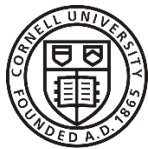


Summary Results from the 2021 Library Faculty Survey



CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Library

CORNELL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

June 2021

Introduction

Regular feedback from faculty and other user groups is essential for Cornell University Library. It helps us plan and improve our collections and services by identifying strengths, weaknesses, trends, and emerging needs. We survey faculty and students on a regular cycle. Spring of 2020 would have been a survey year for faculty, but given the pandemic-dictated campus closure and university-wide move to online instruction, the survey was delayed and deployed in spring 2021. It was designed and deployed by Library Assessment and Planning in collaboration with the Survey Research Institute and with the help of the Faculty Library Advisory Board. It collected feedback from a time period characterized by fast service changes as library staff worked to redefine what it meant to operate a Library in support of academic continuity.

The atypical nature of the year has naturally colored the results of the survey in multiple ways:

- The demand on faculty to respond to all the challenges during the pandemic likely contributed to a lower response rate than in the previous survey
- The demand on faculty to shift teaching and research to online and later to a hybrid mode likely contributed to lower use of available library services
- Some usually fundamental services were not available while special or temporary services were in effect
- Given the pandemic-dictated physical closures, electronic access is over-represented in the results as compared to physical services such as print collections and spaces.

Nevertheless, the results are informative and helpful for our planning efforts. They reaffirm the importance of our collections, core services, and spaces to the work and effectiveness of the faculty. They also underline the diversity of need and research practices the Library has to keep supporting to enable faculty success.

This preliminary report precedes the release of the full data set in early fall 2021 via an interactive Tableau dashboard and a separate text analysis of the open-ended comments with breakdowns by college and department (where feasible while maintaining confidentiality).

Summary of Results

- Over 20% of faculty (940 out of a total of 4,320) responded to the survey
- When asked about their use of library resources, electronic resources (e-articles/e-journals) were reported to be the most often used relative to other materials.
- Ebook use appears high, partly due to the Library's partnership with HathiTrust ETAS (**E**mergency **T**emporary **A**ccess **S**ervices), a service that allowed digital access to a substantial portion of our print holdings while onsite services were disrupted. Copyright laws prohibit the ongoing use of these digital resources once physical access is restored.
- The availability of HathiTrust ETAS (primarily electronic books and some journals) was generally well-received, but while some respondents found this alternate access to our print holdings invaluable, others found its interface cumbersome and features unsatisfactory.
- The comments show that reliance on electronic materials may have shifted research/teaching habits for some, but may have had no effect on others post-pandemic.

- In terms of use of consultative library services, reference and research help was the most used service and almost all of those who used it found it useful.
- The Library's contribution to faculty success in teaching and research continues with collections playing a particularly important role.

Methodology

On April 13th 2021, the CU Library launched the online survey and it was closed on May 7th, 2021.

Building on the faculty survey in 2014, the instrument was adjusted to reflect changes in services and operations brought on by the pandemic. The instrument centered on research support and services utilized and experienced over the preceding 12-month period. Thus the results are skewed to online use, with less focus on in-person services, except those developed to support researchers during the pandemic.

Survey Sample and Respondents

The survey was sent out via email to 4,320 Cornell faculty members, based on personnel information provided by CU Human Resources and supported by the office of the Dean of Faculty. Assistant professors, associate professors, full professors, lecturers, adjuncts, research associates, extension researchers, instructors, emeriti, and RTE faculty from all disciplines (except librarians and archivists) were invited to answer the survey, including NY Tech campus faculty (and excluding Weill Cornell Medical and Qatar faculty). In all, 867 faculty, 20.1% of those invited to participate, completed the survey, and an additional 73 responded partially. This response rate contrasts with the 43% response rate for the 2014 survey (n=1670).

Responses were received from faculty affiliated with all colleges, including NY Tech, plus a handful of research and initiative centers. The faculty response rates by colleges and centers (fig.1) is roughly representative of the affiliation of faculty across colleges and centers, so, as one would expect, the majority of respondents were affiliated with the College of Arts and Sciences (33%) and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (25%).

Survey Instrument

The [survey instrument](#) included 12 mixed type questions (multiple choice and open-ended), with an additional opt-in question for follow-up via email. The questions covered research and teaching support services, such as reference, data management, copyright assistance, information literacy instruction, etc.; collection services and materials including special and distinctive collections; and allied services such as delivery, purchasing, and access. In addition, it specifically asked about use and utility of the special services developed in response to the pandemic, such as HathiTrust ETAS, contactless pickup of print materials, and access to the stacks. Many responders commented that their answers were influenced by the physical limitations of the pandemic and their atypically high reliance on electronic materials and services. The write-in comments to the survey closely follow the multiple choice questions on the topics mentioned previously, but reflect nuances in the use of library services, awareness of those services, and also include suggestions.

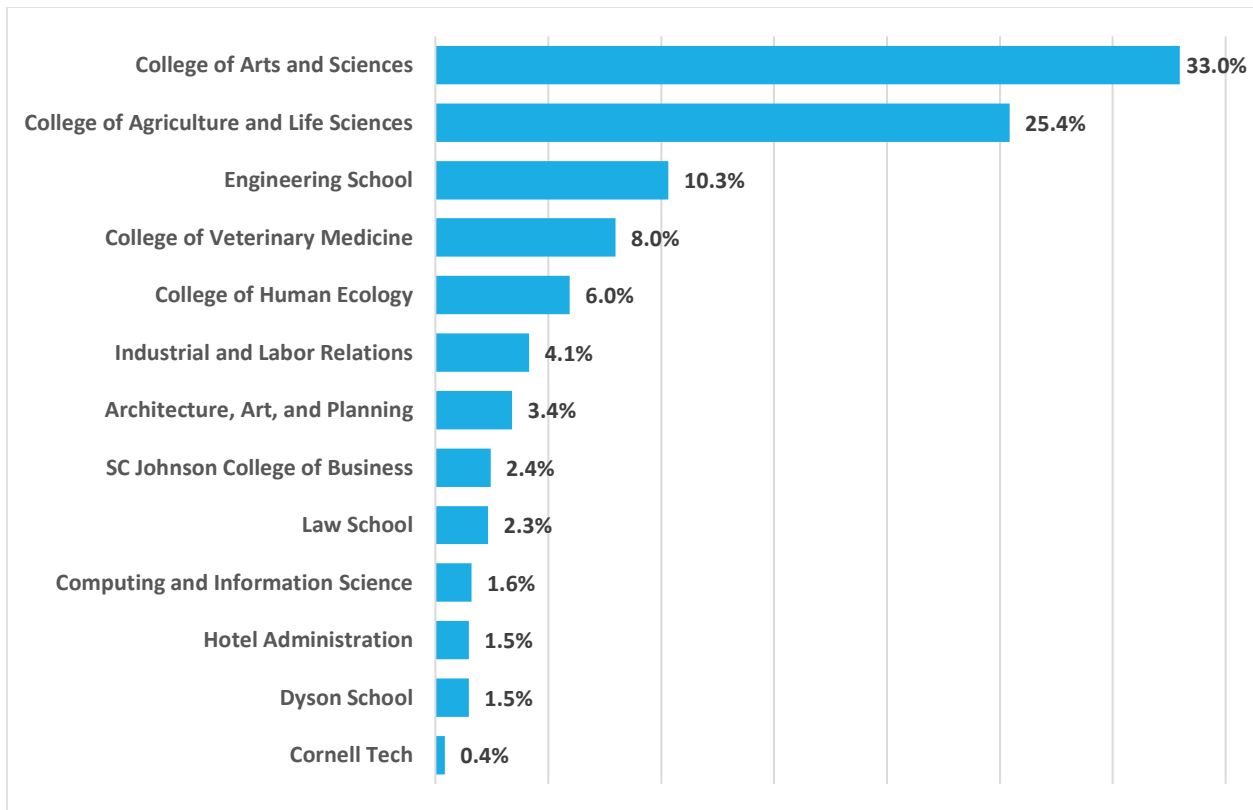


Figure 1. Response rate by college affiliation

Preliminary results

Frequency of Use of Library Resources

As stated earlier, predominant use of online and electronic materials and resources is not a surprise during a year when physical access to materials within library buildings was limited in agreement with university and state guidelines. 51% of respondents reported using the Library online twice a week or more, and this is not that different from responses in 2014, where 59% of faculty reported using the Library online with the same frequency, but for a longer time frame.

As illustrated in figure 2, the most frequently used online materials were electronic articles/journals (76%, n=694), electronic books or book sections (35%, n=313), and indexes and full-text databases, such as Web of Science, MLA, etc., (24%, n=212). While heavier use of electronic articles/journals is not surprising, the use of electronic books is likely more strongly represented in these results because of the access provided by the Library to close to 4 million digitized books via HathiTrust ETAS (Emergency Temporary Access Service). Cornell activated the access on March 30, 2020 and ended it 14 months later on May 26, 2021. ETAS is a service for use when emergency situations disrupt the use of the physical collection. Copyright laws prohibit the use of these digitized books when physical access to the print material is available. It is clear that use of these digitized titles for such an extended period served some purposes, but not all. We received a significant

number of comments about HathiTrust ETAS in the survey, which can be characterized as a continuum of experiences illustrated with the two quotes below.

The HathiTrust access was a life-saver for a project i was working on; having this type of easy, searchable access will one day be the norm (I hope). For some projects it is indispensable.

Comparative literature and linguistics.

I would mark the HathiTrust ETAS as just the merest smidge of barely useful. Frame of text can view per screen so limited and not being able to download as a pdf renders the materials there pragmatically pointless. All I found I could do with it was to look up a passage to see if I recalled a quote correctly. **Global Development.**

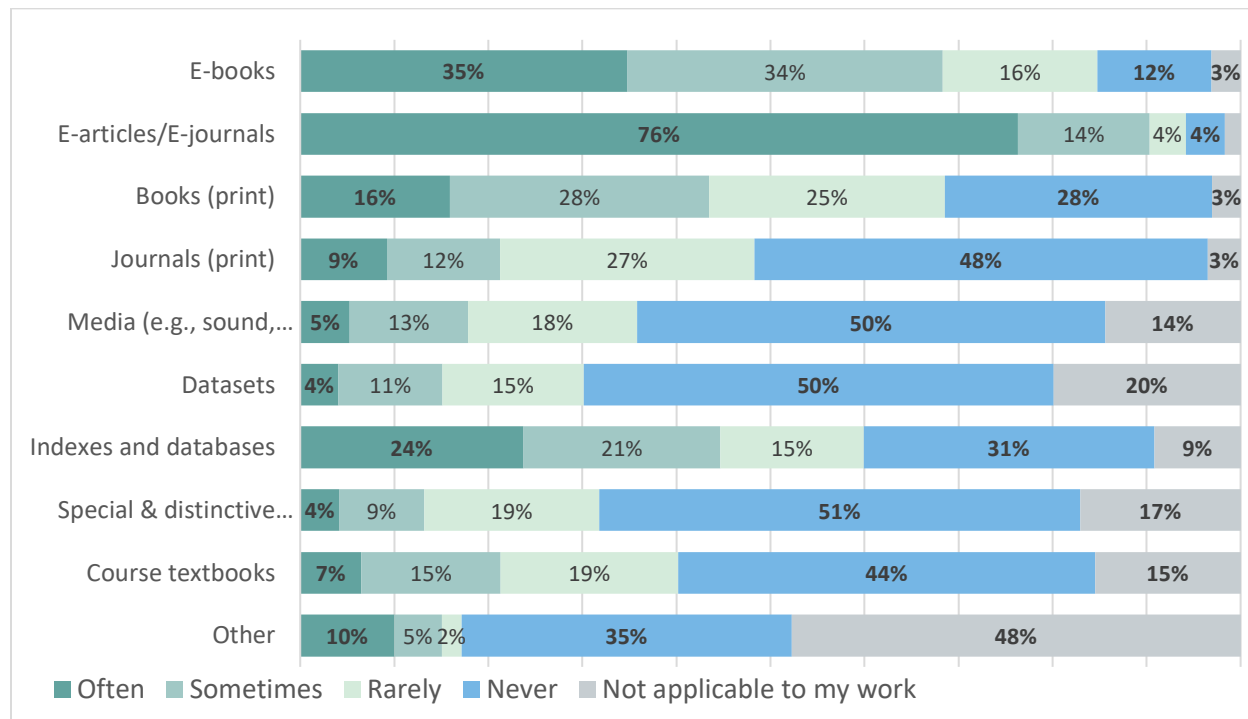


Figure 2. Frequency of use for most resources

Wait Times for Resources

The majority of respondents indicate a willingness to wait for print books and journals, media, datasets, special collections, and course textbooks, from up to three days or up to a week. Similar turn-around times of some current content delivery services such as Borrow Direct might have influenced users’ expectations in this regard. In contrast respondents’ willingness to wait for access to electronic articles, electronic books, and indexes/full-text databases shrinks to within 24 hours (figure 3). Worth noting is the “other” category in figure 3, which largely includes specific databases favored by some respondents and thus is similar to the wait time for databases.

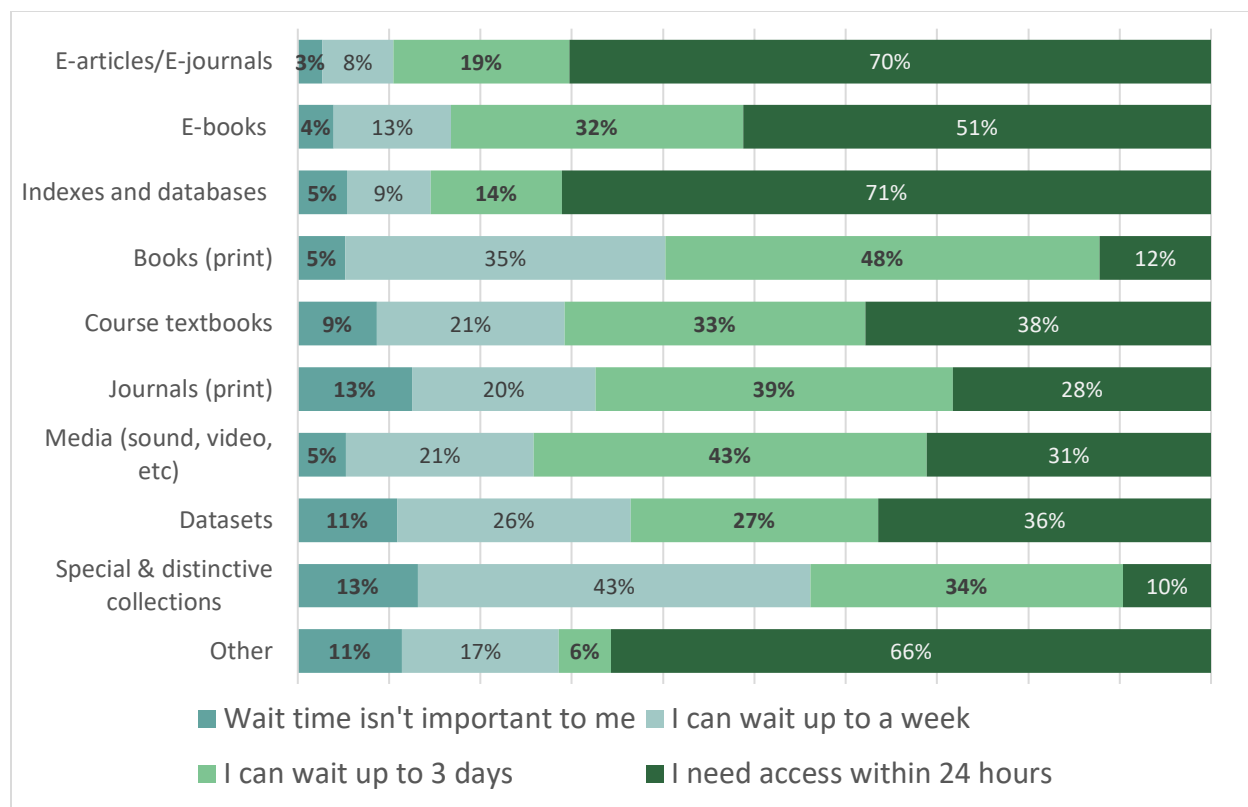


Figure 3. Acceptable wait times for a variety of Library-provided resources

Use of Library Services and Spaces

The Library offers a variety of services and programs to support the research and teaching needs of faculty, some intended for broader audiences, others serving more specialized needs. Many of these continued to be provided online. As might be expected, many of these services were underused in the last year. Respondents expressed surprise at the breadth of these services and others were happy that they could continue to use them, but the majority of respondents did not use these services in the last year. One of the most well-used and well-known library services is the research and reference help, which accounted for the highest use with 29% of faculty respondents reporting their use in the last year. Other frequently used services included online tutorials and guides (23%), local digital repositories such as eCommons (20%) and open education resources (20%). All other services indicated in the survey (figure 4) support specific areas of research or teaching, such as evidence synthesis or research data management services. Of those who used the services, close to 99% of responses indicate they found them useful or somewhat useful.

The comments below give voice to some of the numeric responses that indicated use/no use, awareness and appreciation.

*Once I was not able to get access to a chapter in a book that I should have had access to but the librarian was kind enough to get access and send it to me. I am very grateful for this help from Cornell librarians. I am also grateful for the chat option with resource librarians to help me find items that I need for my research. **Plant Science.***

*I'm not sure if this already happens, but I think each new student should be given a link to a library introduction. So many students are unaware of the rich resources the library offers. I've even had students still using their library from their home country instead of learning Cornell's libraries. It's a terrible shame. **English.***

*I definitely am going to look into the data management help now that I know it exists! **Veterinary.***

*Publication funds to make faculty publications open access is needed very much. If there are such funds I know nothing about them. **History and History of Art.***

Our inclusion of two space-related questions in the survey under services (last few rows in figure 4), surprised some responders, perhaps due to the fact that all library buildings were initially closed by New York State mandate, and subsequently we opened libraries gradually, starting with a limited capacity. Notwithstanding limited access to and use of some library spaces, it is clear from the comments that access to Library stacks, Library-provided classrooms, faculty carrels, and quiet space is extremely desirable and popular. Many comments expressed a desire to return to familiar library spaces that are conducive to research. Two examples below:

*Prior to the pandemic I often went to various libraries on campus to write. I am very much looking forward to having comfortable, safe access again when the pandemic subsides. I would like to make more use of the library in my teaching but need to think creatively about doing so; this survey provided some ideas. **Chemistry***

*I look forward to returning to the stacks, my faculty office, and the Kroch reading room in the near future. **English.***

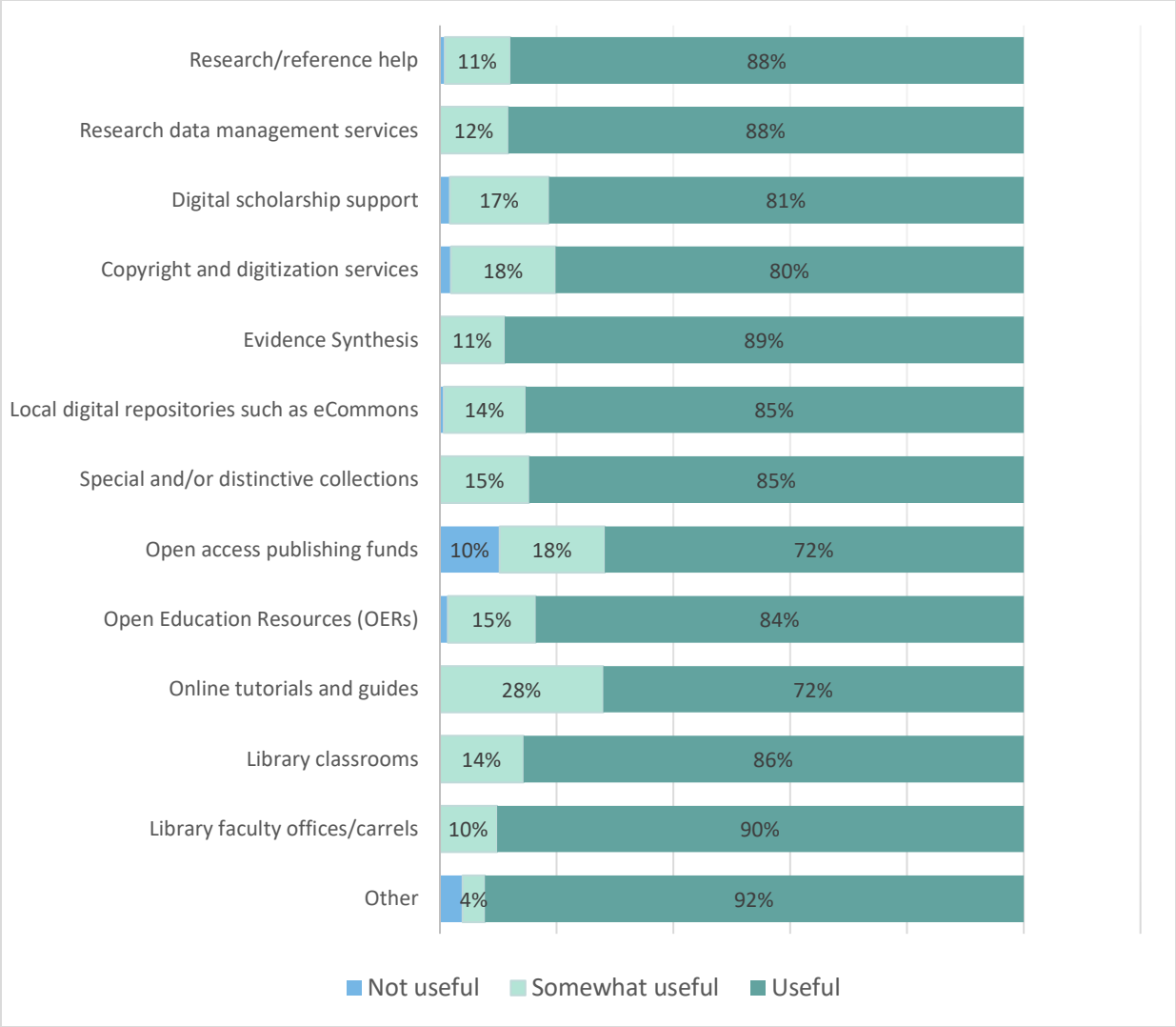


Figure 4. Usefulness of library services that support research and teaching.

Library Instruction Topics and Sessions

As with other library services, teaching information literacy and other related topics in the last year was severely undercut by the pandemic. In a normal year librarians teach about 900 sessions for courses and in workshops, but last year only a small number of library research instruction sessions were requested as faculty had to adjust their syllabi for the online and hybrid teaching environments. As with other offerings, instruction topics listed in the survey, such as finding appropriate scholarly information or understanding information privacy and security were well-received and deemed useful or somewhat useful by most respondents who had taken advantage of them.

Library Services Developed in Response to COVID-19

As faculty and students adjusted to the new normal of working from home with limited access to campus spaces, the Library adjusted and modified its services and access points to maintain safety for patrons and

staff ([see timetable of service continuity in appendix](#)). Four main services were quickly arranged to meet research and teaching needs:

- Contactless pickup of physical collection items
- Stacks access for research and/or research by appointment
- Emergency print purchase and delivery
- HathiTrust ETAS and other full-text electronic resources

Of these, the two highest used as reported by faculty in this survey, were contactless pickup of physical collection items and access of HathiTrust ETAS materials, with 37% and 40% reported use, respectively. Contactless pickup began to be available in the Annex, Olin and Uris by July 1st, 2020 and gained momentum as more locations for pickup opened. 20% of respondents said they used contactless pickup monthly or more frequently, and use held steady throughout the pandemic year as illustrated in this online dashboard: <https://achandler.shinyapps.io/curbside4/>. Some faculty articulated its value as this example shows:

*I occasionally need books and was worried that I wouldn't be able to access items during the pandemic. The contactless pickup was extremely helpful, as was getting the book I needed delivered to a university library branch close to my home. **Biology***

Hathi ETAS garnered many mentions with some faculty members feeling grateful for it and calling it a lifesaver and others calling it an inflexible system that was inconvenient and confusing. Faculty respondents who did not use HathiTrust ETAS (60%, n=509) indicated that they did not need this service (71%, n=246), or didn't look to the Library to provide this (3%, n=10), or were not aware of it (25%, n=90).

Some Initial Thoughts about Future Use of the Library and its Services

After a year of working primarily with resources online or physical resources available at home or in limited ways on campus, faculty responded differently about whether they anticipated a change in terms of how they did research or teaching going forward. Broadly generalizing, faculty responded in two ways: some noted that they do not anticipate their behavior to change and they will go back to how they worked before. Others said that they anticipated using or relying more on electronic resources, or the opposite, attempting to frequent library space more often for research or with their students. The following quotes illustrate the range of perspectives:

*Not really, we mostly rely on digital journal subscriptions. **Engineering.***

*Yes. This year was so hard and busy, I did not have time to do the normal activities. I used the library less frequently than a typical year. There was no time for research, and course development was spent primarily on admin for these online courses. **Mathematics.***

*Not really, but then I always assumed these conditions would be temporary. Time will tell. **History and History of Art.***

*Instead of asking students to purchase whole books, I may continue to rely on e-reserves from the library. This greatly supports course accessibility. **English.***

The Library's Contribution to Faculty Success

The survey probed the Library's contribution to faculty success through use of its collections, services, and on-site computing resources during an unprecedented year. Figure 5 shows that 80% (n=672) of respondents said library's collections contributed a great deal and a fair amount to their success and 43% (359) said the same about services. The computing and technology category reflects the fact that many computers and lab spaces with specialized software had no or extremely limited access during the pandemic.

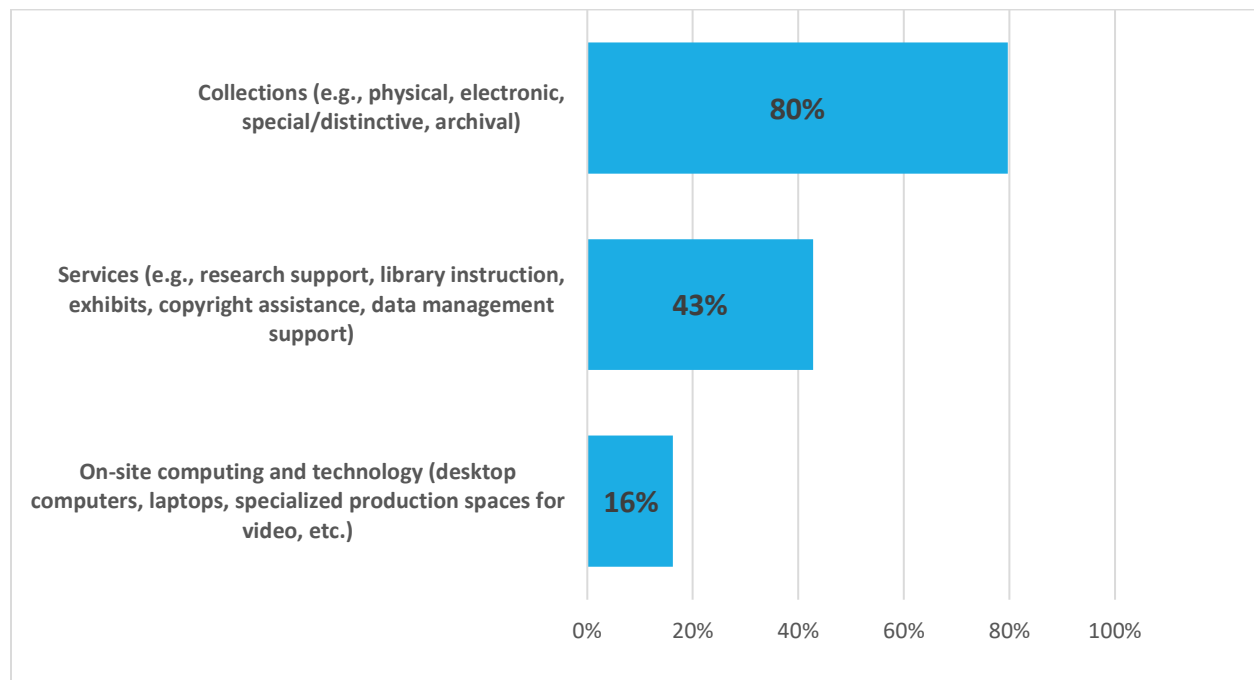


Figure 5. The Library's contribution to faculty success in teaching and research.

General Comments

We received over 2200 open-text comments. They cover a wide range of topics, from use/value of collections and services, awareness, gratitude, appraisal of the Library's response to the pandemic (including HathiTrust ETAS), future outlooks, complaints, and thoughtful suggestions. The analysis is underway to ensure that every comment, suggestion, problem, and praise is duly noted and followed up on where appropriate. The comments indicate the diversity of the needs and situations that people adapted to as they continued their research and teaching in a most extraordinary year. The quotes below provide a sampling of the commentary received.

A million thanks for everything! The Libraries' ability to adapt to the pandemic was a godsend, very grateful to have such a wonderful library system here at Cornell. Asian and Near Eastern Studies.

My answers to this survey would have been very different in years prior to the pandemic. If anything, the pandemic has strengthened my sense of the importance of the physical space and resources of the library. I am planning to increase my own and my students' use of the library next year. English.

*Actually, by taking this survey, I was informed and reminded of some library services that may be useful to me and don't usually come to mind. **Plant Science.***

*Being able to move all access online rather than counting on access to physical books on reserve has been very helpful during the pandemic. **Environmental Engineering***

*I like that on the weekends you have a partnership with other reference services. Someone answered my question on a Sunday and helped me find a newspaper map I was looking for. **Communication.***

*I miss, simply, being in the library as a space to think. I also miss the cafe but only when it is not crowded. I am a little concerned that this survey, in asking what I used in the library during the pandemic, is getting misleading answers. For example, no, I rarely checked books out in the pandemic because I did not feel safe wandering the stacks and I personally can afford to buy books. But in normal times I love to browse the stacks and find things I didn't know about. I have a long to-do list of library things just waiting for the pandemic to end. **History and History of Art.***

Thanks

The feedback the Library received in its 2021 Library Faculty Survey helps us understand existing and emerging faculty needs, and allows us to examine how the Library can best align with researcher needs in a changing world. The Library is grateful for the time faculty took to provide us with feedback and for the thoughtful comments they provided, including their strong support for our indispensable and vibrant Library.

Appendix: Timetable of Service Continuity

Month	Date	Library Services
MARCH	3/13/2020	President Pollack announces all classes suspended at the end of the day.*
	3/15/2020 3/21/2020 3/22/2020 3/31/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The temporary closures to the public of Cornell University Library (CUL's) physical unit libraries started. - CUL's chat reference coverage was expanded to 67 hrs/wk (7 days/week) - All physical library facilities were closed to library staff (following executive order from Gov. Cuomo) - HathiTrust Emergency Temporary Access Service (ETAS) becomes available - Library collection due dates extended to 8/31; Late fees waived until 6/1 All services that could be delivered online continued without interruption.
Mar - April		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checked out books from carrels were packed and available for pickup - Laptops were made available to students
Mar - Aug		Additions to CUL's physical collection were temporarily paused between mid-March and August 31st, 2020.
JUNE	6/30/2020	Contactless pickup first offered at the Library Annex on 6/30/20. Additional locations follow: Africana, Law, Mann, Uris and Vet Libraries.
JULY	7/1/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restart scanning of materials for patrons from the physical collections.
SEPTEMBER	9/2/2020	Classroom space made available in Mann Library
	9/14/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Course reserves restarted in Mann, Math and Uris Libraries. - Quiet study space made available to users from any college, most by reservation and keycard access where possible. - Physical ILL (InterLibrary Loan) and BD (Borrow Direct) started again. - Mandible Café opens
	9/25/2021	Remote access to microfilm browsing started in Olin Library
OCTOBER	10/5/2020	Stacks access for research (browse & checkout if not part of HathiTrust ETAS) and appointment-based access to physical collections began
NOVEMBER	11/12/2020	Mann Library started to offer contactless poster printing services
JANUARY	1/25/2021	Amit Bhatia Libe Café re-opened in Olin Library. All Staff and Students must enter the main café doors and then exit out of the building using the Arts Quad newly installed doors.
FEBRUARY	2/8/2021	The Fiske Room in Uris Library has been set up for in-person course instruction for Spring 2021
MAY	5/26/2021	HathiTrust ETAS discontinued at Cornell to enable restoration of circulation of physical holdings.

*Text in blue denotes University or NYS decisions.