

The Hokie Nation Speaks: User Assessment of University Library Facilities, Services, and Resources

Anita Walz and Charla Gilbert University Libraries, Virginia Tech

ABSTRACT

A vast range of resources, services, and facilities are available from University Libraries at Virginia Tech. How do library patrons actually use library resources, services and facilities? And what else do library users (and non-users) say that they need? This poster presentation highlights findings from a Spring 2014 VT Libraries survey of Virginia Tech Faculty, Staff, Graduate Students, and Undergraduates, emphasizing overall and contrasting group-level themes, what's working, where we can improve, and our progress to date in responding to user needs and in alignment with the Virginia Tech Plan for a New Horizon, and the University Libraries Strategic Plan for 2012-2018.

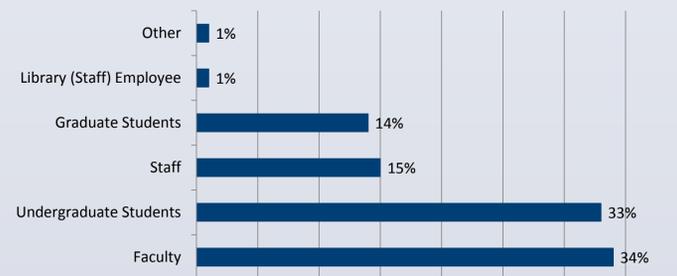
PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was to collect information about the satisfaction of Virginia Tech Library users, based on their interaction with spaces, resources, and services. The nature of the library on a national level has been rapidly changing over the past decade. We hope to gain insight on how we can continue the momentum to support our users. Survey questions were designed to determine how users are using the library and what changes can be made for future growth in these areas.

METHODS & INSTRUMENTS

A survey invitation linked to a 15-item mixed methods survey was sent via email to all Virginia Tech Faculty, Staff, Graduate Students and 25% of undergraduate students identified by Virginia Tech's Office of Institutional Research as being representative of the total undergraduate population. The survey was open from March 24 to April 7, 2014.

754 unique responses were recorded, a 10% response rate. Respondents reported their affiliation with one of the following user groups.



EXPECTED FINDINGS

We expected results to be consistent with day-to-day observable usage having worked in Newman Library, and in line with previous survey results. Specifically, we expected:

- Library collections, facilities, and service reported usage would differ by user group;
- Students would mention spaces: crowding, lack of electrical outlets, inadequate/slow wifi, uncomfortable seating, and lack of available group study space;
- Faculty would emphasize collections;
- Low or minimal usage of several library services (<20% was expected);
- Staff respondents in particular would report low or minimal usage of libraries;
- Comments regarding branch libraries would be minimal.

ACTUAL FINDINGS

- **Undergraduates reported the most frequent visitation to Newman Library;** 63% of undergrads reported visiting Newman Library once-a-week or more often. Only 1% of undergraduates indicated that they do not visit Newman Library.
- **Undergraduates also reported the longest average visits** (81% reported spending on average more than one hour per visit)
- While Undergraduates reported the most use of library buildings, they reported the lowest use of online library resources . 30% indicated that they do not use online library resources.

- **Online library resources were most frequently used by Graduate Students and Faculty,** 24% and 20% respectively of whom, reported using online library resources daily. And additional 28% of each reported using online library resources 2-3 times per week.
- While staff reported lower than average levels of online library resource usage and visits to libraries, **only 36% and 25% of staff respondents reported that they never use online library resources, or visit Newman Library, respectively.**

REPORTED USAGE AND SATISFACTION RATES

Usage levels may reflect awareness (or lack thereof) of a service. Survey terminology may also mean different things to different groups.

Satisfaction levels may reflect an opportunity to improve a service, or may be related to a user training need, or both.

Service level changes and suggestions are the responsibility of each department.

Usage and satisfaction levels also vary by group.

Examining group-level data for each service can also reveal additional areas for training, building awareness, and service improvement.

	% respondents use services	% Users satisfied	% Users Neutral	% Users Dissatisfied
Remote access to collections (online databases, journals, Addison, etc.)	72%	79%	16%	5%
Checked out materials (books, DVD's, CD's, etc.)	61%	87%	11%	2%
Interlibrary Loan	43%	86%	11%	3%
Delivery of materials (Desktop delivery, Request it, Bookrunner)	34%	83%	13%	4%
Printing Services (Scanning, plotter, printing, etc.)	32%	62%	27%	11%
Ask a Librarian (online chat, email, text, etc.)	30%	82%	15%	3%
Newman at Night (Extended hours between midnight and 8am)	29%	80%	17%	3%
Textbook on Reserve	24%	75%	19%	6%
Classroom use (Scale-up, Computer labs)	22%	67%	22%	11%
Library Instruction	17%	76%	23%	1%
Special Collections	17%	73%	25%	2%
Assistive Technologies	16%	65%	30%	4%
Research assistance services	15%	75%	24%	1%
Writing Center	13%	60%	32%	8%
Checked out electronic equipment (iPads, laptops, calculators)	11%	71%	23%	6%
Digital publishing services	9%	57%	38%	4%
Copyright assistance	7%	51%	45%	4%
Language Resource Center (Rosetta Stone and Mango)	7%	62%	34%	4%
Port	7%	43%	35%	22%
Communications Lab	6%	57%	39%	4%
Guidance on submitting papers and publications to VTechWorks	6%	46%	44%	10%
Support for development of data management plans	6%	45%	52%	3%
Support in managing, archiving and/or preserving research data and related materials	6%	53%	42%	5%
e-Portfolio Peer Mentor	5%	55%	42%	3%
Records Management Services	5%	50%	50%	0%
Event Capturing	4%	48%	52%	0%
Exam proctoring	4%	40%	57%	3%

UNANTICIPATED FINDINGS

Most findings were consistent with our expectations, except for the following:

- 7% of faculty, and 11% of staff reported using **Newman At Night** (Midnight-8am hours)
- 34% of respondents used **delivery of materials** (desktop delivery, request it, bookrunner); Graduate students, faculty, and staff were most satisfied (90%, 89%, and 82%, respectively). However, of the 14% of undergraduates using the service, 51% were satisfied.
- **75% of staff** reported visiting Newman Library during the last school year
- 21% of faculty, and 16% of staff reported visiting **Special Collections**
- We were surprised that 11% of users were dissatisfied with **Classroom use** (Scale-up, computer labs), but not entirely surprised that 22% of users were dissatisfied with **PORT**, as we are aware of hardware and software problems affecting both services.
- We did not expect that 11% of users would report dissatisfaction with **printing services**.
- (From other question) Higher than expected numbers of Undergraduates reported "working independently" in the Libraries (88%) than those "working in groups" (77%)

We did not ask for comments from respondents indicating their reason for dissatisfaction with particular services. We plan to incorporate this into the next survey.

From narrative comments, we also learned that some library users would like extended hours on weekends, capability to pay fines online (now available with Hokie ID), collaboration space for faculty, more space, space which is less crowded and not so busy, group study room reservation system, and tables that are comfortable to share with strangers.

Other findings we were already aware of were derived from narrative responses, including: slowness of the library's public computer stations, the need for the Café to be on the dining plan, need for better wifi, more outlets, more comfortable seating, and additional journal subscriptions. (Note: We consider specific titles when requested.)

LIBRARY IDENTITY AND PURPOSE

While a large number of positive comments were received, a number of users raised questions about the identity, purpose, and value of the University Libraries, including:

I embrace the integration of technology, but I worry that in the quest for technological advancement, less attention will be given to the true function of the library, which includes access to physical books. I can't tell you how many times I have gone to the library to pick up a specific book, and... found myself checking out many more books in a similar topic. The physical space and the tangible books created for me, in those moments, a learning experience that could not be replicated digitally.

The more we can get the students in the library the more space is needed for them to study and work together. The digital resources are great but our students still need to know how they work and how to use them. Thus they need reference librarians to help them. The library needs to remember "high tech high touch" meaning the more high tech we go the more we need to make contact with the students.

I just want you to be a library.

I am disappointed in the trend to purchase online books rather than physical copies. Please continue to purchase physical copies.

I love when there are e-books online. It helps expand what I can use for research papers and allows me to preview a book I might consider buying.

Compared to the university population this library is small. Compared to other top ranked universities in science and technology this only library is embarrassing!

Differences of opinion also exist regarding use and configuration of library spaces.

WHAT IS A LIBRARY? - EXTENDING THE CONVERSATION

While a number of known issues have been or are currently being addressed (outlets, wifi, seating, group study areas, collections, PORT, and public computers to name a few) likely the most significant findings from this survey highlight the need to address the topic of the **University Libraries' identity, purpose, and aspiration**, and to clearly communicate this to diverse user groups who hold a wide range of expectations, sometimes conflicting expectations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Department of the Registrar
Human Resources
Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board
Department of Institutional Research
Campus Computing

CONTACT

Anita Walz, Assessment, Open Education & Online Learning Environments Librarian
University Libraries, Virginia Tech arwalz@vt.edu 540-321-2204

Charla Gilbert, Director of Planning and Branch Operations
University Libraries, Virginia Tech cgilbert70@vt.edu 540-231-9406

VIRGINIA TECH ASSESSMENT SHOWCASE

February 9-13, 2015