

# University of Chicago Library 2015 Survey of Graduate and Professional School Students

*The Assessment Committee and Survey Project Team  
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## Introduction

Since 2010, the University of Chicago Library has conducted periodic surveys in order to better understand the research, teaching, and learning needs of the University community.<sup>1</sup> These surveys have provided useful insights regarding our patrons' perceptions and use of Library's collections, services, and spaces; however, a recent survey meta-analysis demonstrated the need to develop a more holistic picture of our users' experiences at the University in order to understand their perceptions and use.

In 2015, the Library conducted a survey of graduate and professional school students in order to begin developing this understanding. The questionnaire, created and administered by Ithaka S+R<sup>2</sup> and customized for use by the University of Chicago, included modules addressing participants' higher education objectives, coursework, research habits, and teaching practices, as well as their perceptions of the role of the Library in supporting these different activities.

## Response Rates

The survey was distributed to all 8,701 enrolled graduate and professional school students on February 4, 2015 and closed on March 4, 2015 with an overall response rate of 26%, including responses from all divisions and schools. This response rate is a significant increase over the responses to the previous

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/surveys/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://sr.ithaka.org/content/surveys/>

Survey of Graduate and Professional School Students (17%)<sup>3</sup> and comparable to the responses to the 2011 Survey of Undergraduate Students (also 26%).<sup>4</sup>

### Notes on this Report

Features of the Qualtrics survey platform (survey flow and skip logic) were used to ensure that participants received questions and modules relevant to their current status at the University; additionally, no questions were required. As a result, not all participants received or responded to all questions or modules. Discussions of individual questions reflect the number of responses to that individual question, rather than responses to the survey as a whole. Where appropriate, responses and response rates have been put into the context of the total surveyed population of a division or school; this is noted in the discussion.

Many of the questions in the Ithaka S+R instrument utilized scales ranging from four to seven points. For the purposes of this report, we have often chosen to cluster responses. In most cases, discussing responses at the level of granularity provided did not prove meaningful. Where clustering has occurred, it will be indicated in the initial discussion of the affected questions and then noted in the footnotes for specific questions.

Divisions and schools will be referred to by common abbreviations (e.g., Humanities, PSD, Booth) for purposes of brevity<sup>5</sup>.

A number of supplements to this report will be made available. Interactive visualizations of survey responses have been generated with Tableau and will be made available via the Library's intranet for viewing and use by Library staff. Most questions will be able to be filtered by departmental affiliation; further segmenting can be made available as necessary. Brief analyses of specific topics or areas for decision-making will be made available to the appropriate individuals, departments, or divisions, including those at the campus level. For example, requests for collection development in specific areas will be shared with the appropriate bibliographer or selector.

### Demographics

The survey instrument included a number of demographic questions, which were answered by respondents in two ways: seven questions were presented in the instrument itself and a further nine questions answered using data obtained from the University Registrar.

Response rates varied greatly by division, with the Humanities Division having the highest rate at 43% of enrolled students, followed by the Divinity School (38%), and the Social Sciences (37%). Professional schools tended to have lower response rates, with Booth having the lowest rate at 16%.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 2010 University of Chicago Library Survey of Graduate and Professional School Students:  
<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/surveys/2010/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> 2011 University of Chicago Library Survey of Undergraduates:  
<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/surveys/2011/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> Common abbreviations indicated in Unit chart below.

<sup>6</sup> Despite Booth's low response rate, it is worth noting that responses from Booth students comprised the largest response from any single division or school (21%), and that more than three times as many Booth students (475) responded to this survey as did to our previous survey of graduate and professional school students (127).

2015 Survey of Graduate and Professional School Students

Unit	Enrolled Students	Responded	Response Rate
Humanities Division (Humanities)	790	341	43%
Divinity School	306	116	38%
Social Sciences Division (SSD)	1097	403	37%
Institute for Molecular Engineering (IME)	36	13	36%
Social Service Administration (SSA)	460	159	35%
Physical Sciences Division (PSD)	929	285	31%
Biological Sciences Division (BSD)	394	120	30%
Graham School of Continuing Liberal and Professional Studies (Graham School)	250	74	30%
Harris School of Public Policy Studies (Harris)	354	89	25%
Pritzker School of Medicine (Pritzker)	403	85	21%
Law School (Law)	695	139	20%
Booth School of Business (Booth)	2987	475	16%

Response rates by degree tended to be fairly similar to responses by division, with response rates from students seeking a PhD (37% of enrolled students) or MA (36%) being generally higher than response rates from those seeking terminal professional degrees (e.g., 25% of students seeking an MPP responded; 16% of enrolled students seeking an MBA responded):

Degree Sought	Enrolled Students	Responded	Response Rate
J.S.D.	18	7	39%
Ph.D.	2948	1088	37%
M.A.	834	298	36%
M.L.A.	48	15	31%
M.Div.	39	11	28%
LL.M.	73	19	26%
M.S.	476	123	26%
M.P.P.	275	68	25%
M.D.	329	70	21%
M.A.T.	62	12	19%
J.D.	599	112	19%
Multiple	110	19	17%
M.B.A.	2874	455	16%
M.F.A.	16	2	13%

The general demographic profile of respondents offered few surprises.

- 85% of responses came from full-time students, who responded about 10% more frequently than part-time students, most of whom came from Booth.
- More than half of respondents lived in Hyde Park or the surrounding neighborhoods (58%), with Booth students being most likely to live off campus (93%), followed by Graham School students (76%).
- A little more than half of respondents were employed (51%), with more respondents working part-time than full-time. This likely reflects differing types of employment as well as different types of student support available in the divisions or schools.<sup>7</sup>
- Although women make up only 39% of the graduate student population, they comprised 45% of the total responses. This is because the response rate for women was 31%, compared to 24% of men.
- 89% of respondents were born in or after 1980.

### Higher Education Objectives

The first module posed questions about the relative importance of a number of common higher education objectives. Respondents were then asked to indicate the relative usefulness of a number of factors related to obtaining their desired job or career. The factors perceived to be most critical - those that were most frequently rated as very or extremely useful – were the type of degree completed (for 91% of respondents) and the reputation or ranking of the University of Chicago (90%).

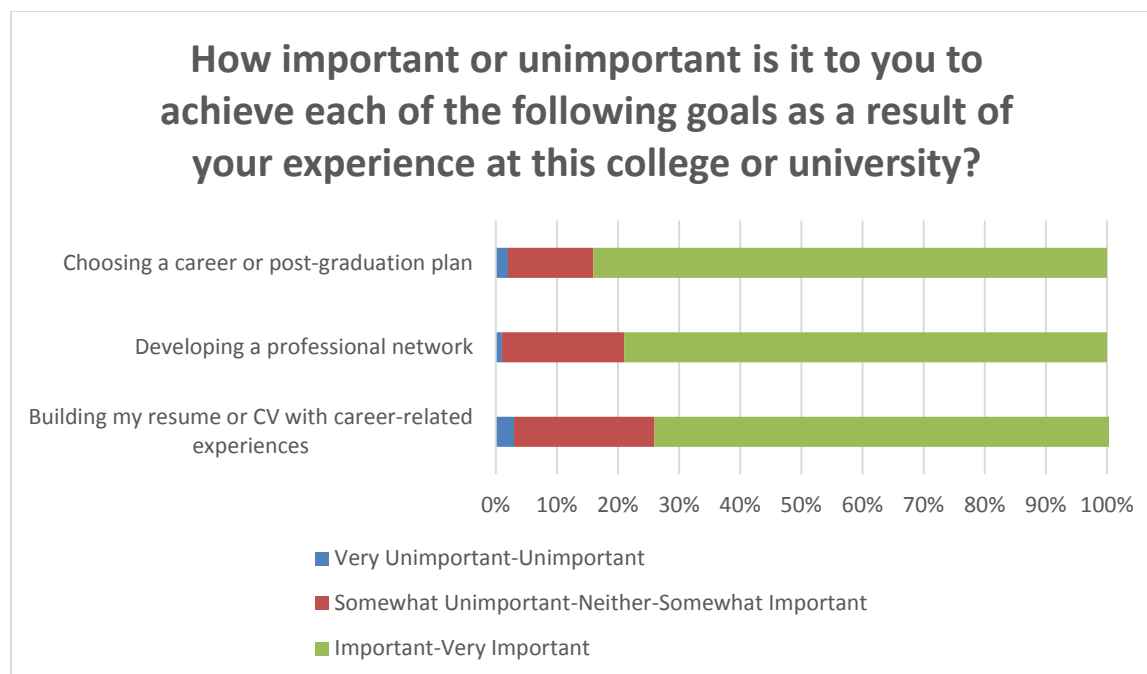
It came as no surprise that 93% of respondents indicated that it was important or very important to have advanced knowledge about a specific subject, field, or major. Similarly, 84% of respondents felt that their major, field, or program of study would be very or extremely useful.

84% of respondents indicated that the research and analysis skills developed at the University would be very or extremely useful for obtaining a job or career. A slightly lower 73% of respondents indicated that it was important or very important to improve their ability to find sources. This was most important to the Divinity School, the Humanities, and SSD, divisions that typically make heavy use of the Library's resources and services, but least important to Booth and PSD.<sup>8</sup> The discrepancy between these two values may be explained by responses to later questions wherein respondents indicated that they had sufficient research skills for the work they expected or were expected to do, so the questions about obtaining these skills were perhaps perceived as irrelevant.

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<sup>7</sup> The high rates of full-time employment on campus for respondents from IME (54%), PSD (41%), and BSD (40%) likely represent lab work done as a part of full-time graduate studies. By contrast, the respondents from Booth (47%) and the Graham School (43%) who work full-time off-campus are likely doing their student work part-time while working at a "real" job full-time. However, the high rates of on-campus part-time employment for respondents from the Divinity School (46%), Humanities (37%), SSA (35%), Harris (33%), and SSD (32%) likely reflect work done so that they can afford to continue being students.

<sup>8</sup> Divinity 89% important-very important; Humanities 83%; SSD 81%; Booth 61%; PSD 65%.



Professional development and future employment were also important or very important to the majority of respondents, including those in traditionally more academic fields. Respondents are not enrolled in graduate/professional programs solely to gain knowledge for knowledge’s sake; they also want to better their chances of post graduate employment (88%), and see value in choosing a career or post-graduation plan (85%). 79% were interested in developing a professional network, and 75% in building a resume or CV. These results were consistent across divisions and schools. For example, getting a job upon graduation was important or very important to 95% of respondents from BSD, 94% of SSA, 93% of Law and the Humanities, 92% of Harris, and 90% of Pritzker.

Developing a professional network was much more important and useful to respondents from Booth,<sup>9</sup> but was ranked as important or very important to at least 70% of respondents in all divisions except PSD (67%) and IME (62%), and very to extremely useful to obtaining a job or career to at least 73% of respondents in all divisions except Pritzker (67%). These responses suggest that all students – not just those from Booth – may be interested in additional resources or support related to building professional networks.

Collaborating with faculty was important or very important to approximately 63% of respondents, but only 56% of respondents expected these collaborations to be very or extremely useful when seeking a career or job after graduation. This is one area where responses from selected divisions skewed the average rating, likely as a result of differences in research and teaching practices. Collaboration was viewed as minimally important or useful to respondents from Booth<sup>10</sup> and Law<sup>11</sup>, but highly important to the sciences<sup>12</sup>. However, the faculty/mentor relationship was perceived as very or extremely useful by

<sup>9</sup> 95% important-very important; 88% very-extremely useful.

<sup>10</sup> 30% important-very important; 26% very-extremely useful.

<sup>11</sup> 43% important-very important; 34% very-extremely useful.

<sup>12</sup> BSD 94%; IME 92%; Pritzker 89%; PSD 84%.

69% of respondents, with a clear division between research-intensive divisions<sup>13</sup> and the more practice-oriented schools<sup>14</sup>. The value of mentorship was echoed in the open-ended responses.

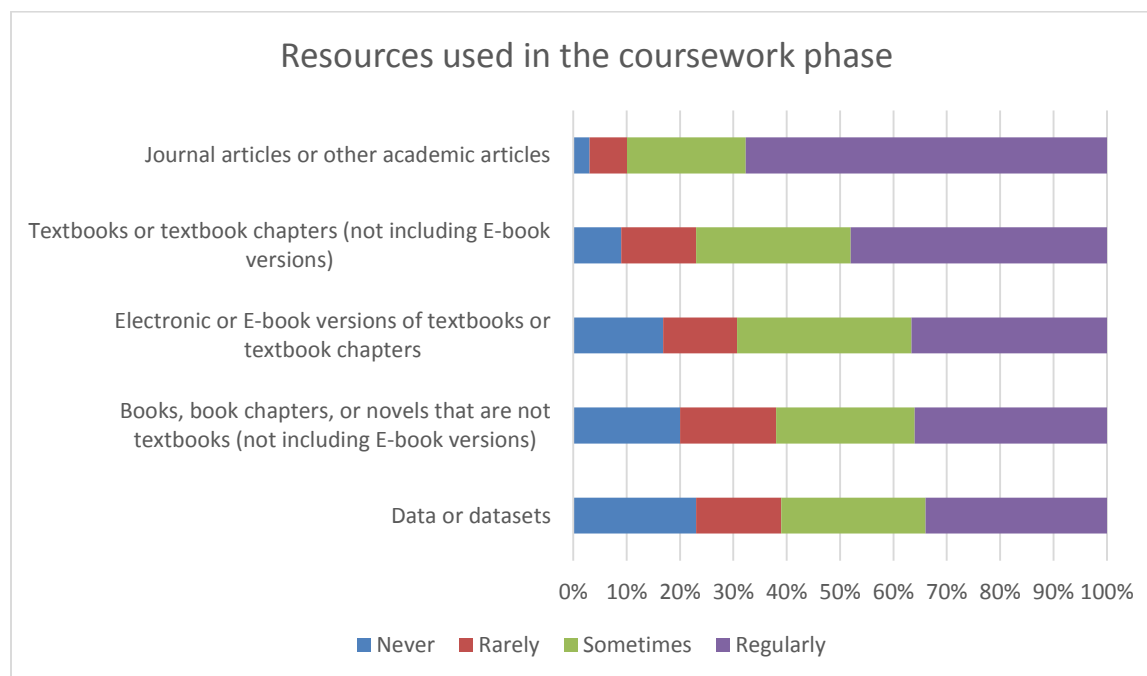
Of least importance to respondents were: working on group projects (41% important-very important); taking general courses (37%); participating in social events (37%) or extracurricular activities (25%); studying abroad (24%); achieving a specific GPA (23%), or obtaining an additional degree such as a second master's (22%). Extracurricular activities were similarly perceived as minimally useful (17% very-extremely useful).

## Coursework and Academics

The second module provided context for the participants' experience at the University: questions focused on the types of assignments and resources required for coursework, the ease of accessing the resources, spaces, and training required to get work done, and the role of the Library relative to this work. This module was preceded by a series of questions about participants' status at the University; responses to these questions were used to trigger the display of relevant questions in the subsequent modules.

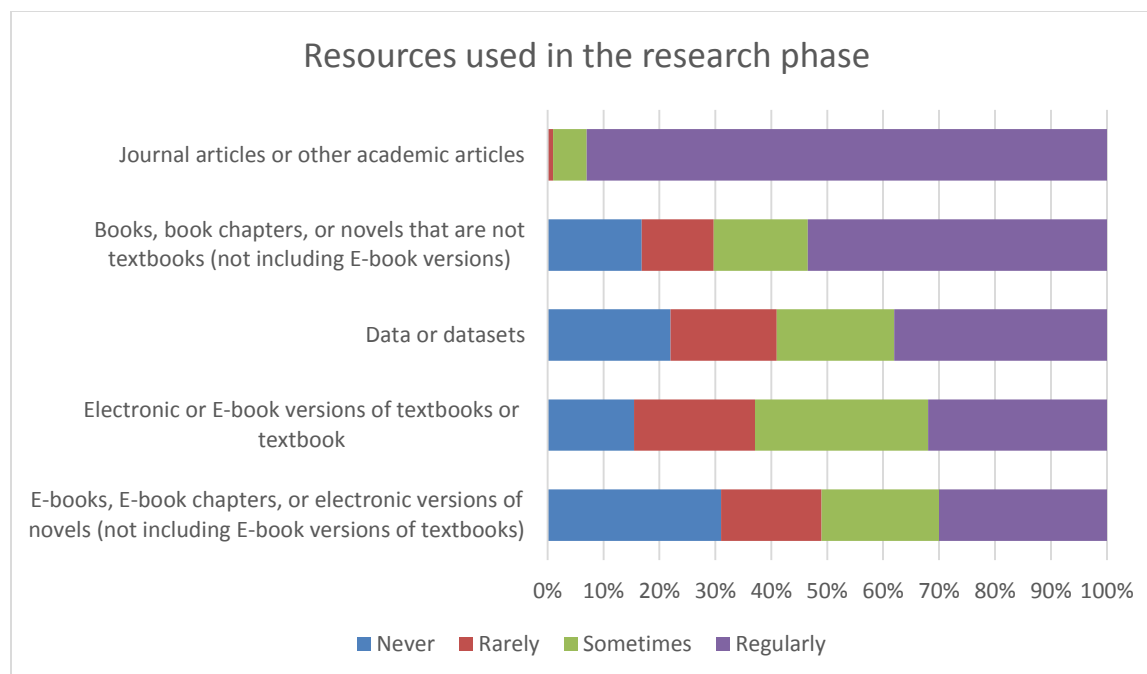
### Assignments and Resources

Respondents in the coursework phase reported that they are most regularly assigned problem sets (42%), group projects (37%), and research papers (36%), and most frequently use academic articles (67%) and textbooks or textbook chapters (in print: 48%; electronic: 36%) to complete their work. Respondents in the research phase most regularly use academic articles (93%) and books or book chapters (in print: 54%; electronic: 30%).



<sup>13</sup> BSD, Divinity, Humanities, IME, Pritzker, PSD, SSD all greater than 75%.

<sup>14</sup> Booth, Graham, Harris, Law, SSA all 65% or less.



### Research Starting Points

38% of respondents reported beginning their research with an academic search engine or database, while 30% began with a general search engine (e.g., Google), and 17% at the Library’s website. Respondents from the Divinity School and the Humanities (37% in both cases) were more likely to begin with the Library’s website than were other respondents. Of the 4% of respondents who provided a more specific starting point, 46% reported beginning with types of sources (e.g. books, bibliographies, articles, data, archival material, films, an art exhibition). 27% began with specific academic search engines/databases, primarily legal databases (15 of these 25 respondents specified Westlaw and/or Lexis/Nexis). 18% began with recommendations from/discussions with professors and others, in one case stackoverflow.com, a question-and-answer site for programmers. 4% begin with fieldwork or interviews.

This question proved problematic, both in terms of definitions for tools or sources and in terms of defining and understanding the nature of research in various disciplines. One respondent commented, “[it’s] hard to know where/when a PhD student’s research *begins*.” Some wanted to list more than one starting point: “All the first three (they are not exclusive!)” and “Discussion with professors, books and their bibliographies.”

When asked specifically about the Library, 40% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it serves as a starting point for locating information, resources, or citations, with respondents from the Humanities and the Divinity School having the strongest positive response.<sup>15</sup> 19% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, with respondents from BSD and Booth having the strongest negative response.<sup>16</sup> This is not surprising, given the differences in the nature of the work and the types of resources most heavily used by these divisions. In addition to these disciplinary or divisional differences,

<sup>15</sup> Humanities 72% agree-strongly agree; Divinity School 70%.

<sup>16</sup> BSD 37% disagree-strongly disagree; Booth 33%.

it seems that phase of study at least somewhat correlates with overall agreement: respondents preparing to file their dissertations (65% agree-strongly agree) or for comprehensive or other doctoral exams (62%) reported the strongest positive response, while respondents in the coursework phase were the least strongly positive (30%).

### **Ease of Access to Information and Resources**

At least 75% of respondents in all phases reported that it is at least somewhat easy to access the resources needed for their work. However, as students progress through qualifying exams and dissertation research and writing, accessing the needed resources seems to grow less easy (though not necessarily more difficult).

In the coursework phase, 77% of respondents indicated that it was at least somewhat easy to access the needed resources, with the largest percentage of respondents selecting 'easy' (35%) from the provided scale. A breakdown by division helps to explain this picture. In the coursework phase, 91% of respondents from BSD indicated that it is easy or very easy to access resources. In all other divisions, however, the majority indicated that it was somewhat easy or easy to access resources.

80% of respondents indicated that it was at least somewhat easy to access the resources needed to prepare for qualifying exams; however, only 6% of respondents indicated that it was very easy. Finally, in the dissertation phase, 77% of respondents indicated it was at least somewhat easy to access the needed resources. It is interesting to note that while the percentage of respondents expressing difficulty<sup>17</sup> remained relatively stable (11% in the coursework phase; 10% in the exams phase; 12% in the dissertation phase), few respondents in any phase indicated that this access was very difficult.

### **Research and Teaching Practices**

The first two modules helped provide a better understanding of respondents' priorities and objectives, and to put those in the context of the work they expect or are expected to complete at the University.<sup>18</sup> The final two modules helped situate respondents' research and teaching practices in this context.<sup>19</sup>

#### **Research Priorities**

The Research Practices module generally confirmed previous perceptions of research priorities and practices among graduate students. For instance, 67% of respondents ranked conduct[ing] original research as important or very important to do before graduating. For those writing a dissertation, the top three considerations for choosing their topic were: personal interests (89%), perceptions of gaps in the existing research (77%), and [the] practicality or feasibility of a project (66%).<sup>20</sup>

#### **Importance of Collaboration**

Collaboration is far more common in the science divisions, which is expected given the nature of scientific investigation. 90% of respondents from BSD reported having collaborated with faculty, followed by Pritzker at 80%, IME at 69%, and PSD at 61%,<sup>21</sup> which is consistent with the value placed on collaboration by respondents in these fields. While a similar number of respondents report having

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<sup>17</sup> Somewhat difficult-difficult-very difficult.

<sup>18</sup> The third module focused on the Role of the Library will be discussed in the final section of this report.

<sup>19</sup> The display of portions of the Research Practices and Teaching modules was contingent upon skip logic, so some questions were displayed to fewer than half of respondents to the core modules.

<sup>20</sup> These percentages are a combination of respondents rating as important-very important.

<sup>21</sup> Pritzker 80%; IME 69%; PSD 61%.



collaborated with fellow graduate students,<sup>22</sup> these collaborations are perceived as much less important.<sup>23</sup>

While collaboration with faculty is common in the sciences, acknowledgement of this collaboration by faculty is far lower: only 43% of respondents from BSD, 29% of Pritzker, 28% of PSD, and 23% of IME report that they received acknowledgement for contributions to work published by their faculty collaborators. Interestingly, while collaboration with faculty is low in the SSD, the Humanities, and the Divinity School, the rate of faculty acknowledgement matches the rate of collaboration more closely.<sup>24</sup> This suggests that those students who do collaborate with faculty in these divisions or schools do so in a more substantive manner. If acknowledgement correlates with the level of intellectual collaboration, then intellectual collaboration with faculty seems to be fairly consistent across different divisions and schools. Much of this collaboration may also be ongoing, as 74% of respondents reported collaborating “sometimes” or “regularly.”<sup>25</sup> This rate and frequency of collaboration suggests the need to support *both* student and faculty research.

### Research Output

The overwhelming importance of publishing academic journal articles is not surprising, even among units that showed less interest in publishing.<sup>26</sup> The publication of journal articles was perceived to be very or extremely useful professionally by 92% of respondents from the research-intensive divisions or schools.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, respondents from these units were uniformly most concerned with their work reaching scholars in their sub-discipline<sup>28</sup> or field.<sup>29</sup> The highest ratings for the usefulness<sup>30</sup> of publishing in scholarly monographs came primarily from outside the sciences.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> 36% overall report having collaborated with faculty; 33% overall report having collaborated with graduate students.

<sup>23</sup> 47% overall rank faculty collaboration as important-very important; 26% overall rank graduate student collaboration as important-very important.

<sup>24</sup> SSD, 38% vs. 25%; Humanities, 31% vs. 25%; Divinity, 16% vs. 19%.

<sup>25</sup> The survey does not define “sometimes” and “regularly.”

<sup>26</sup> The following units had the lowest highest percentage of perceived usefulness (very-extremely useful) for any type of publication: Harris and Law 60%; SSA 54%; Graham School 50%; Booth 25%.

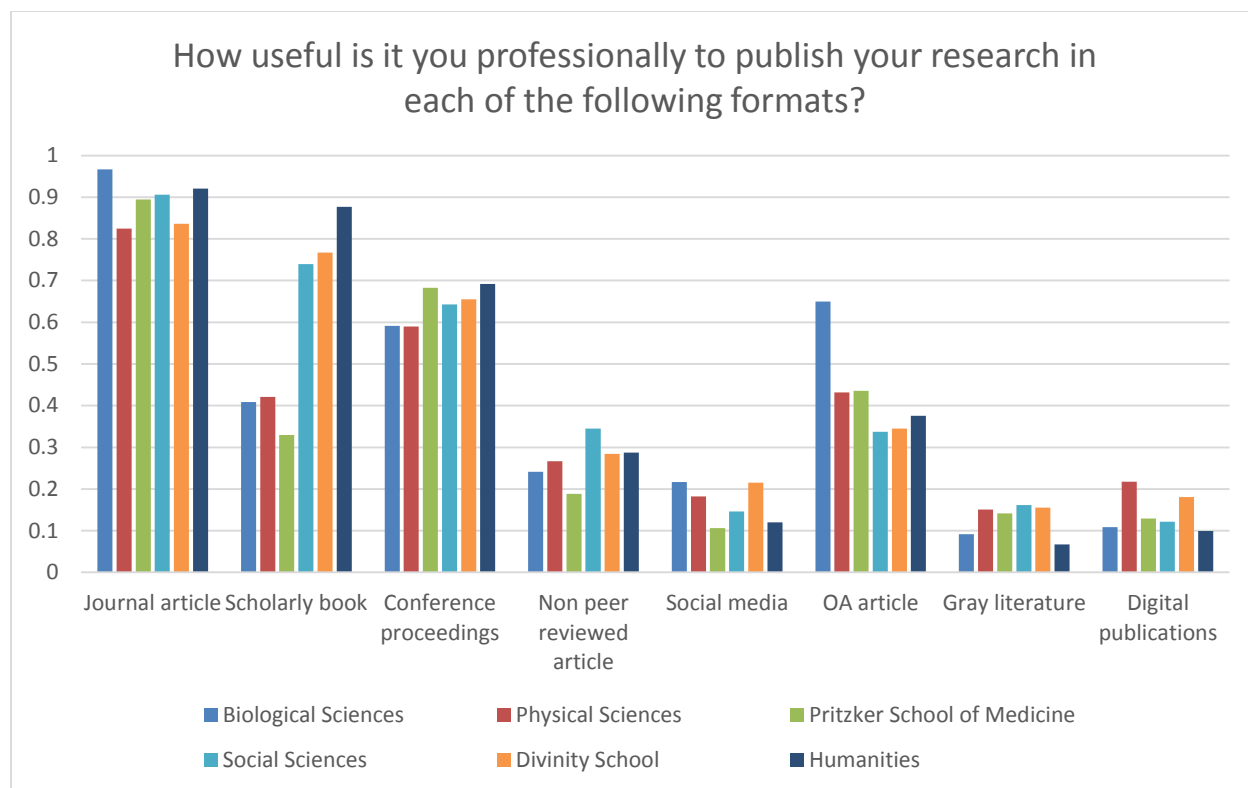
<sup>27</sup> 100% of respondents from BSD and IME; Pritzker and SSD 94%; Humanities 93%; Divinity School 89%; PSD 86%.

<sup>28</sup> 92% important-very important to BSD, Divinity School, Humanities, IME, Pritzker, PSD, SSD.

<sup>29</sup> 80% important-very important to BSD, Divinity School, Humanities, IME, Pritzker, PSD, SSD.

<sup>30</sup> Very-extremely useful.

<sup>31</sup> Humanities 89% very-extremely useful; Divinity School 82%; SSD 77%; IME 73%.



The perceived usefulness of publishing Open Access articles varied by affiliation. This outlet for research dissemination received the second highest rating for perceived usefulness for respondents from BSD, and third highest rating for Pritzker and the Graham School, and PSD.<sup>32</sup> The value placed on Open Access publication among the sciences is likely a reflection of NIH grant requirements. Two units that may benefit from expanded outreach and support around Open Access publishing are SSD and SSA. Both perceived Open Access as relatively less useful than other types of publication,<sup>33</sup> however both expressed the strongest interest of all divisions/school in their research reaching professionals outside academia<sup>34</sup> and the general public.<sup>35</sup>

### Teaching Practice

The Teaching module was displayed to fewer than half of the respondents of the entire survey, making it difficult to draw conclusions that reflect the larger graduate student population. 90% of responses to most questions in this module came from respondents in the research-intensive divisions, and the responses from these divisions varied consistently from the practice-oriented schools while displaying minimal in-group variation. As a result, this discussion will primarily focus on the research-intensive divisions; responses from the practice-oriented schools will be excluded except where noted. This module covered three general topics: respondents’ teaching practice, expectations for their students’ work, and their perceptions of and responsibility for students’ research skills.

<sup>32</sup> BSD very-extremely useful 67%; Pritzker and Graham 46%; PSD 45%.

<sup>33</sup> SSD 35% very-extremely useful; journals (94%), monographs (77%), conference proceedings (67%), and non-peer reviewed articles (36%) rated higher. SSA 32% very-extremely useful; all but “other” (28%) and digital publications (26%) rated higher.

<sup>34</sup> SSD 55% important-very important; SSA 51%.

<sup>35</sup> SSD 48% important-very important; SSA 42%.

### Instruction and Digital Technology

Respondents were asked two questions about their use of “new pedagogies or instructional approaches that take advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technology”: whether they were interested in adopting these methods, and whether their institution offers “excellent” support to help adopt those methods. 49% of respondents from the research-intensive divisions indicated that they would like to use these new methods;<sup>36</sup> however, respondents had a more mixed opinion of the University’s support for these approaches, with nearly equal percentages of respondents expressing agreement with (39%) and no opinion of (37%) the University’s “excellent” support for these modes of teaching. While it is clear that there is interest in developing these new approaches, it is not clear how many respondents actually use these methods. Additionally, results for the second question may be colored by the use of the qualifier “excellent” in the question text; responses may reference the availability or the quality of support.

### Student Research

46% of respondents from the research-intensive divisions indicated that they expect their students to use primary sources in coursework and research projects<sup>37</sup> while 60% expected the same for secondary sources<sup>38</sup>. These results suggest that students are expected to use library resources. Respondents were also asked how often they assign original research projects to their students. 37% of respondents indicated that they sometimes assigned original research while only 14% regularly did so<sup>39</sup>.

### Student Research Skills

There was a lack of consensus among respondents who teach regarding the responsibility for teaching or improving research skills. In general, respondents had a slightly negative view of their students’ research skills, with only 13% disagreeing with the assertion that their students have poor research skills<sup>40</sup>. 46% of those who teach undergraduate students indicated that improving their students’ research skills was a goal of their courses.<sup>41</sup> However, respondents generally felt that the responsibility for developing students’ research skills falls to the students themselves (48% agreed or strongly agreed), followed by their instructors (24%), and then the Library (11%). A separate question asked respondents to indicate whether librarians help students develop their research skills; 40% of respondents had no opinion, 24% somewhat agreed, and 23% agreed or strongly agreed.

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<sup>36</sup>Agree-strongly agree.

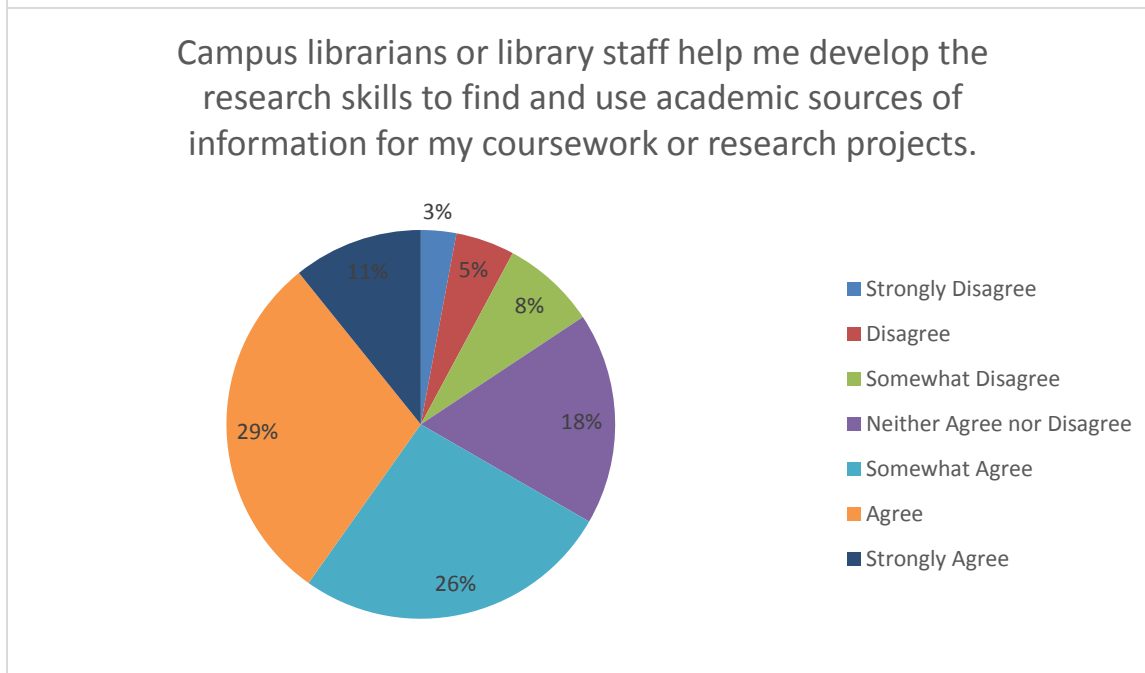
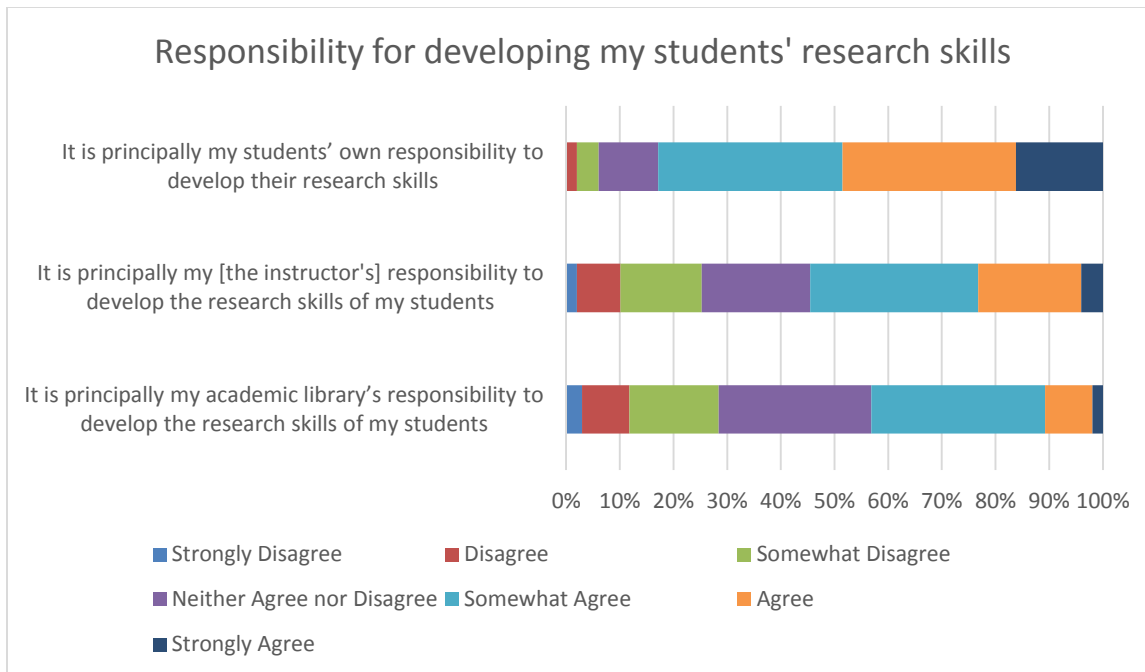
<sup>37</sup> Agree-strongly agree.

<sup>38</sup> Agree-strongly agree. The more practice-oriented schools expressed stronger neutral opinions for both questions. 26% expressed no opinion regarding primary sources.

<sup>39</sup> No significant difference between the research-intensive and practice-oriented divisions/schools.

<sup>40</sup> Disagree-strongly disagree.

<sup>41</sup> It is worth noting that this question received 17-20% fewer responses than the other questions in this module.



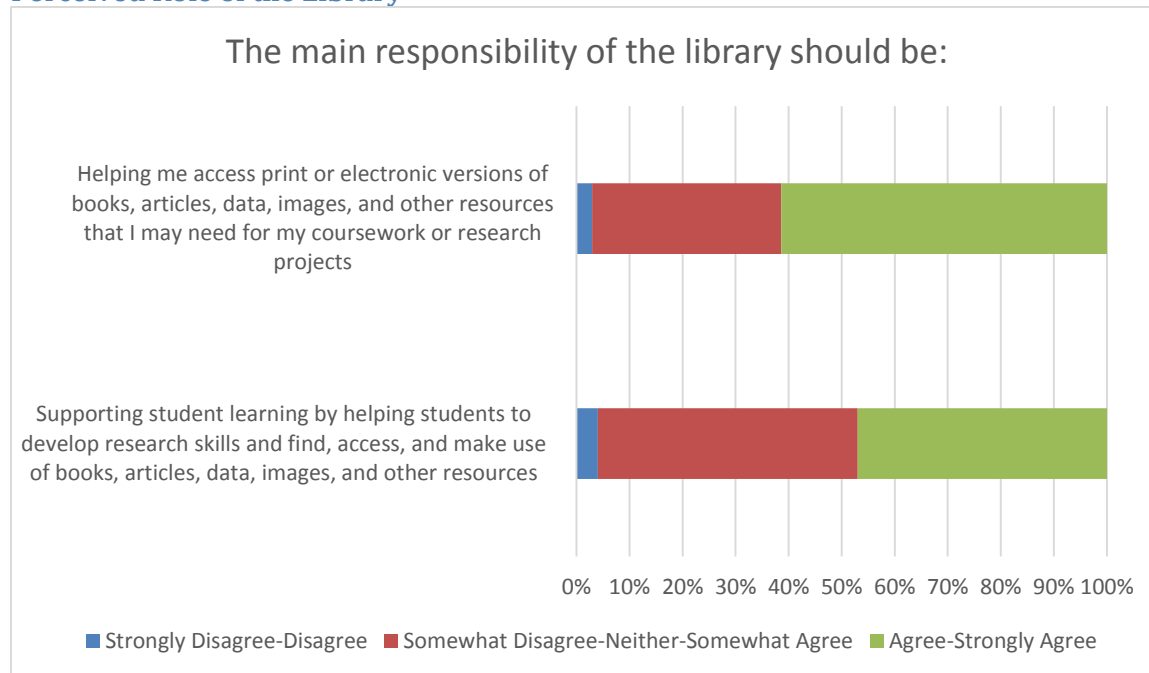
Given that so many instructors believe their students have poor research skills to some degree, and that improving research skills is a goal for at least some instructors of undergraduate students, there seems to be some evidence that the current preference to have students develop their own skills is not working. However, since there is no time element associated with any of these questions, it is not possible to determine if respondents felt that their students improved over time (even within a particular course; though even that may be difficult as instructors may have a student for a single

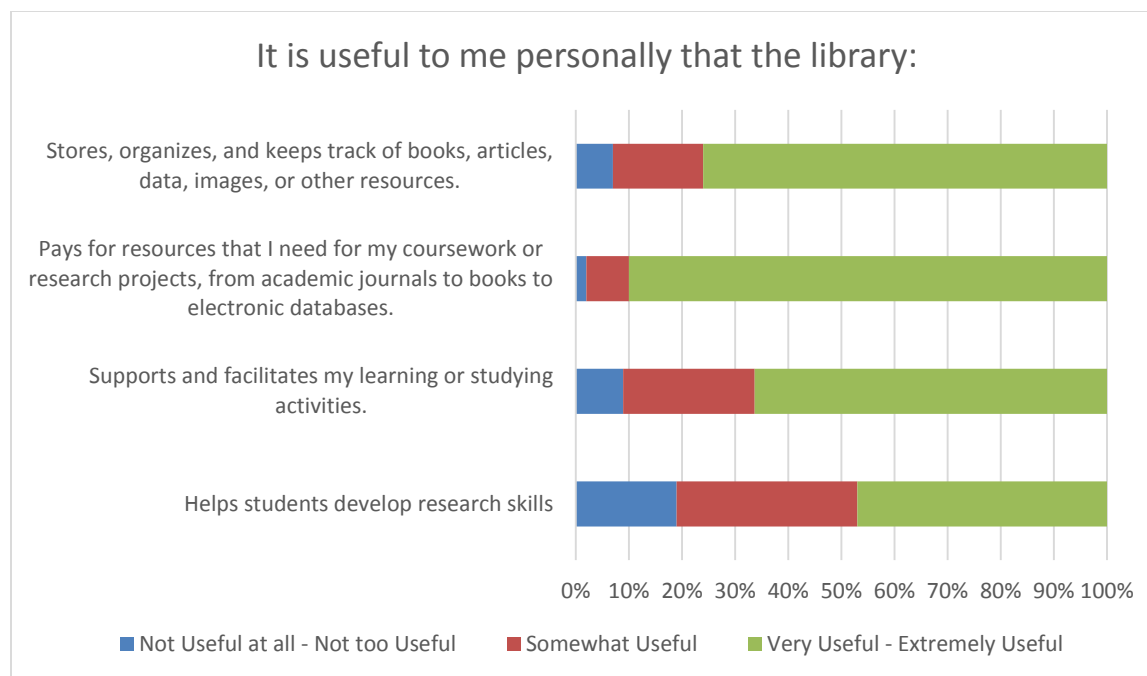
quarter and the only evidence of their research skills comes in a project or paper at the end of the course).

### The Library in the Life of the Student

A number of questions throughout the survey asked respondents to express their opinions regarding the Library's role in various aspects of their academic experience. Additionally, a dedicated module (Role of the Library) explored aspects of the library in the context of respondents' needs and use. Rather than discussing these roles individually, as they were posed in the survey, it seems useful to consider areas or themes where the Library might have the opportunity to change perceptions of its role, or to change its role itself based on the needs and practices expressed.

### Perceived Role of the Library





90% of respondents, including at least 70% of respondents from all divisions, find it very or extremely useful that the Library “pays for resources I need for my coursework or research projects, from academic journals to books to electronic databases.” Additionally, 79% of respondents, including at least 50% of respondents from all divisions, find it very or extremely useful that the Library “stores, organizes, and keeps track of books, articles, data, images, or other resources.”

Continuing this theme, 62% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “the main responsibility of the library should be helping me access resources I need for my coursework or research projects.” Respondents from the Humanities, the Divinity School, and SSD had the most strongly positive response to this statement, while Booth, Law, and Harris had the least.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, respondents who were working on or preparing to defend their capstone projects or dissertations were more likely to agree with this statement than students in the coursework phase.<sup>43</sup>

By contrast, only 67% of respondents in the coursework phase find it very or extremely useful that the Library “supports and facilitates my learning or studying activities”, with the strongest positive responses from the Divinity School (86%) and the Humanities (80%).<sup>44</sup> 47% of respondents in all phases of study find it very or extremely useful that the Library “helps students develop research skills,” with the strongest positive responses coming from the Divinity School and the Graham School (63% each).

Similarly, 47% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that “the main responsibility of the library should be supporting student learning by helping students to develop

<sup>42</sup> 80% of respondents from the Humanities agree-strongly agree; Divinity School 75%; SSD 72%; Harris 53%; Law 47%; Booth 4%.

<sup>43</sup> 75% of master’s/professional students defending their capstone project agree-strongly agree; filing capstone 74%; working on capstone 71%. 81% of PhD students filing their dissertation agree-strongly agree; defending dissertation 73%.

<sup>44</sup> It is worth noting that due to the use of skip logic, this question (RL3) received 40% fewer responses than the related questions immediately before (RL1, RL2) and after (RL4) it.

research skills and find, access, and make use of resources.” Respondents from the Graham School had the most strongly positive response to this statement, while BSD, Booth, and PSD had the least.<sup>45</sup>

While the specific language of these questions makes comparison problematic,<sup>46</sup> the overall message is clear: respondents from all divisions feel more strongly positive about the Library’s traditional collections role than they do about its roles providing instructional services or supporting student learning. This could be because more than half of respondents (55%) only interact with librarians or other library staff members at most once or twice per quarter, with a further 23% reporting no interaction at all. While these percentages are somewhat skewed by Booth,<sup>47</sup> the only units that report a higher frequency of interactions were from Law, Humanities, and the Divinity School.<sup>48</sup> In addition, the majority of respondents (44%) indicated that the reason for their most recent interaction with a librarian or library staff member was “to checkout an item or items from the Library’s collection.” Interestingly, this held true for all divisions except Booth, Harris, and Law, all of whom most recently needed “help finding resources,” which was the second most popular response overall (31%).

### Research Skills

Nearly half of respondents (49%) report not having attended instructional sessions focusing on the use of Library resources. Elsewhere, 41% of respondents expressed a neutral opinion when asked whether campus librarians or library staff help develop the research skills to find and use academic sources of information for coursework or research projects. At the same time, respondents expressed value in learning the following research skills while at the University: forming evidence-based conclusions (77% important-very important), synthesizing or incorporating academic information into research projects (75%), and framing or developing original research questions (72%).

When broken down by the divisions or schools, however, the Humanities, the Graham School, Law, Pritzker, SSD, and SSA all report attendance by 50% or more respondents, with the highest rate of attendance by respondents from Law, whose respondents also had the most strongly positive (54% agree-strongly agree) response to the Library’s role in teaching research skills.<sup>49</sup> A consistent 35% of respondents from these units, along with the Divinity School, rated the Library’s instruction role as very useful.<sup>50</sup> 79% of respondents seeking a masters’ degree<sup>51</sup> find it very-extremely useful that the Library helps students develop research skills. Further, 64% of respondents found it somewhat or very useful that the Library provides support in learning and using online search engines or databases. This demonstrates that while the Library’s instruction program does not reach the majority of respondents, it has value for those that it does reach. One respondent commented, “Many of the offerings asked about

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<sup>45</sup> 65% of Graham agree-strongly agree; BSD 38%; Booth and PSD 40%. Note that 62% of IME agree-strongly agree, but this represents only 8 respondents.

<sup>46</sup> A further challenge in comparing these two questions arises from the language used: the former presents a statement related to the Library’s role in supporting the individual – “helping *me* access the resources *I* need” – while the latter discusses the Library’s role in supporting the larger student body – “supporting *student* learning by helping *students* to develop research skills”. It is possible that while respondents perceive the former role to be important to them individually, they may not have the same understanding of the priorities or needs of the larger student body.

<sup>47</sup> 66% of respondents from Booth reported never having visited a Library.

<sup>48</sup> Law 43% interact at least monthly; Humanities 39%; Divinity 33%.

<sup>49</sup> The positive feedback from Law is likely related to D’Angelo librarians’ involvement in the Law School curriculum.

<sup>50</sup> The remaining units selected “somewhat useful” at a similar rate (35%).

<sup>51</sup> LLM, MA, MAT, MBA, MD, MDiv, MFA, MLA, MPP, MS.

in this survey would be valuable to me if I knew where to access them,” indicating the potential need for expanded outreach and publicity around some of the Library’s services and instruction efforts.

### **Referrals and Consultations**

Less than a quarter of respondents indicated that they were directed by a faculty member to consult with a subject librarian or liaison. 57% of those who indicated that they were referred by faculty were Ph.D. students, which is disproportionately high as Ph.D. students represent 47% of all respondents. 44% of survey respondents from Humanities received referrals, 37% from Law and SSD, 36% from the Divinity School, and 24% from the Graham School. Additionally, nearly half (45%) of respondents who teach believed that their students “rarely” interacted with librarians.<sup>52</sup> However, there is no way to know from the data whether respondents (or their students) consulted a librarian as a result of referrals.

These results suggest a relatively low rate of referrals for consultation with librarians among students in general. However, the need for consultation varies based on the student’s existing knowledge, area of coursework and research, and phase of study; not all students will need to take advantage of this resource during their time at the University. As a result, the low rate of referrals does not necessarily reflect negatively on librarians or the consultations they provide. In fact, several respondents made a point of noting their positive interactions with bibliographers, so it seems that those who do participate in consultations receive great value from them.

### **Perceptions of Library Staff**

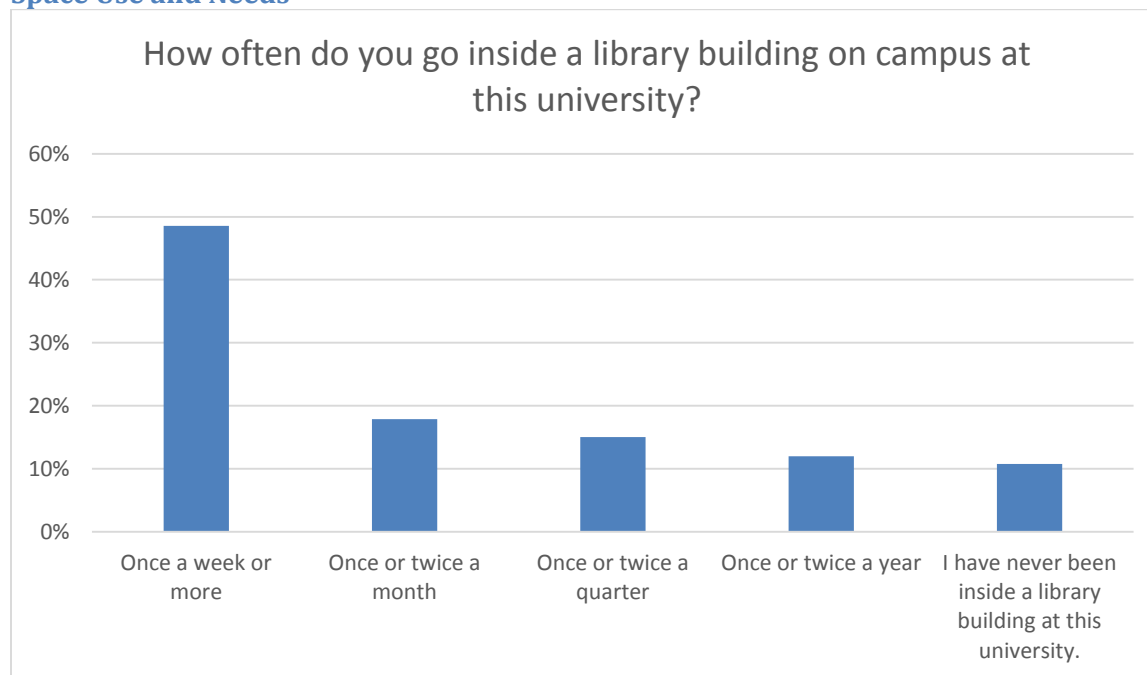
Despite the lukewarm perceptions of the need for some Library services, respondents feel quite positive about Library staff. Several respondents commented on how knowledgeable, patient and invaluable the reference librarians are, singling out the D’Angelo Library staff and the Library’s document delivery services as particular assets.

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<sup>52</sup> As this question was about the teachers’ perceptions, it is not clear how useful it is. Students may interact with librarians more or less often than their teachers are aware; there is also the potential confusion of respondents about the term “librarian.”



## Space Use and Needs



Nearly half of all respondents (49%) claim to visit the Library at least weekly, with 66% of respondents indicating that they visit Regenstein most often. The Divinity School, Humanities, SSD, Booth, Graham, and Harris tend to prefer Regenstein; PSD, BSD, and IME tend to prefer Crerar; and Law and SSA tend to prefer their dedicated Libraries. The majority of respondents (60%) tend to stay for more than an hour when they visit a Library, with more than 70% of respondents from Law, Pritzker, Humanities, and the Divinity School staying more than an hour. The length of stay could explain the one surprising result from these questions, which was that respondents from Pritzker slightly prefer Regenstein, which has a 24 hour study space available, over Crerar<sup>53</sup>.

One area where responses challenged long-held perceptions was with regards to the space needs of graduate students. 72% of respondents in the research phase at least somewhat agreed that they have access to a location on campus where they can work effectively on a dissertation or other research. The units with the highest rate of disagreement were the Divinity School, SSD, and the Humanities; these units were also strongly represented in the 32 responses to the two open-ended questions that mentioned the need for personal or private spaces.<sup>54</sup>

It is difficult to reconcile respondents' seeming satisfaction with the continued frustrations expressed in previous surveys and echoed in this response: "Study space for postgraduate (especially doctoral) students is a serious issue at UChicago. Many universities provide office or other study space for their doctoral students this would be particularly welcomed by students at UChicago." It is possible that the need for space is felt more acutely by students in the coursework phase who would not have seen this question. It is also possible that those who responded to this question have adequate spaces available to them on campus (e.g., laboratories), or do not expect to use campus spaces to do their work (e.g.,

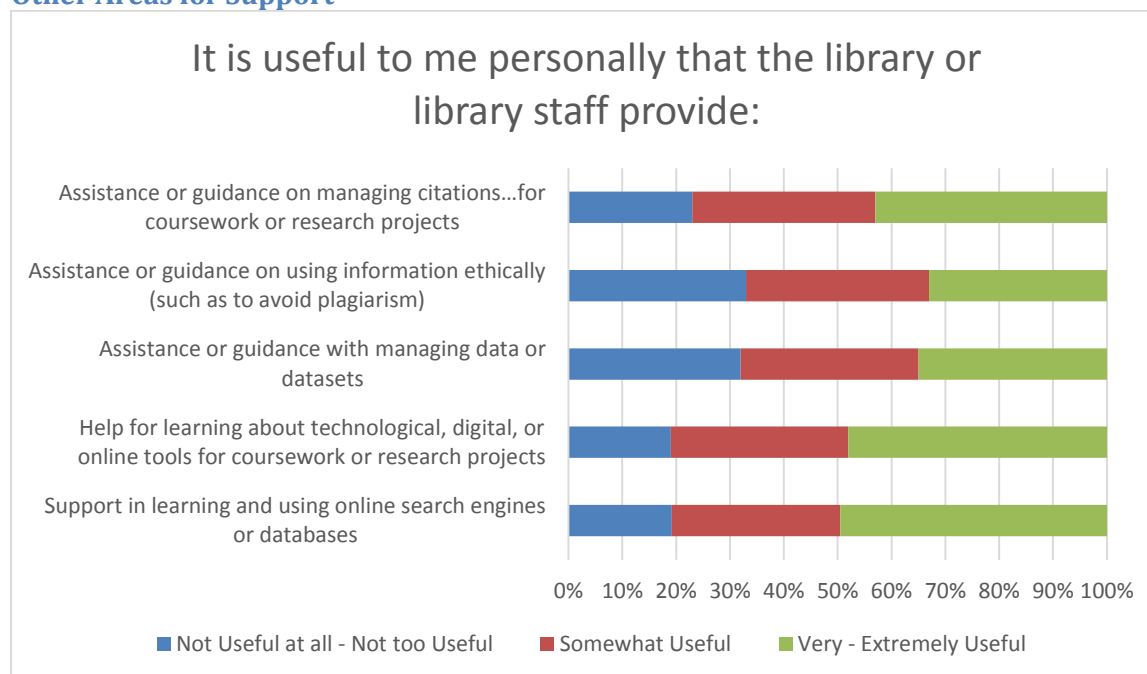
<sup>53</sup> 44% prefer Regenstein; 42% prefer Crerar.

<sup>54</sup> Divinity School 39% somewhat-strongly disagree; SSD 33%; Humanities 30%. 23 open-ended responses from Humanities and SSD.

work primarily off campus). After all, a small number of respondents,<sup>55</sup> all from Booth, BSD, or PSD, stated that they do not make use of Library spaces. Interestingly, while some Booth students indicated that they do not use Library spaces, an additional 14 respondents from Booth and the Graham School also commented on the lack of study and/or private work spaces at the downtown Gleacher building.

However, given the low rate of disagreement – only 196 respondents in total – it may be more feasible than previously thought for the Library to provide personal or private space for those students who need it.

### Other Areas for Support



Respondents were asked about the relative usefulness of other support roles played by Library staff ranging from traditional reference services to supporting new modes of scholarship and publication. 54% of all respondents reported that they find it very or extremely useful that the Library provides assistance or guidance in finding sources for coursework or research projects, while 43% of respondents find it very or extremely useful that the Library provides assistance or guidance on managing citations.

48% of respondents find it very or extremely useful that the Library provides help for learning about technological, digital, or online tools for coursework or research. Respondents mentioned the need for support of several specific tools or software packages; additionally, one commented “It would be nice if all the libraries had research computing facilities, not just Crerar.”

35% of respondents were interested in assistance with data management.<sup>56</sup> However, only 36% of those who use data regularly felt that this service would be very or extremely useful. A few respondents,

<sup>55</sup> 16 comments.

<sup>56</sup> 35% very-extremely useful.

especially from BSD and PSD, expressed interest in the Library offering more data management instruction.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, 33% of respondents find it very or extremely useful that the Library provides assistance or guidance on using information ethically, with particular interest from respondents from the Graham School.<sup>58</sup>

## Conclusion

This survey was conducted with the aim of better understanding our graduate and professional school students in the context of their life at the University. In closing, it seems appropriate to put what we heard in the context of our culture.

Respondents expressed the value and importance of the Library's collections to their coursework, research, and teaching. Students want, need, and use our strong, accessible collections; as a result, the collections and all that supports them should remain a high priority for the Library. Put another way, graduate students affirmed the value of the Library's traditional roles, expressing similar values and uses as were articulated in the 2006 Final Report of the Provost's Task Force on the University Library.<sup>59</sup>

By contrast, those areas and services that were perceived to be of less value were often relatively new functions for the Library: support for data management, Open Access publishing, or new modes of technology-enabled teaching. In a highly traditional culture, it is not surprising that these new roles received modest support. However, the fact that many respondents from across the University expressed support for the Library's expanded involvement in their academic life provides an opportunity for the Library to start changing perceptions regarding the current and future role of the Library to our students and on this campus.

In fact, in some areas a relatively lukewarm response rate may actually represent a success. While the majority of respondents may not strongly value Library instruction, the value of these initiatives to masters' students demonstrates their worth. While not all students are receiving referrals, the incidence of referrals and the positive regard for the bibliographers who give consultations demonstrates that both faculty members and students see value in this service. While our collections seem to be perceived as the most important aspect of the Library, our spaces are used with remarkable frequency and at very high rates. And while the professional schools, particularly Booth, tend to make less use of our collections, services, and spaces, the strong response rates from these schools and the interest expressed in deeper engagement with the Library represent an area for tremendous outreach and growth.

Respondents affirmed the Library's importance to their academic work while expressing the need for greater support from their departments. These areas for support may provide opportunities for potential Library intervention or collaboration. Respondents expressed the need for more assistance developing research topics, more training in formal research methods (as distinct from library research skills), more support while preparing to seek a job, and more services offered at lower costs (including scanning and printing), particularly given the high financial cost of attendance.

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<sup>57</sup> 12 comments.

<sup>58</sup> 52% very-extremely useful.

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/about/finalreport.html>

The findings of this project indicate many areas for celebration: our strong collections, the growing impact of our services, the heavy use of our spaces, and the high regard our students have for the Library as an institution. The lack of surprises is also positive, as it indicates that we know and understand our users, and are well-equipped to provide for their needs as students and scholars. Our commitment to anticipating and supporting these needs will ensure that the Library continues to be a center of intense intellectual inquiry and “one of the best things at U of C.”

## **Acknowledgements**

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