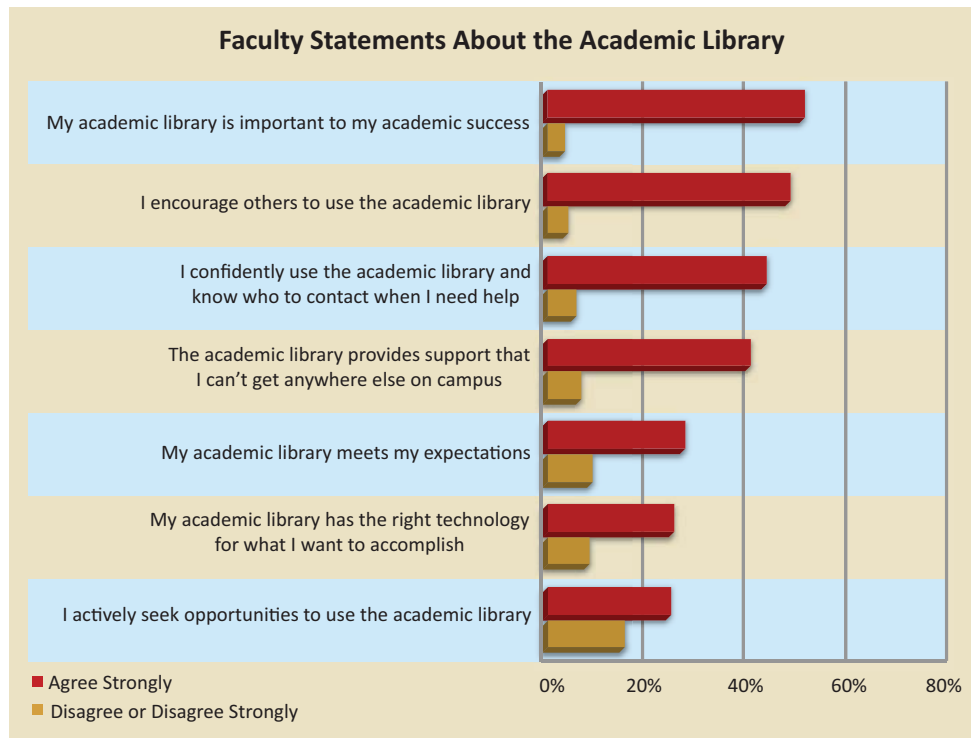


Figure 55

Faculty members were asked to indicate which mobile services they have used, or would use, if offered by the academic library. Search and access to scholarly resources topped the list of well-liked options, at 51.9%, followed by placing an interlibrary loan request (44%). Over one-third of faculty reported interest or experience using mobile services to access patron account features, including renewals and requests (Figure 53). Instant messaging and text messaging were the mobile services faculty reported that they would not use, even if available, at 54.4% each (Figure 54).

Faculty perceptions about the library were largely positive, although only a few qualitative statements reached the “Agree Strongly” level, including 50.8% of faculty respondents who indicated that “my academic library is important to my academic success.” This is double the number of student respondents who indicated a strong agreement with that statement. Meanwhile, 48% of faculty report encouraging others to use the academic library, and approximately 40% felt confident in their own ability to use the library, as well as in the library’s ability to provide support unavailable elsewhere on campus (Figure 55).



Faculty satisfaction was highly contingent upon the experience of using the library; 57% reported that helpful staff was an essential factor in determining a positive outcome. In addition, the physical space was noted as important; from overall cleanliness (49%) to design (29%). Course reserve support was also indicated as an effective service by 33% of respondents (Figure 56).

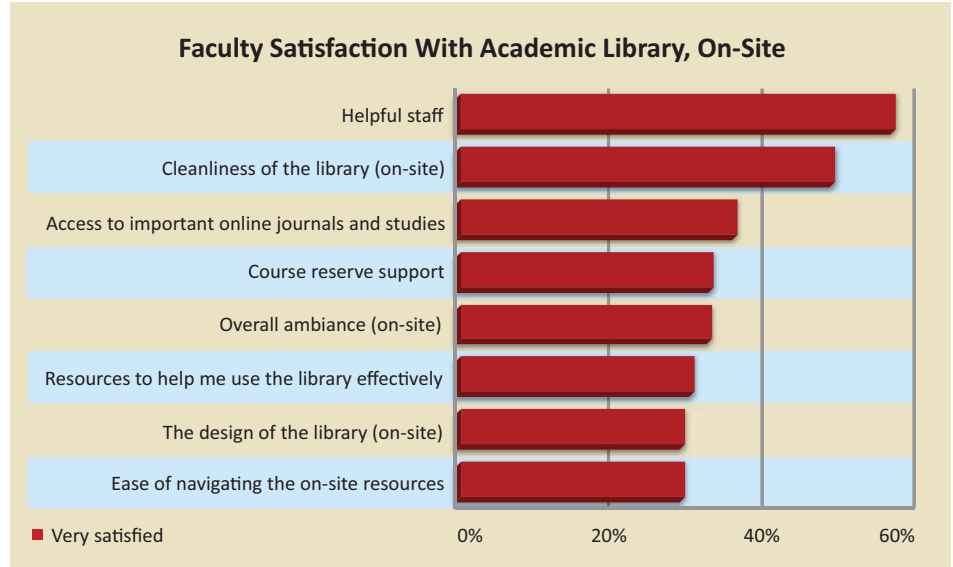


Figure 56

Faculty ranked immediate assistance and resolution (58%) and access to online resources (49%) as the two most important outcomes when using the academic library (Figure 57). Kind service was noted as the third most important outcome, at 39%. Considered alongside the 57% of faculty reporting interactions with helpful staff as also positive, it can be posited that constructive academic relationships across departments are equally valuable in supporting the teaching, learning, and research objectives of the campus community. There were 30% of student respondents who reported kindness as an important outcome when interacting with the library.

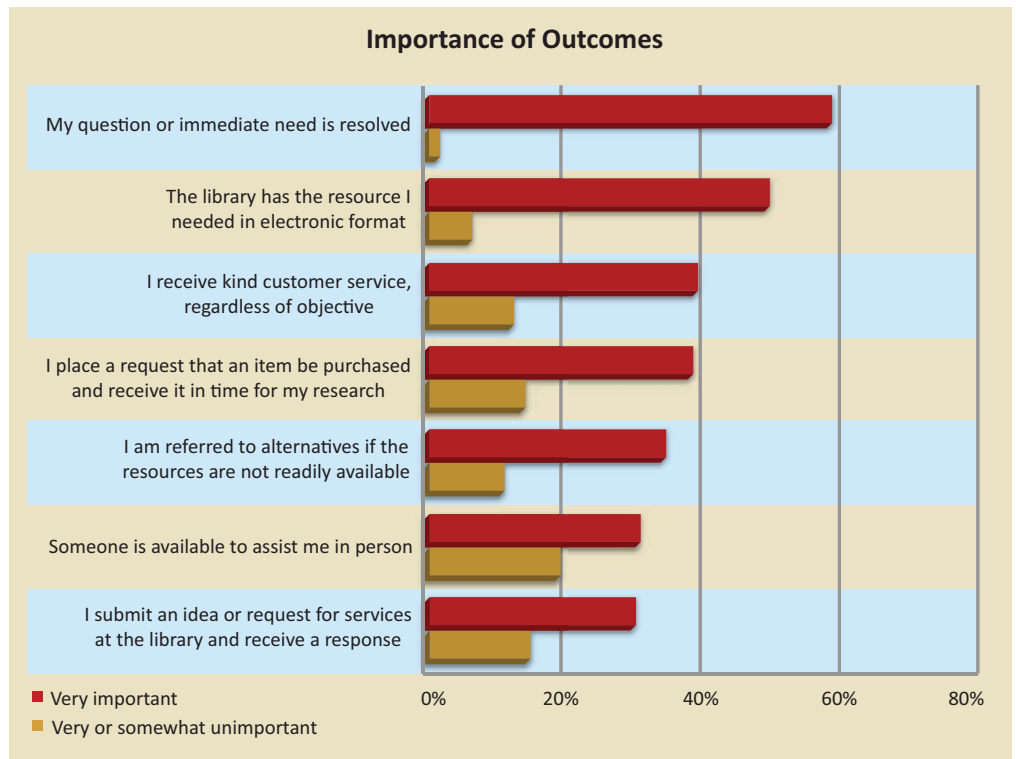


Figure 57

**RELATED RESEARCH**

**THE AGE OF PARTICIPATION | OFFICE HOURS**

“Understanding, empathy, and kindness matter in everything we do. Technology extends human reach but participation requires engaged participants who feel welcome, comfortable, and valued.”—Michael Stephens

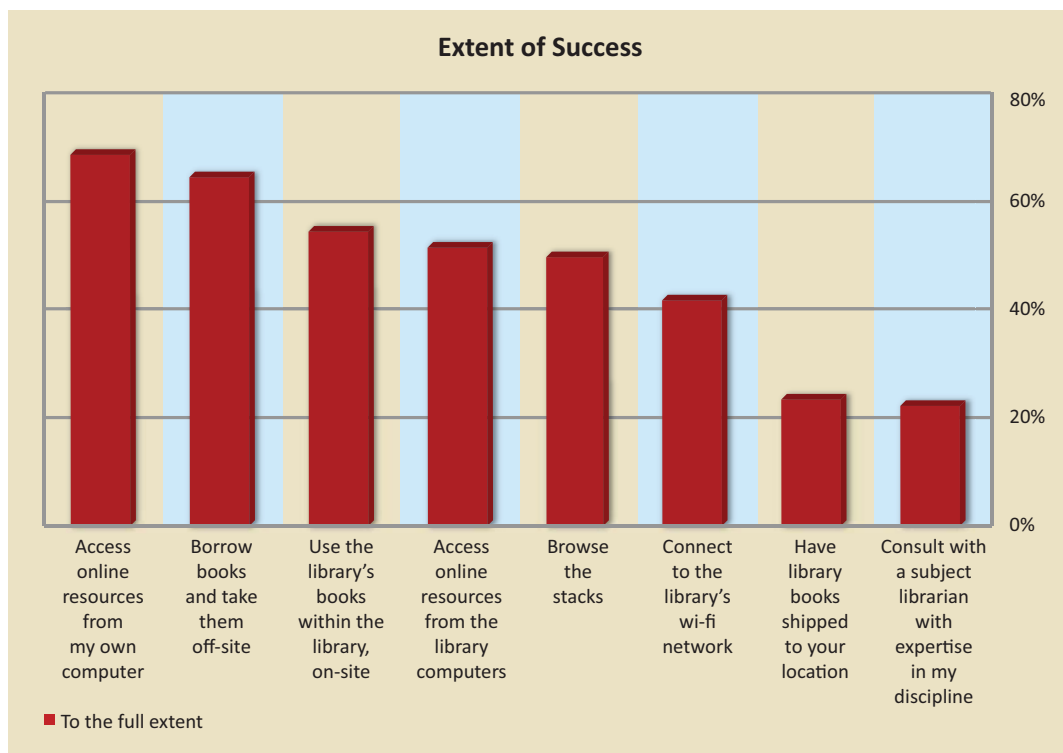


Figure 58

Over 68% of faculty respondents indicated success “to the full extent” accessing online resources from their own computers, but only 22.1% did so with regard to live consultation with a subject librarian, which was previously highly cited as a research objective. While faculty reported high levels of success borrowing books from the collections, browsing the stacks, and connecting to the library’s Wi-Fi network, only 23% reported success having books shipped to their office or work location (Figure 58).

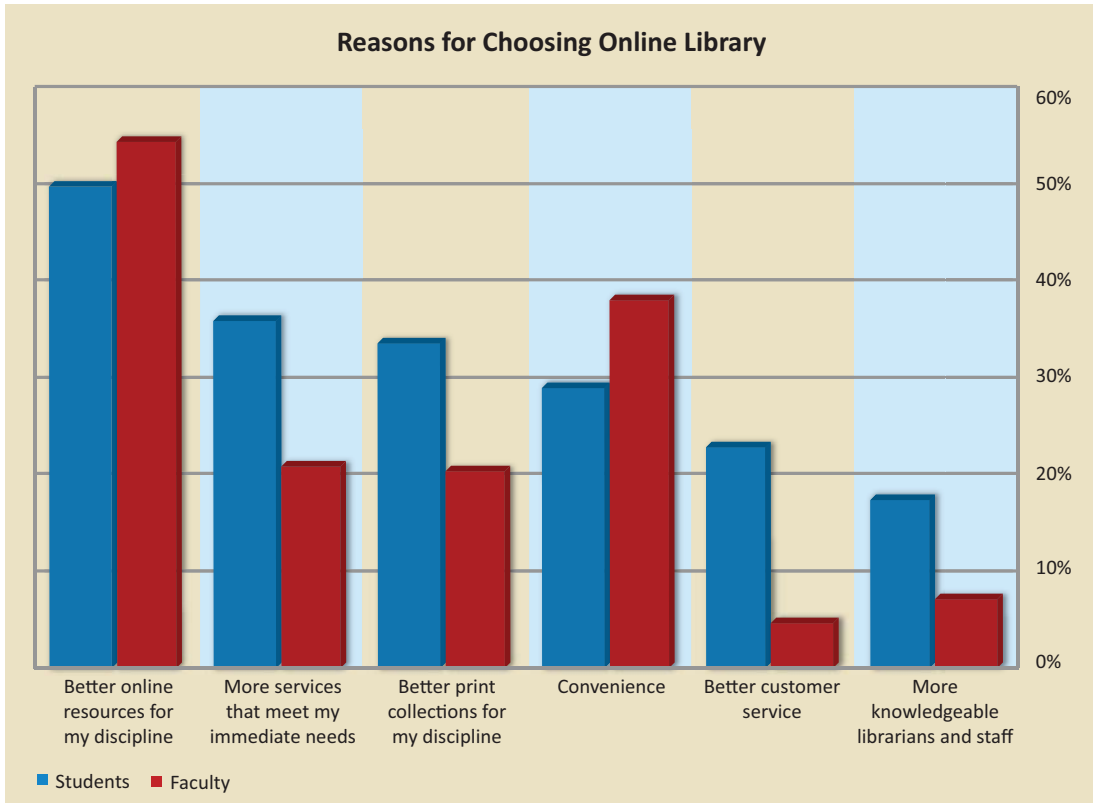


Figure 59

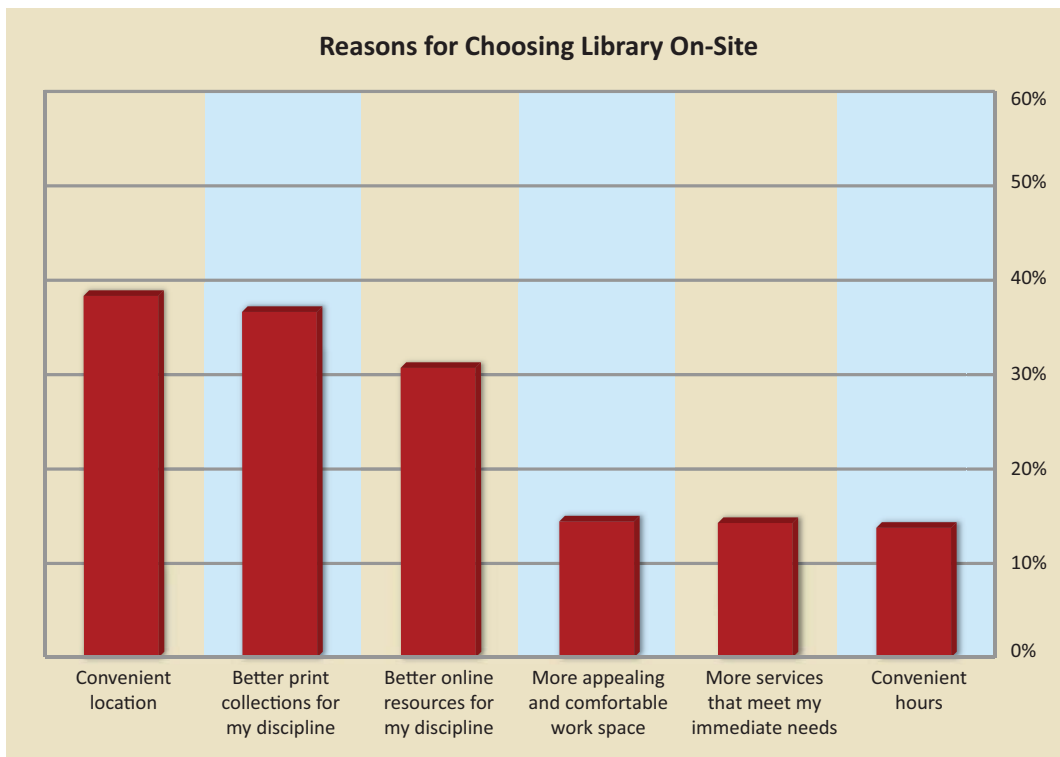


Figure 60

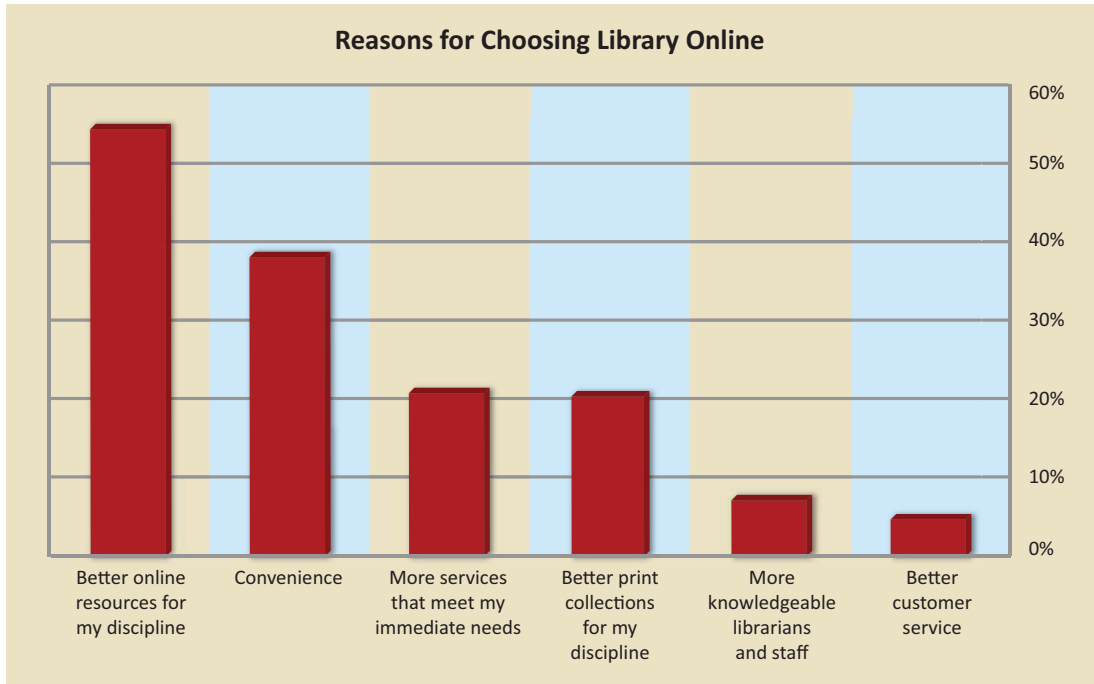


Figure 61

Faculty and student respondents have comparable motivations for using academic libraries on campus (Figure 59). Faculty in particular noted convenience as a leading reason, along with better collections for their discipline—this higher quality is quite often owing to faculty requests or library collections actively designed to support the curriculum (Figure 60). The majority of faculty turn to online resources when they better match research needs, although convenience is cited as a second consideration (Figure 61).

For all the convenience of proximity, not all of the library’s resources are always immediately available, for a variety of reasons, such as off-site shelving or current use. Some items require special attention, reside in archives or restricted shelving areas, or require time to be retrieved. The majority of faculty (53%) and students (60%) report “very effective” results when advance arrangements are required (Figure 62).

Overall, 73% of students report achieving a fully successful, desirable outcome when they last used the academic library; 68% of faculty reported the same (Figure 63). When asked if there were anything they wished to see available via the academic library that wasn’t of-

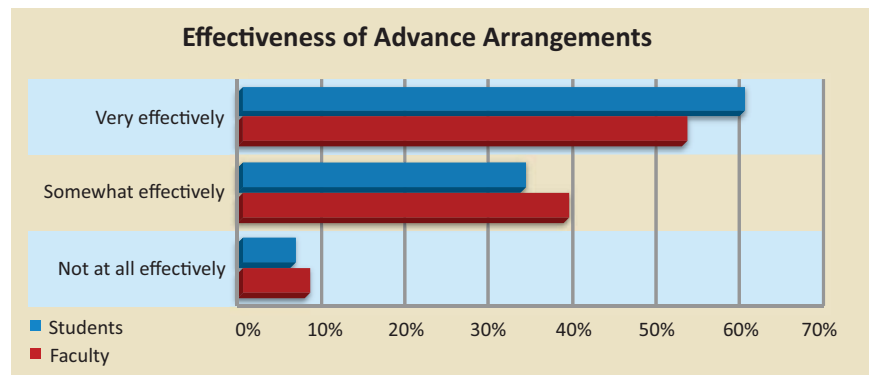


Figure 62

ferred, 62% of students and 67% of faculty said, “No” (Figure 64). This response is a favorable indicator of the services and collections presently offered by academic libraries, yet with just under 40% of each group answering “Yes,” there’s adequate room for innovation, experimentation, and improvement.

Over 86% of faculty respondents indicated they would be very likely to continue to use the academic library for research after the last time, compared to 63.5% of student respondents (Figure 65). With 27% of student respondents selecting “somewhat likely,” it’s unclear whether the nature of the experience or a future assignment would ultimately inspire subsequent use.

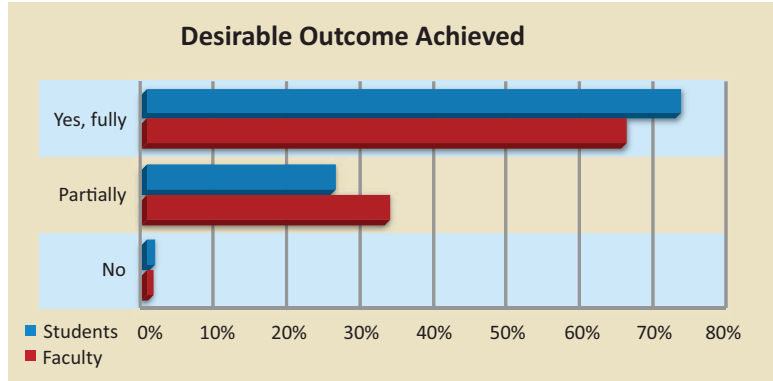


Figure 63

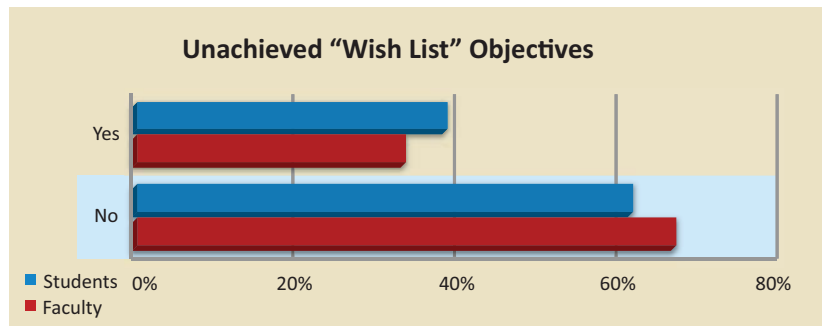


Figure 64

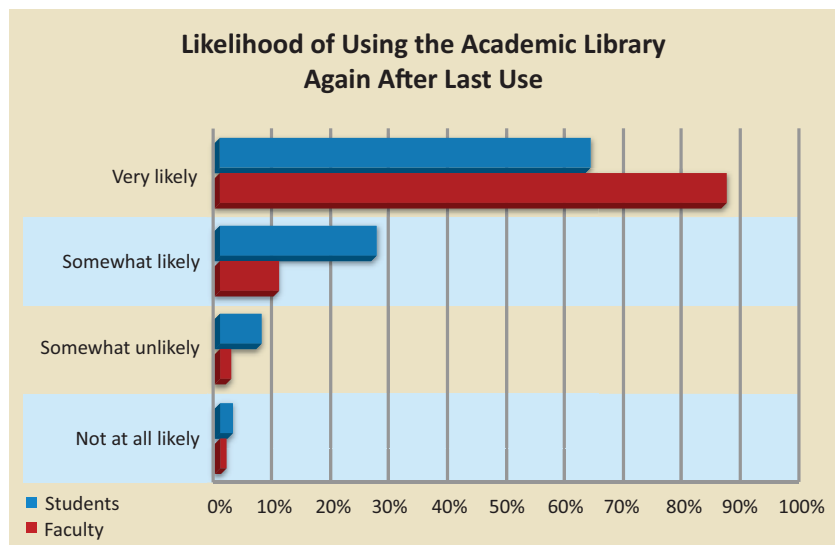


Figure 65

## TAKEAWAYS: FACULTY PERSPECTIVES

- 82% of faculty respondents recommended their libraries' websites to students to a high or moderate extent, compared with 77% who reported the same for the on-site facility. Increased partnerships between academic librarians and faculty, across the levels of the academic curriculum, should strive to make this 100%.
- Like students, faculty frequently turn to Google for initial research; however, many faculty respondents use academic libraries extensively and understand firsthand the value of the library for academic research and course development.
- 68% of faculty report achieving a fully successful, desirable outcome when they last used the academic library. When asked if there were anything they wished to see available via the academic library that wasn't offered, 67% of faculty said no, however there's significant room for innovation, experimentation, and increased engagement to attract the other 40% who had unachieved objectives. For example, only 23% reported success having books shipped to their office or work. Zeroing in on such areas could help heighten the "kindness" factor that all users rated highly.
- Constructive partnerships across departments not only support students, they create opportunities to refine services to faculty and contribute to course development. Librarians and faculty members are natural and essential partners, working together to meet the teaching, learning, and research objectives of the campus community.

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## CONCLUSIONS

Exploring how academic libraries meet patron preferences charts the course for future research on the attitudes and expectations, experiences and behavior, investments and outcomes of students and faculty, with an eye toward advancing partnerships, building interactive relationships, and developing a culture of innovation and kindness. Representing a wide range of students and faculty from community colleges, four-year colleges, and research institutions, *Library Journal Patron Profiles: Academic Library Edition* begins the dialog by identifying current successes and ripe opportunities for academic libraries to align resources, planning, services, and spaces with the goals of their institutions and communities.

But this report is designed to do much more than foster dialogue; it is intended to serve as a blueprint for methods to consider and metrics to measure to improve upon strategic outcome drivers that ultimately lead to establishing the Academic Library's value proposition to its core constituency. And to that end, we posit the following four (4) categories as value-measures to build out strategic planning.

---

### ***Experience—When participants last used the academic library (on-site or online), what were the activities and outcomes?***

Students and faculty use the academic library, on-site and online, selectively, based on convenience and specific needs. While visiting the library is reported as the leading form of obtaining information about academic libraries, Facebook is an essential but under-utilized communications platform, and academic libraries are encouraged to build community on other social media channels, based on experimentation and interactivity.

The most important outcome to students and faculty alike is that their question or immediate need is resolved. Students often seek print resources on-site, and both groups welcome alternatives when the item needed is not readily available. Faculty continue to provide course reserve services, with effective support from academic libraries, a service students may or may not be fully aware of or use. Faculty members are significantly more self-directed when using the academic library and are more likely to use self-service functions, if available, including those via mobile devices.

Availability of resources, particularly online, supports an overall positive user experience. And while user-experience should be constantly assessed and evaluated, deploying increasingly limited resources to support critical priorities is key. Accordingly, use information to help make those decisions: For example, according to the data, mobile virtual reference is not a preferred means of reference inquiry by faculty or students. There's a 60/40 split when it comes to both groups reporting success of desired outcomes achieved via the academic library.

---

***Perceptions—What expectations exist that shape student and faculty awareness of the library’s services, effectiveness, and role?***

The majority of students and faculty reported the likelihood to return again, based on the library’s ability to meet expectations and preferences, with only a segment of students expressing some ambivalence. Both students and faculty seek the on-site library for the experience of space vs. the online library for convenient access to content. However, of critical concern is that undergraduate students experience a decrease in their assurance about the support and inspiration provided to them by the academic library over their course of study. Faculty members encourage students to use the library, and as the lead researchers in the community, librarian/faculty partnerships would be mutually advantageous, by promoting positive, accurate student perceptions of the library and promoting research engagement and learning success. While relationships may be discussed in the context of in-person experiences and transactions at the academic library, or in the form of digital communications, such as with email, virtual reference, and social media – the consistency and effectiveness of student and faculty relationships with the academic library bears significant results. This is by far one of the clearest opportunities to improve overall library value based on the data presented herein.

---

***Preferences—How can the library expand or modify what’s offered to be more relevant and useful to academic library patrons?***

Student statements about the academic library indicate a desire for peaceful study space and a generally positive outlook on the role of the library toward achieving their academic goals, as well as the ability of technology and services to meet their expectations. For students, receiving support that helps them obtain a good grade on an assignment, or in a course, is more important than receiving library instruction in general. Google plays an important role in providing initial research information to students and faculty before they seek scholarly resources in the academic library collections.

Both students and faculty members indicate that kindness is a very important outcome of using the library, regardless of whether the primary objective was achieved. The majority of students and faculty reported a likelihood to return again, based on the library’s ability to meet expectations and preferences, with only a segment of students expressing some ambivalence.



**Value—When it comes to demonstrating and delivering value, what do students and faculty want most?**

Two-thirds of students still visit libraries seeking print books, and nearly the same number seek assistance in the form of interpersonal support. This reinforces the value of in-person services but also illustrates a clear opportunity: how to best expand the service-value proposition to support other areas of student/faculty interest? Faculty and students appreciate friendly, successful, and efficient academic library experiences, on-site and online. Relationships that foster creativity, development, and inspired research, as well as a culture that allows for experimentation and the introduction of emerging technologies, will add to and enhance the value of existing services.

This is particularly vital because despite the big push toward first-year library instruction classes to prepare students for research fluency, academic libraries are losing ground as undergraduate students advance in study. Of notable concern is the decrease in assurance that the academic library helps students understand what is being learned in class and offers unique support.

And keep in mind, when asked why they chose to use the academic library, Wi-Fi, collections, and convenience are the leading drivers – how can you build services around these leading drivers? More importantly, what services can develop that synthesize these drivers?

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

### **Academic Patron Profiles Data Collection Student Sample:**

The sample for most Bowker Market Research primary research projects, including this Academic Patron Profiles study is drawn from a “book buyer” subgroup of a nationally representative panel of U.S. adults over age 13 that is balanced to the U.S. Census. This sample is built by monthly recruiting of more than 6,000 book buyers in 2011 and 2012 who complete surveys about their book-purchasing behavior as part of Bowker Market Research, a service of R.R. Bowker LLC. Each month, these book buyers are recruited onto the panel in order to ensure a statistically valid and engaged sample of book buyers.

For the Academic Patron Profiles survey, a series of meetings with subscribers was held to finalize the sampling plan and question its scope. For sampling, it was agreed that a reasonable sample size would be between 2,000 and 2,500 students per wave. The breakdown of the sample would be expected to be in line with recent data from the National Council of Education Statistics, a U.S. government agency that tracks data about American education. Three key demographics were selected according to the following quotas, in accordance with NECS:

**Gender:**

Male: n = 1,100; Female: n = 1,400

**Student Level:**

Freshman / 1st year: n = 475 ; Sophomore / 2nd year: n = 475 ; Junior / 3rd year: n = 450  
Senior / 4th year: n = 450 ; Graduate: n = 3501

Because of the greater role that academic libraries tend to play in four year school student populations, the proportion of these schools is greater compared to that of two year schools.

Actual sample came in within reasonable tolerances of the above targets.

To ensure the highest-quality sample, the market research firm MarketTools used their patented “TrueSample” methodology to ensure that the people who responded were who they said they were and completed the survey thoughtfully and accurately. These respondents were incentivized with ZoomPoints, which they can redeem for various goods and services.

**Faculty Sample:**

The faculty list was drawn from two principle sources: MarketDataRetrieval (MDR) and Scholar Universe. Bowker purchased a randomly selected list of 10,000 faculty from the market research firm Market Data Retrieval. MDR is the primary source of faculty mailing lists in the US. To generate a sizeable number of responses for analysis, we supplemented this list with names from ProQuest’s “Scholar Universe” which is an opt-in resource of 2 million profiles of active full-time faculty—authors, researchers and scholars. It is important to note that the response rate from faculty was significantly lower than that of the students and, therefore, building a truly representative sample (as was possible among the students) was more challenging. For this reason, the faculty sample should not be used to project the demographic make-up of the larger universe of US faculty. But we believe the value in this sample is to determine how faculty differ in their usage and behavior in the academic library.

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