

Introduction CONUL conducted a survey of researchers at eight higher education institutions in Ireland in Spring 2005. The purpose of the survey was to find out more about the habits and needs of researchers in using and finding information and their levels of satisfaction with library collections and services.

The population surveyed consisted of academic staff and research postgraduates. The survey questionnaire achieved a response rate of 26.3% nationally, with 3,221 returns from a target population of 12,246 researchers. This document summarises the main findings. The full survey results, including the data from individual institutions, are available at www.conul.ie



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Respondent Profile

? Institution

	number of responses	local response rate	% of national total
University College Dublin	886	35.6%	27.5%
Trinity College Dublin	509	18.3%	15.8%
University College Cork	420	18.8%	13.1%
NUI, Galway	415	26.7%	12.9%
University of Limerick	340	28.5%	10.6%
Dublin City University	329	34.0%	10.2%
NUI, Maynooth	220	30.5%	6.8%
Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland	98	23.0%	3.0%

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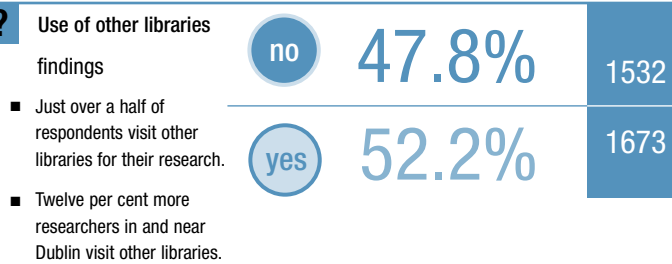
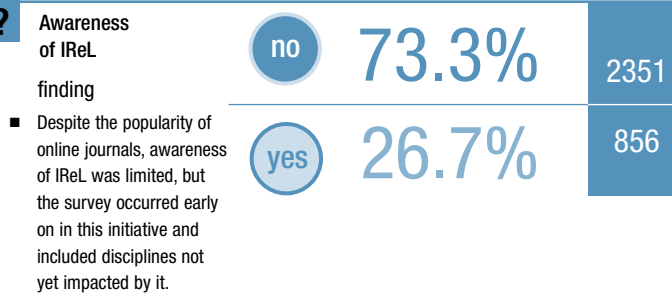
Information Sources

? Frequency of use of information sources

Source	often	occasionally	never
Web search engines	92.5%	6.4%	1.1%
Journals: online	80.1%	16.8%	3.1%
Databases	65.8%	27.4%	6.8%
Books: printed	57.5%	38.1%	4.4%
Journals: printed	46.4%	46.8%	6.8%
Conference papers	40.6%	46.4%	13.0%
E-print archives	33.4%	32.1%	34.5%
Reference: online	30.7%	47.8%	21.5%
Reference: printed	22.6%	50.9%	26.5%
Newspapers: online	21.0%	31.6%	47.5%
Newspapers: printed	17.0%	31.2%	51.9%
Manuscripts and archives	10.6%	34.3%	55.0%
Official publications	10.6%	38.6%	50.9%
Books: online	9.5%	43.0%	47.5%
Microfilm/microfiche	3.4%	16.0%	80.6%

findings

- Where both formats are available, researchers use online more often than print except in the case of books.
- Online journals are clearly more popular than their print counterparts and over 80% of researchers use them frequently.
- Web search engines are the most popular information resource, often used by 92.5% of respondents.
- Online journals, databases and printed books are the most frequently used library collections and almost all respondents consult them, usually often.
- Other sources include web sites, theses, e-mail and colleagues.



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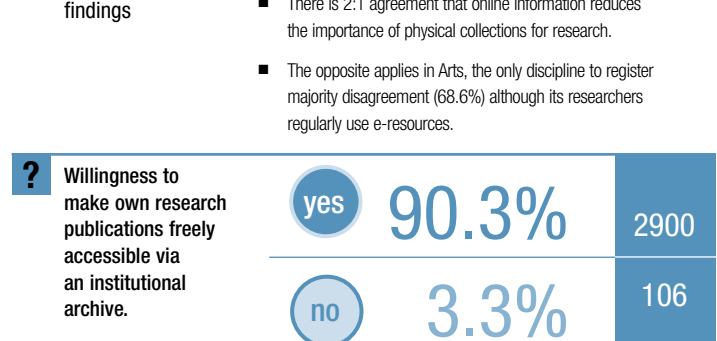
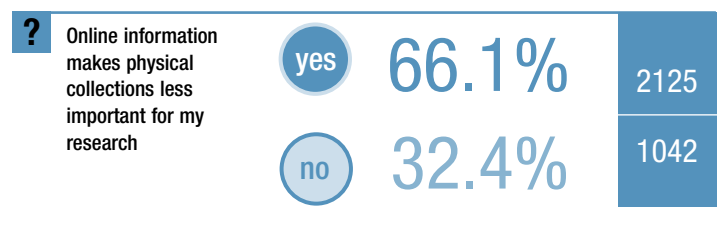
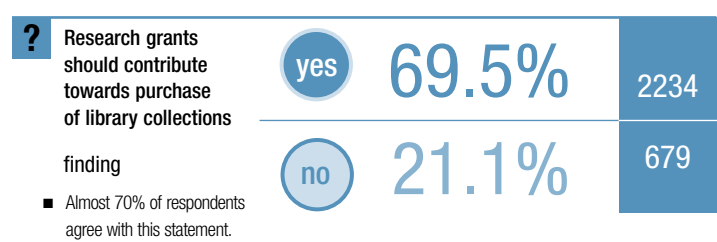
Library Collections

? Satisfaction with Library collections

Collection	satisfied	not applicable	dissatisfied
Databases	81.3%	9.8%	11.7%
Journals: online	78.5%	4.1%	25.1%
Books: printed	69.8%	4.1%	26.1%
Reference: online	64.4%	26.8%	8.7%
Journals: printed	63.4%	5.1%	31.5%
Reference: printed	60.8%	30.6%	8.6%
Conference papers	51.9%	23.1%	25.0%
Official publications	49.3%	44.0%	6.7%
Newspapers: online	41.3%	50.6%	8.0%
Newspapers: printed	38.1%	55.9%	5.9%
Manuscripts and archives	33.2%	59.0%	7.9%
Books: online	32.4%	42.0%	25.6%
Microfilm/microfiche	20.5%	74.0%	5.4%

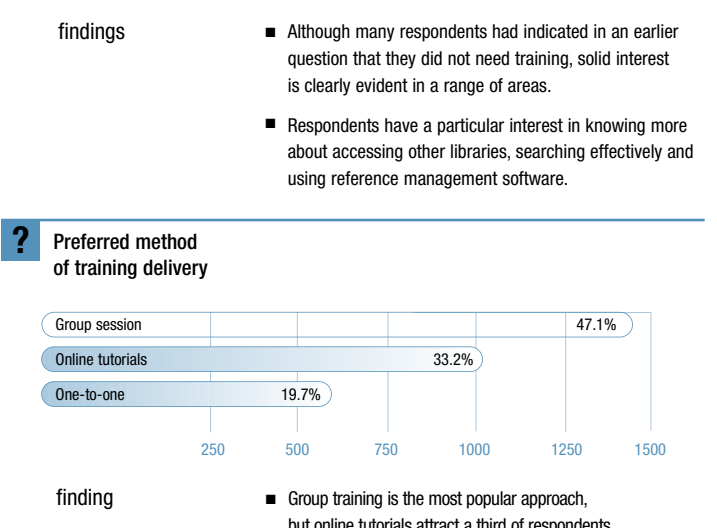
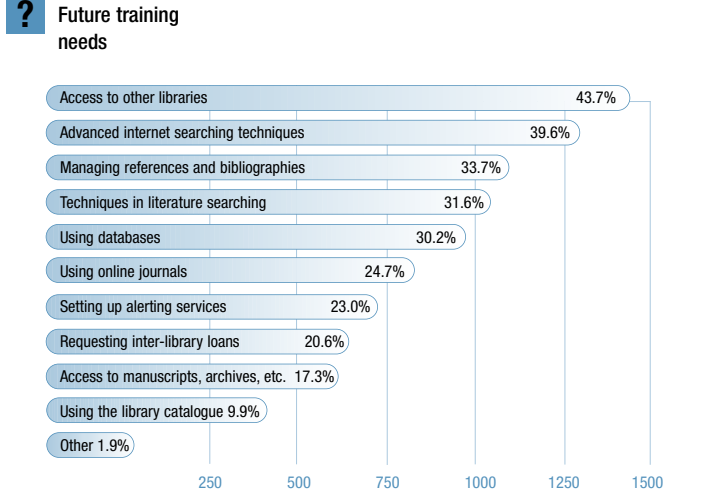
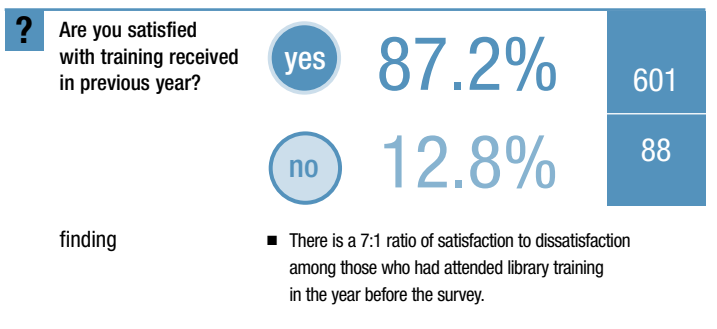
findings

- Researcher satisfaction is higher than dissatisfaction for all collections.
- Online journals attract significantly stronger satisfaction than print journals.
- Databases, online journals and printed books score highest satisfaction.



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Researcher-Centred Information Skills Training



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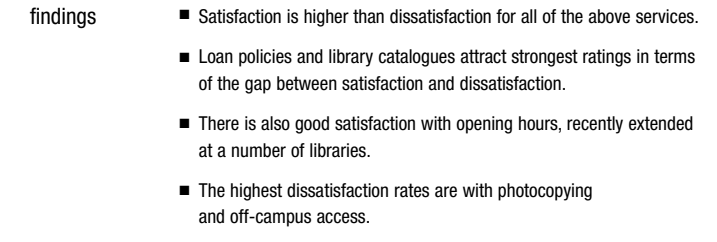
Library Services

? Satisfaction with library services

Service	satisfied	not applicable	dissatisfied
Loan policies	81.8%	6.2%	12.0%
Library catalogue	80.0%	3.7%	16.3%
Opening hours	74.7%	5.9%	19.3%
Inter-library loans	62.9%	20.3%	16.8%
Off-campus access to online services	61.1%	17.4%	21.5%
Photocopying	57.3%	15.7%	27.0%

findings

- Satisfaction is higher than dissatisfaction for all of the above services.
- Loan policies and library catalogues attract strongest ratings in terms of the gap between satisfaction and dissatisfaction.
- There is also good satisfaction with opening hours, recently extended at a number of libraries.
- The highest dissatisfaction rates are with photocopying and off-campus access.



? Library web site

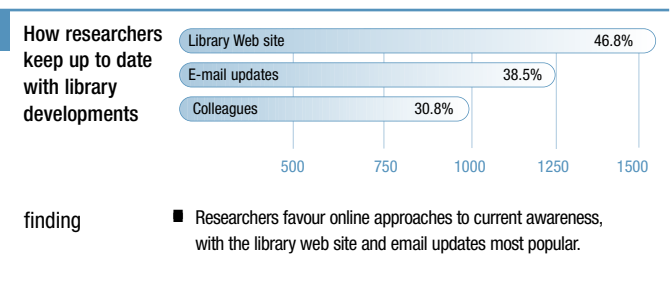
Aspect	satisfied	not applicable	dissatisfied
Usefulness of content	90.0%	2.3%	7.7%
Up-to-date information	87.3%	2.8%	9.8%
Access to online information resources	82.0%	2.7%	15.4%
Ease of navigation	79.1%	2.2%	18.7%

findings

- There is strong satisfaction with all aspects of library web sites, but access to online information resources and ease of navigation can improve.
- Researchers expressed in other questions their desire for more service request forms and a single portal to e-resources, especially online journals.
- Low "not applicable" scores throughout show the importance of library web sites to researchers.

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Communication



? Library staff, service, funding

Statement	agree	don't know	disagree
Library staff are knowledgeable	81.5%	10.9%	7.7%
I am aware of the role of the subject librarian	53.9%	11.7%	34.3%
The library publicises its services well	62.3%	4.9%	32.8%
Overall the library provides a good service	83.0%	2.3%	14.7%
The library is adequately resourced to support research	42.1%	7.0%	50.8%

findings

- There is a very positive view of staff knowledge and overall service, but funding to support research is considered inadequate.
- Service marketing and awareness of the role of the subject librarian can improve.

? Most desired service improvements

Journals	More extensive and easily accessible online holdings
Books	Better coverage and faster access
Inter-library loans	Faster and cheaper supply, preferably online
Funding	Higher budgets generally, especially for journals
Opening hours	Longer, particularly at weekends and in summer



dissatisfied

Key Findings

Recommended Actions

The 2005 CONUL national survey of library support to researchers provides invaluable data regarding service performance and researcher preferences and needs. Thanks to all the researchers, more than 3000 from the eight participating institutions, who completed the survey questionnaire.

There are many instances of strong satisfaction with current provision but patterns of researcher use of, and access to, information are evolving rapidly, demanding further improvement, new initiatives and novel approaches by libraries. Challenges are readily evident, both for libraries and their parent institutions.

The panels on this side of the survey digest highlight key findings (*black*) and recommendations (*blue*) for consideration by CONUL libraries and, in some instances, their parent institutions. The other side shows supporting data.

Agnes Neligan,
CONUL Chair

Collection development	Improved funding	Researcher-centred information skills training	Optimal staffing structures
<p>Improved journal coverage is clearly the top priority for researchers.</p> <p><i>Maximise journal coverage and increase online backfile access where possible.</i></p> <p>Online journals are clearly more popular than their print counterparts and generated higher levels of satisfaction in the survey; their significantly higher use indicates value for money.</p> <p><i>Continue migration of journal holdings to online format where licencing and access conditions are favourable and there is secure archival coverage.</i></p> <p>Two thirds of respondents believe that online information reduces the importance of physical collections, but Arts/Humanities researchers have the opposite view despite their strong uptake of online information.</p> <p><i>Recognise the continuing importance of printed resources for Arts/Humanities researchers while supporting an expansion of the IReL initiative to improve their access to online resources.</i></p> <p>Over half of respondents never use microform, manuscripts, archives, printed newspapers or official publications.</p> <p><i>Promote awareness of less used collections.</i></p>	<p>Almost 70% of respondents support the view that research grants should assist the purchase of library collections.</p> <p><i>Instigate a concerted campaign for research grant contributions to library collections as an established practice.</i></p> <p>There is a majority perception that library funding to support research is inadequate.</p> <p><i>Quantify deficits, articulate ongoing needs and lobby for improved resources in relevant local and national fora.</i></p> <p><i>Pursue the continuation and expansion of national funding initiatives such as IReL.</i></p> <p><i>Consider the relevance, impact and applicability of the model offered by the UK Research Information Network.</i></p>	<p>Most respondents are relatively inexperienced.</p> <p><i>Ensure availability of a generic introductory information skills programme for new researchers.</i></p> <p>Respondents cite web search engines as their most popular information resource.</p> <p><i>Cover advanced use of web search engines in training programmes.</i></p> <p>Almost half of respondents do not visit other libraries for their research.</p> <p><i>Promote access to other libraries, including the ALCID and SCONUL Research Extra access schemes, more actively, and integrate into training courses.</i></p> <p>Most respondents do not see a need for training in use of information resources.</p> <p><i>Review training coverage and packaging, consulting researchers extensively and targeting specific needs, eg bibliographic software support.</i></p> <p>Group sessions are the most popular method of training delivery but a third of respondents favour online tutorials.</p> <p><i>Develop online tutorials, particularly for science and technology researchers.</i></p>	<p>43.6% of respondents consider their research to be multidisciplinary.</p> <p><i>Optimise subject support structures and team collaboration to support multidisciplinary research.</i></p> <p>Interaction with the library varies by discipline, being lower in Science, Engineering and Medicine and higher in Arts, Law and Social Sciences.</p> <p><i>Review the effectiveness and applicability of the subject librarian model across different disciplines and types of researcher.</i></p> <p>70% of respondents would value a librarian providing research-specific information services throughout all disciplines.</p> <p><i>Consider the range of functions appropriate to a research support librarian and identify key outcomes, including maximum IReL uptake.</i></p> <p>There is a strongly positive perception of library staff knowledge.</p> <p><i>Build on this to ensure ongoing development of staff skills in support of evolving researcher needs.</i></p>
Service development	Easy information access	Targeted marketing	Survey follow-up
<p>The library information desk is the most common target for enquiries relating to research, but almost as many respondents contact nobody.</p> <p><i>Support self-service but ensure maximum visibility of, and easy access to, library staff support in person and online.</i></p> <p>Over 90% of respondents favour free online access to their research publications via an institutional archive.</p> <p><i>Maximise this support to realise the development, with libraries as key partners, of institutional repositories to increase individual citation and research impact and to showcase institutional and national research output.</i></p> <p>Three quarters of respondents consider the inter-library loans service important to their research.</p> <p><i>Speed up inter-library loan transaction times by increased online requesting and delivery.</i></p>	<p>There is strong satisfaction with library web sites, but researchers want better access to online information resources and easier navigation.</p> <p><i>Maximise the effectiveness of library web sites as portals to well organised and easily navigable collections of online information resources.</i></p> <p><i>Continue to enhance library web coverage and functionality, eg through service request forms, alerting services.</i></p> <p>A third of respondents indicate use of online library services from home; some unawareness of, and dissatisfaction with, off-campus access is evident.</p> <p><i>Ensure robust but simple off-campus access to online library services, sharing expertise as appropriate.</i></p> <p>Researchers are unsure of online journal entitlements.</p> <p><i>Provide comprehensive listings of online journal holdings, maximising ease of resource discovery through linking technologies and metasearching.</i></p>	<p>Awareness of IReL (Irish Research e-Library) is limited to date.</p> <p><i>Market IReL to maximum effect and develop clearly identifiable branding.</i></p> <p>Research-only staff, half of them in Science, represent 28.4% of staff respondents and tend to be less engaged or familiar with library services.</p> <p><i>Target research centres and research-only staff to identify needs and maximise service awareness and engagement.</i></p> <p>Respondents use a variety of approaches to stay abreast of library developments.</p> <p><i>Continue to use a diverse range of channels, electronic and personal, for service marketing and promotion.</i></p>	<p>Share and debate findings and recommendations with Vice-Presidents/Deans of Research and the research community in general.</p> <p>Conduct a further similar survey in 2007.</p> <p>Interact with other projects/surveys of researchers, eg IReL Monitoring Group; Royal Irish Academy Working Group on Research Support for the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; CONUL/ANLTC/Swets-funded REBUS project (Researcher Environment and Behavior in the University Setting).</p>