Depository Library Needs Assessment/Benchmark: Public Libraries Segment Report

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Library Services and Content Management

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Background

- The Federal Depository Library Program, FDLP, consists of a diverse grouping of almost 1,300 institutions encompassing academic, federal, state, local, public, and special libraries. Each federal depository library must comply with legal responsibilities to "make government publications available for the free use of the general public." Individual libraries may determine how to meet this requirement.

- Through its Public Access Assessment (PAA) program, the GPO bears the responsibility of ensuring that the resources it distributes to Federal depository libraries are made accessible to the general public. Assessments are categorized (access, collections, service, and cooperative efforts), and touch almost every aspect of library operations and service including access to depository resources through bibliographic, physical building, tangible collection, Internet, and onsite computer access. The GPO's PAA program also has an educational and customer relations aspect, with the GPO looking to develop the library's knowledge-base about FDLP requirements and best practices, as well as tools and services to enable libraries to successfully serve as federal depository libraries. r

- Over the past year, Outsell has worked closely with the GPO to better understand that led to the identification of discrete segments within FDLP. With the revised FDLP library types segmentation completed, Outsell designed a needs assessment and benchmark instrument to survey the FDLP libraries as input to its client relations program.

- This report presents the findings from that survey, both on an overall basis and with detailed analysis by type of library.

Methodology

- **Data Collection**. Outsell designed, programmed, and fielded the needs assessment and benchmark study instrument with input from GPO. Specifically, Outsell:
  - Programmed the questionnaire into a secure web-based server and performed quality testing of the survey program;
  - Provided a draft invitation which FDLP adapted and used to invite FDLP member library personnel to the survey site.
  - Collected responses into a database and monitored response, providing updates to FDLP on a regular basis during fielding.

- **Data Processing & Tabulation**. Once data collection was completed, Outsell processed the survey data and tabulated the responses. Data processing included cleaning and quality-checking the data, coding up to three open-ended questions, and providing a set of data cross-tabulated by up to 20 segments such as library type. Outsell has previously provided a raw data file showing individual responses to the survey, including individual library metrics.

- **Analysis**. Drawing on a deep understanding of academic, government, and special libraries; segmentation analysis; research design; needs assessment and benchmark research methods, Outsell consultants analyzed the survey results to identify key findings and draw implications for FDLP's client relations program.

- **Presentation**. In addition to the written report, Outsell will attend an on-site meeting to present the project and facilitate a discussion with the goal of identifying the group's "center of gravity" on reactions and thoughts about the outcomes and strategy. During this meeting Outsell will debrief and discuss the key findings and recommendations in a combination of facilitated discussion, and brainstorming actions for inclusion in the customer relations plan.

Segment Results: Public Libraries

- **Needs Assessment**
- **Biennial Survey**

Key Findings

- 191 public libraries responded with municipal libraries accounting for the greatest sub-segment. Potential number of users (median): 477,000; actual users (median): 114,000.
- Approaching 50% of respondents identified the user base for depository services as 10,000+. Across all respondents, median number of depository services users: 10,000.
- Respondents identified budget, workload, staffing, space/facilities management and cost-containment as leading (and clearly inter-related) concerns. More than half of respondents also cited the lack of training to search/use resources and time management.
- Almost all respondents (90+%) identified core services and content management activities: Reference desk, Electronic access to documents, and Managing a physical library/collection were cited by 90+% respondents.
- Almost 60% respondents do not measure library performance with regard to depository services. Those that do primarily use qualitative and quantitative needs assessments.
- Almost all (91%) respondents identified access to depository materials as the most important FDLP services. Unlike other segments' responses which also highlighted the importance of services such as FDLP Desktop, Persistent identifier capability in cataloging records to full text, and Free access to Government fee-based databases, Public library respondents specifically also cited User access tools and Collections development/management.

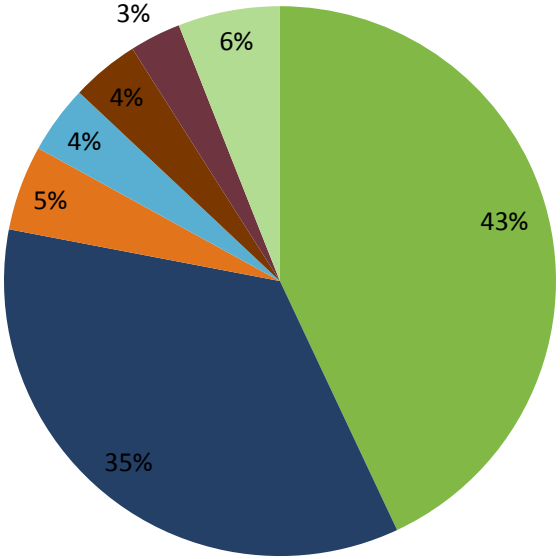
Key Findings cont.

- A digitized collection of FDLP historical materials led responses as the desired service/resource not currently available (55%). More than in any other segment, Item selection flexibility (by subject, geography, and collection) was highlighted as a needed service/resource, as was the desire for classification of publications by the Dewey Decimal system.
- ~90% respondents cited Routine cataloging, Display of the FDLP emblem, and Knowledgeable library staff as methods for making all formats of depository publications visible to the public. More than half of all respondents also highlighted FDL status or resources on library websites.
- 32% respondents identified no barriers for access to depository materials. For those who did cite barriers, filtering/blocking software on public access computers, online authentication to public access computers, and the difficulty of accessing the collection within the library were prominent concerns.
- Respondents expressed the greatest levels of satisfaction with FDLP Desktop, the FDL Handbook, Conferences, askGPO, Cataloging, Communication, Web Tools, Classification, Distribution, and Acquisition of Agency Materials. The greatest levels of dissatisfaction were with Access to Government Fee-based Databases and Needs and Offers.
- ~30% respondents identified an interested in receiving digital files on deposit. While more than 50% had discussed this interest with their Director, 30% felt they did not have Administrative Support.
- 2% of respondents are not continuing with FDLP, and 9% respondents are considering whether to remain within FDLP.

Public Library Type

Of the 191 public library respondents:

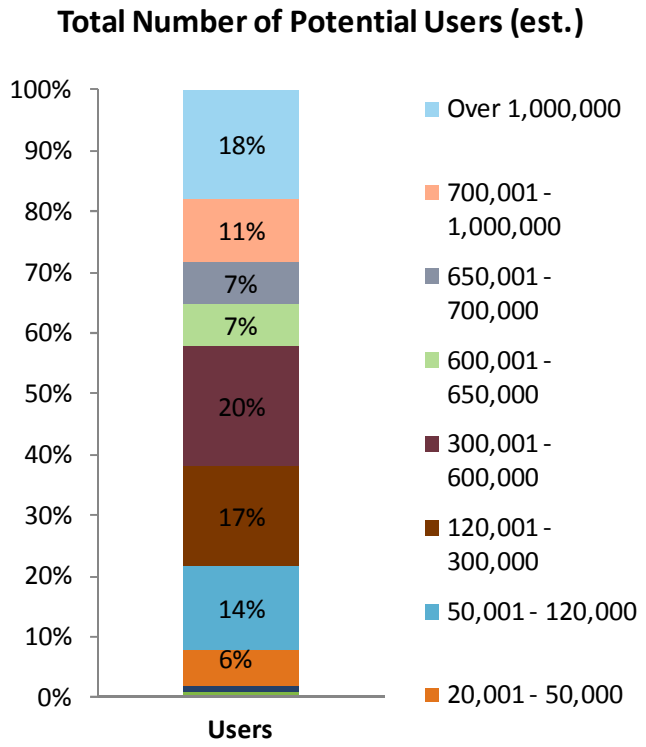
- Municipal public libraries accounted for a slight majority of the responding institutions (43%)
- City/county libraries comprised the bulk of the remainder (35%)
- The remaining 22% was relatively evenly distributed across other sub-segments

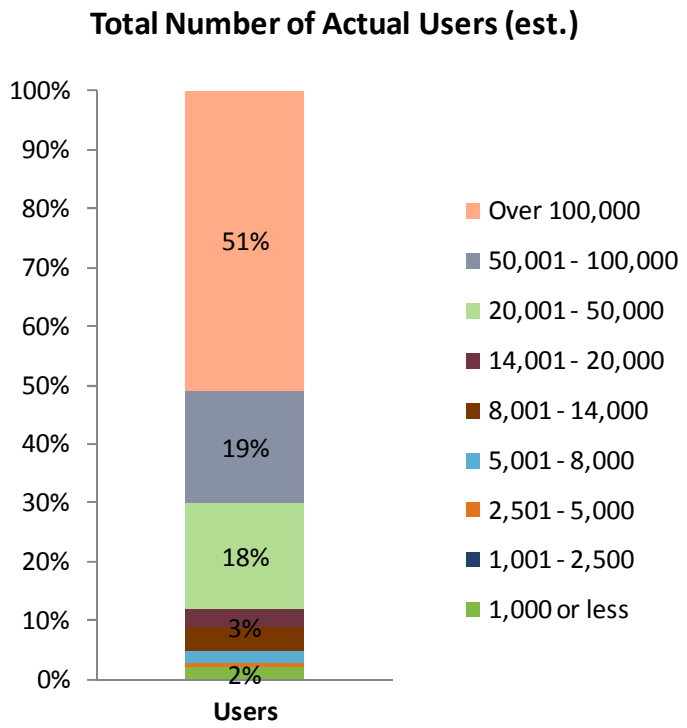


City/county public library
Municipal public library
City/county public law library
County or parish public library
Multijurisdictional public library
School district
Other public library

Source: Q1. Which of the following best describes your library type?

Populations Served by Size: Potential and Actual

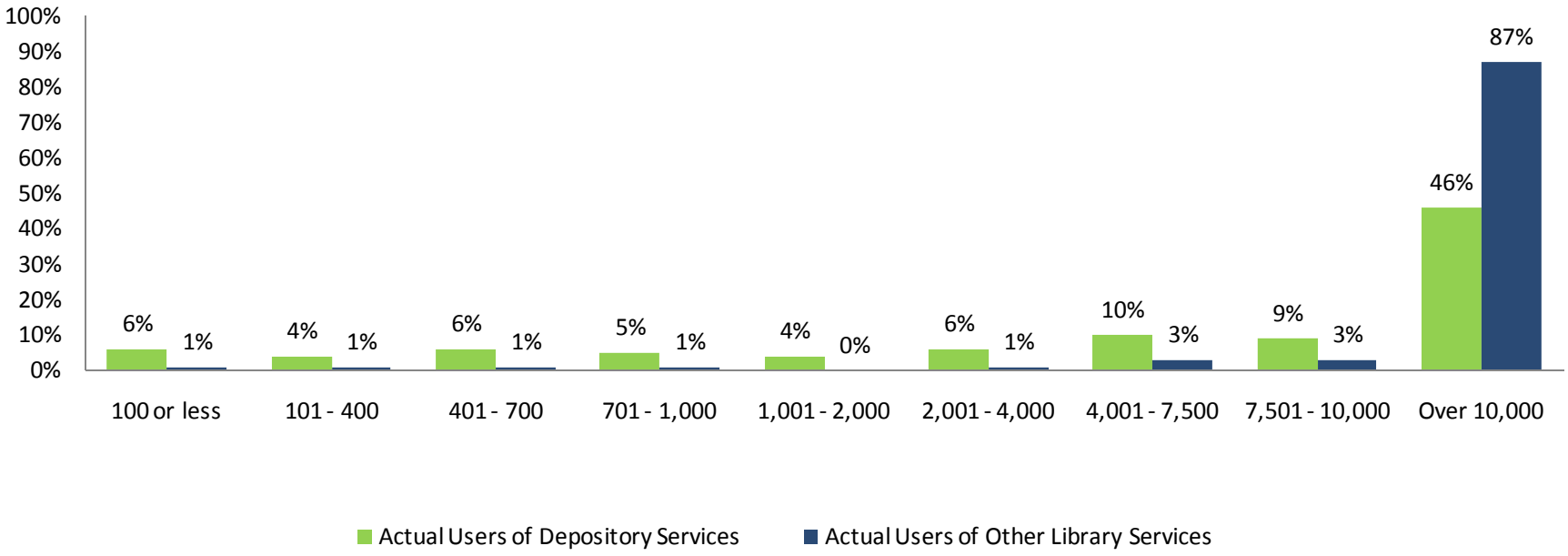




With only 2% respondents reporting fewer than 20,000 potential users, approximations of potential users were distributed across all ranges 20,000 and more. Estimates for actual user populations, while skewing to the high end of the spectrum (70% respondents represented actual user populations of 50,000 or more, with 51% citing $100,000 users or more) did reflect a sizeable number of respondents (18%) citing 1,000 or fewer users.

 Source: Q2. What is your best estimate of the approximate number of potential users (those in your area who would likely benefit from your services) and the approximate number of actual users that your library supports?

Populations Served: Use of Depository or Other Services



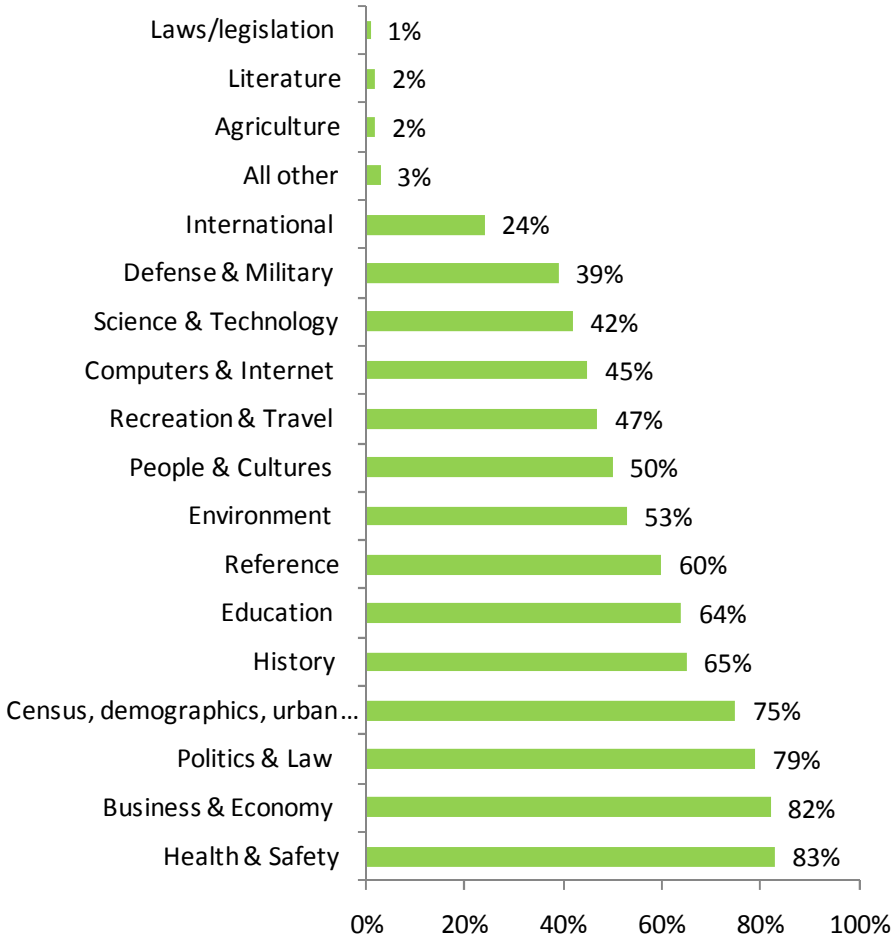
Actual users for both depository and other library services tended to the high end of the market, with almost half of depository service user populations and almost 90% of actual user populations reported as over 10,000.

Q2a. Of those [INSERT # OF ACTUAL USERS IN Q2] actual users, approximately how many of them represent your user base for depository services and how many represent your user base for other library services?

Populations Served: Subject Categories Used by Patrons

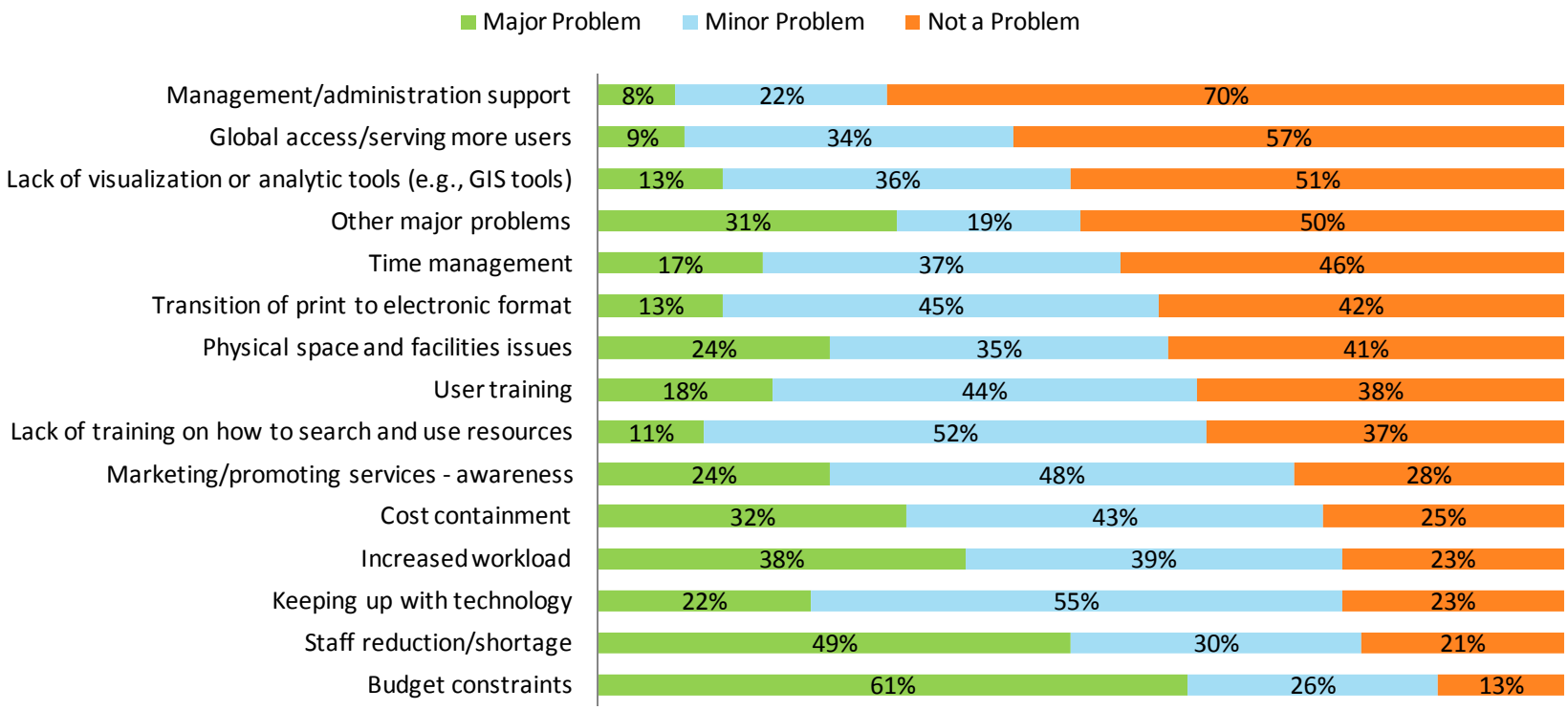
Health & Safety and Business & Economy lead the subject categories used most often by public library patrons. [Note: This varies from other segments where top 2 responses tended to include Politics & Law and Business & Economy.]

Amongst respondents, categories identified as 0% use included:
- Native American studies
- Forestry
- Social work/sociology
- Library Sciences



Q3. What are the key subject categories that your patrons use most regularly?

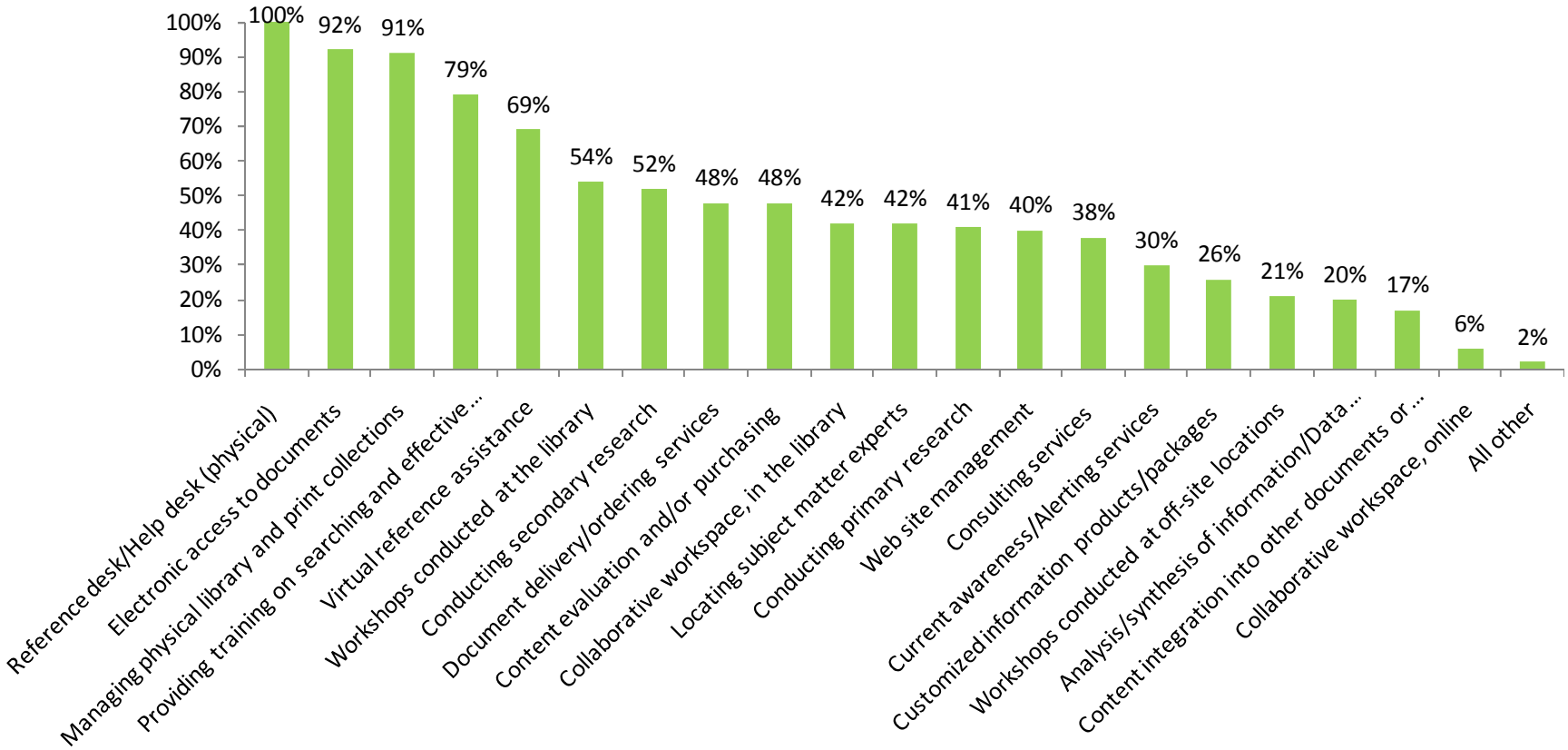
Problems and Challenges



While the greatest concerns mirrored the "financial" concerns of other segments, the Public libraries segment was the only one where "Lack of training on how to search and use resources" and "Time Management" were cited as a problem by 50% or more of respondents. Also distinct from other segments, more Public library respondents reported problems (major or minor), with 50% or more referencing almost all of the challenges identified. Stand-outs (i.e., not a problem) were few: Lack of visualization tools, Global access, and Management/Administration support.

Q4. In general, to what extent do you consider the following factors to be problems or challenges to providing information and services?

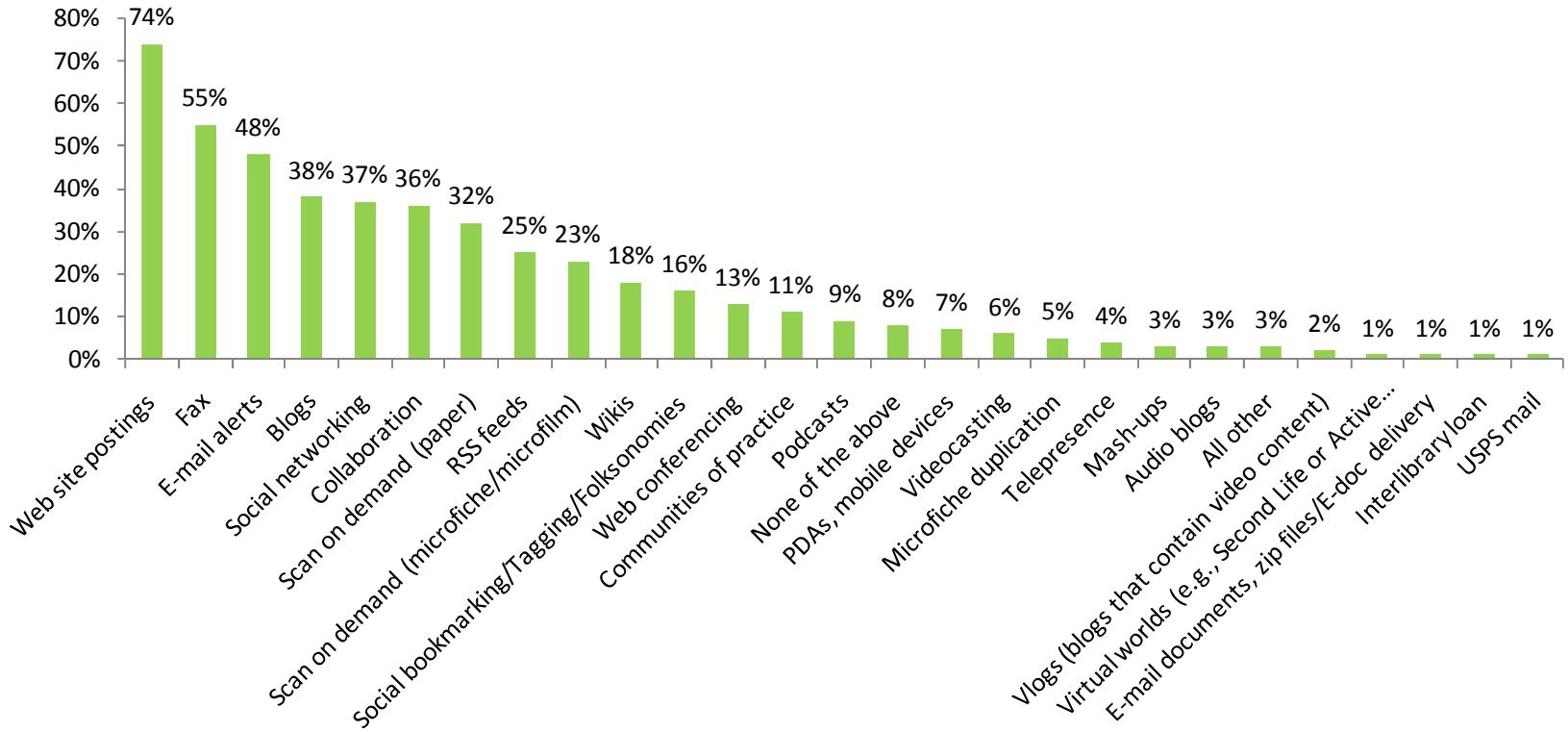
Services and Content Management Activities



Reference desk, Electronic access to documents, and Managing a physical library/collection were cited by 90+% respondents.

Q5. Please indicate which of the following services and content management activities that you provide to your patrons.

Tools, Methods, and Applications of Managing and Delivering Information



While more than half of all public library respondents reported utilizing web site postings (74%) and fax (55%), fewer than half of all respondents utilized any other tool or method. The public segment offered more tools/methods than other segments, with only Online guides, Class presentations, and Digital equivalent (microfiche) not being used.

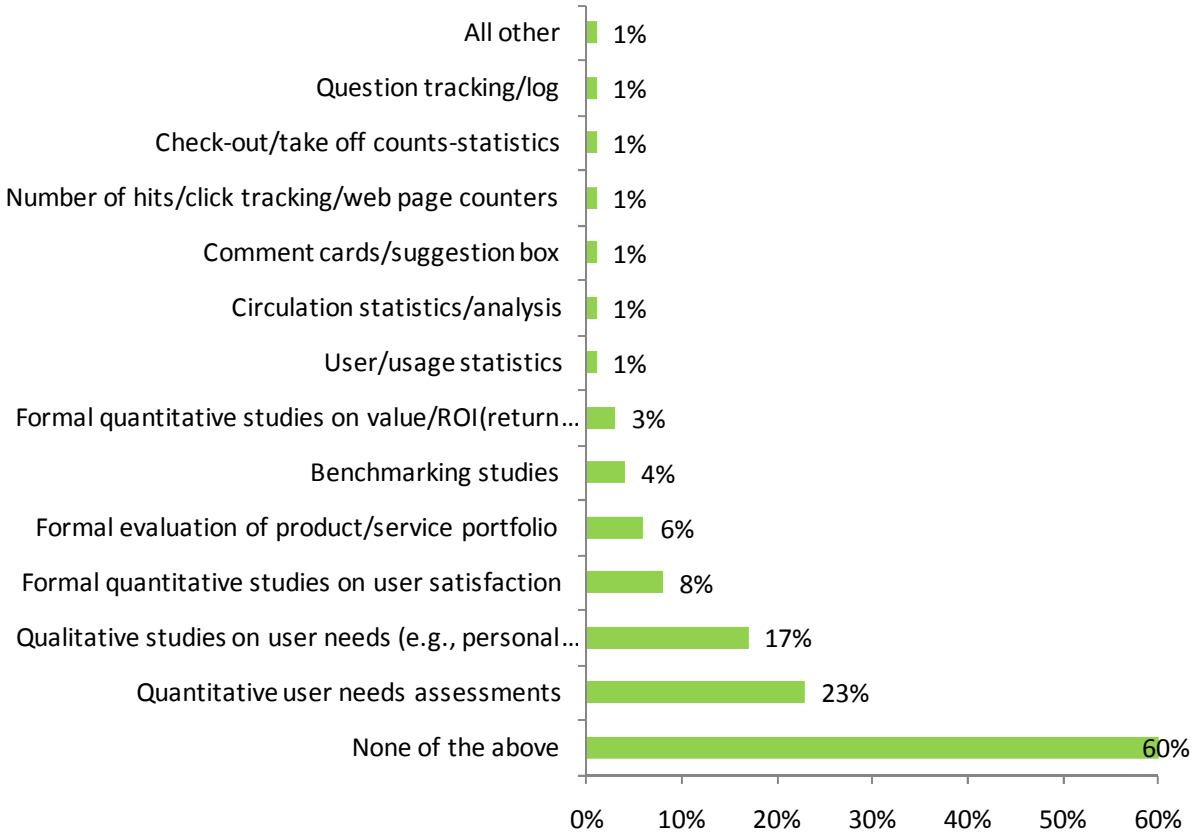
Q6. Which of the following tools, methods, or applications do you incorporate into managing or delivering information?

Measuring Library Performance | Depository Services

60% respondents did not measure library performance with regard to depository services and usage.

For those who did measure performance, needs assessments topped the list with usage of both quantitative and qualitative studies.

More than other segments, albeit in small numbers, Public libraries reported use of counts, statistics, and tracking.



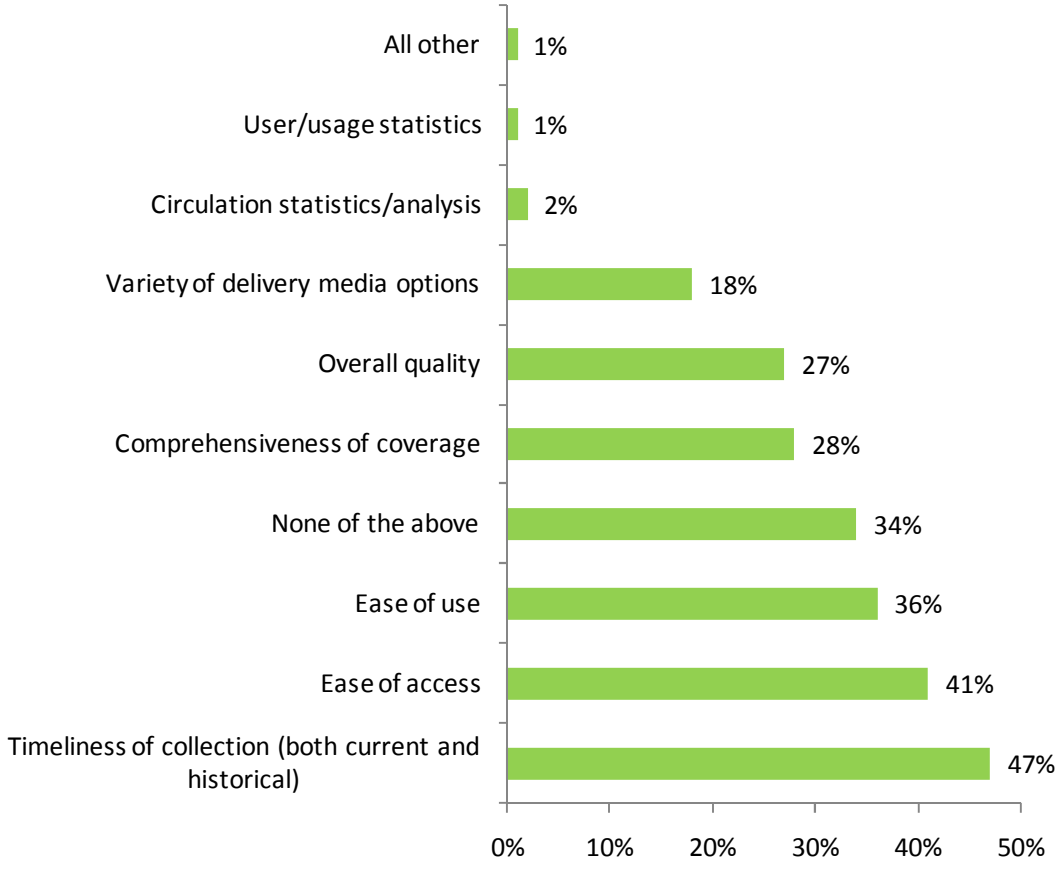
Q7. Which of the following types of studies, if any, do you utilize to measure your library's performance with regard to depository services and usage?

Performance Metrics| Usage of Content Collection

No more than 50% respondents reported measuring any one metric of content collection usage, with Timeliness of collection leading Ease of Access and Ease of Use.

Only 27% cited measuring Overall Quality.

0% respondents reported measuring:
- Verbal/written feedback or informal interviews
- Library wide assessment / service and collection assessment
- Number of hits/click tracking/web page counters



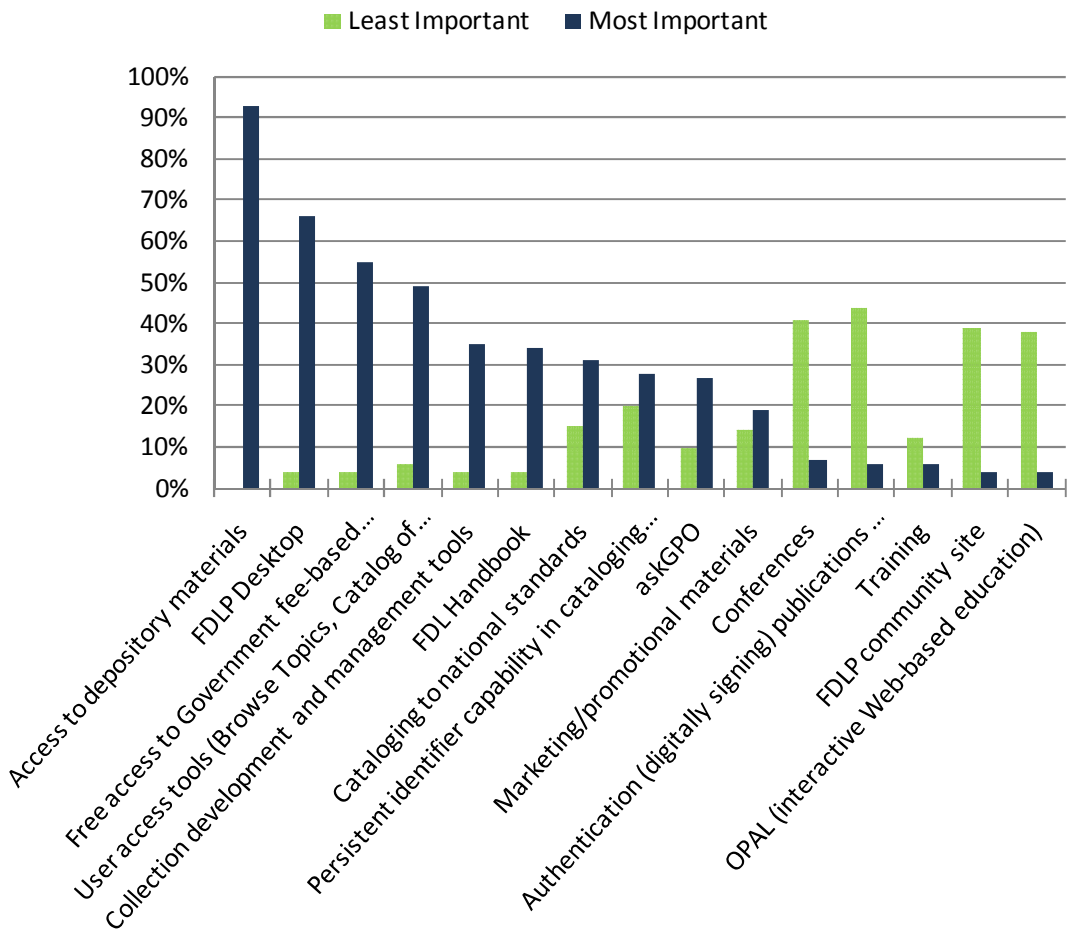
Q8. Which of the following performance metrics, if any, do you measure related to your library's content collection usage?

Importance of FDLP Services (Most Important / Least Important)

Access to depository materials was the most important FDLP service cited. Also cited as most important (50+%) were the FDLP Desktop and Free access to Government fee-based databases

User access tools and Collection development/management tools were cited by a larger percentage of respondents than in other segments, coming in higher than the typical responses for FDL Handbook, Cataloging to national standards, and Persistent identifiers further down the list.

FDLP community sites and interactive Web-based education topped the list of least regarded services.



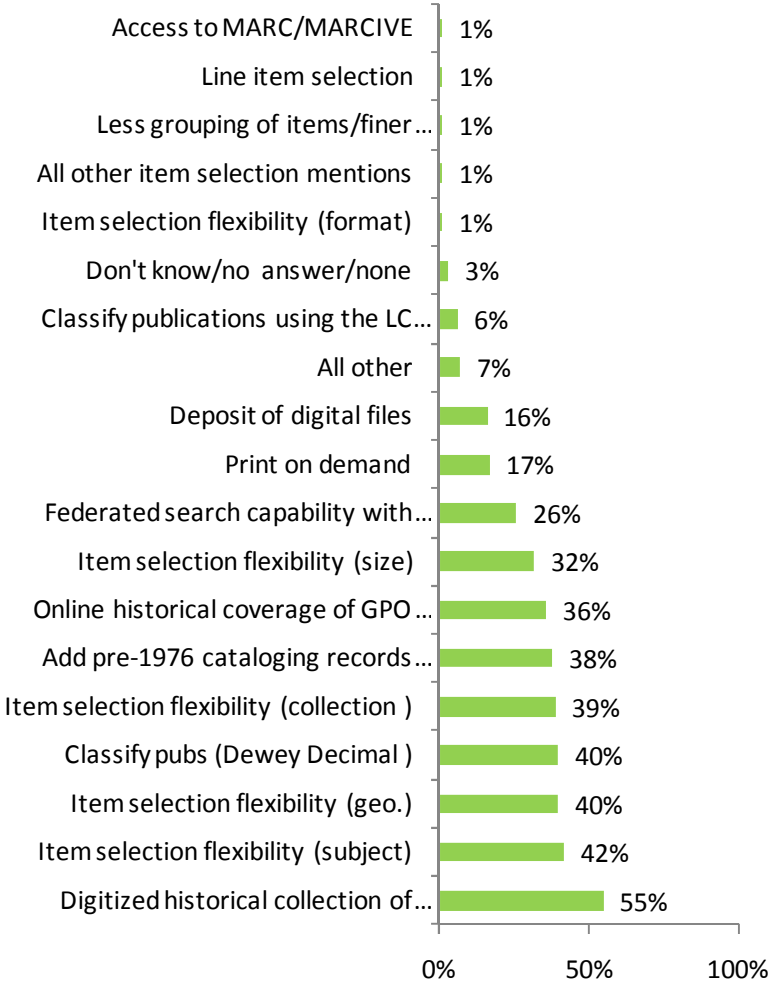
Q9. What are the most important services provided by the FDLP to your library?
Q9a. Now please indicate the least important services provided by the FDLP to your library

Services / Resources Needed but Not Currently Available from FDLP

An majority of respondents (55%) identified a digitized collection of FDLP historical materials as a desired service/resource not currently available.

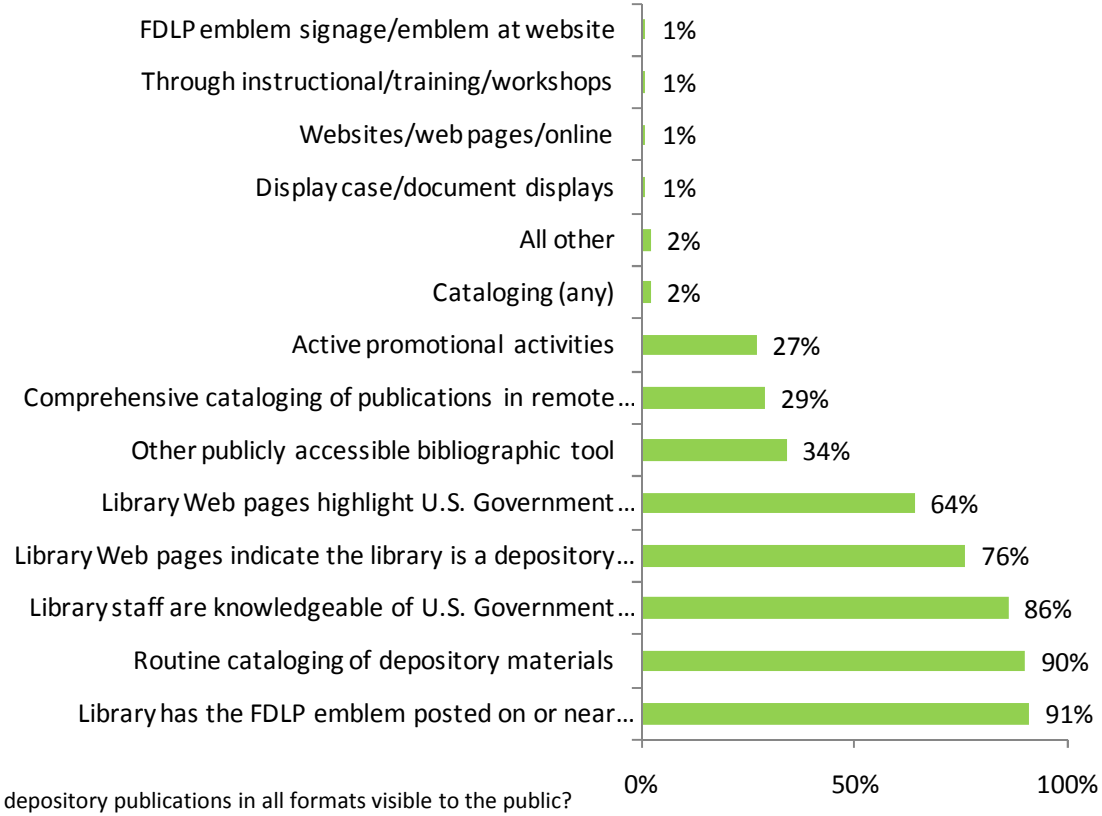
Unlike other segments where the addition of pre-1976 cataloging records to OCLC or Online historical coverage of GPO/Fedsys titles followed as needed services, Public libraries showed a stronger need for Item selection flexibility - by subject, geography, and collection.

Similarly, requests for classification of publications by the Dewey Decimal system were much higher in public libraries than other segments.



Q10. What services and/or resources do you need from the FDLP that you currently do not have?

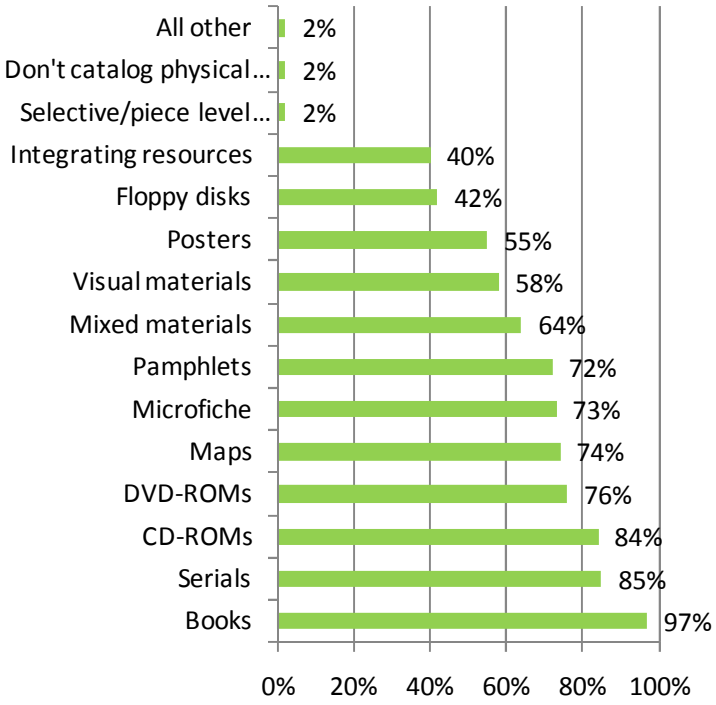
Methods for Making Depository Publications (All Formats) Visible



Q17. How does the library make the depository publications in all formats visible to the public?

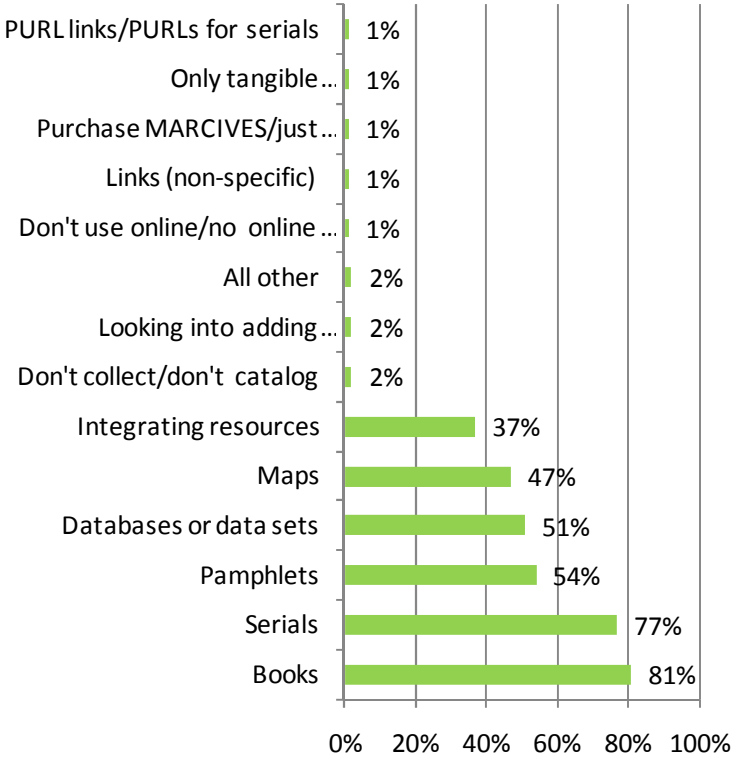
Routine cataloging, display of the FDLP emblem, and knowledgeable library staff were most cited as methods for making all formats of depository publications visible to the public. More than half of all respondents also reporting using library web pages to indicate and/or highlight depository library status and materials.

Piece Level Records and Cataloging of Online Materials



Libraries identified educational kits/kits as the only materials to not have piece level records available.

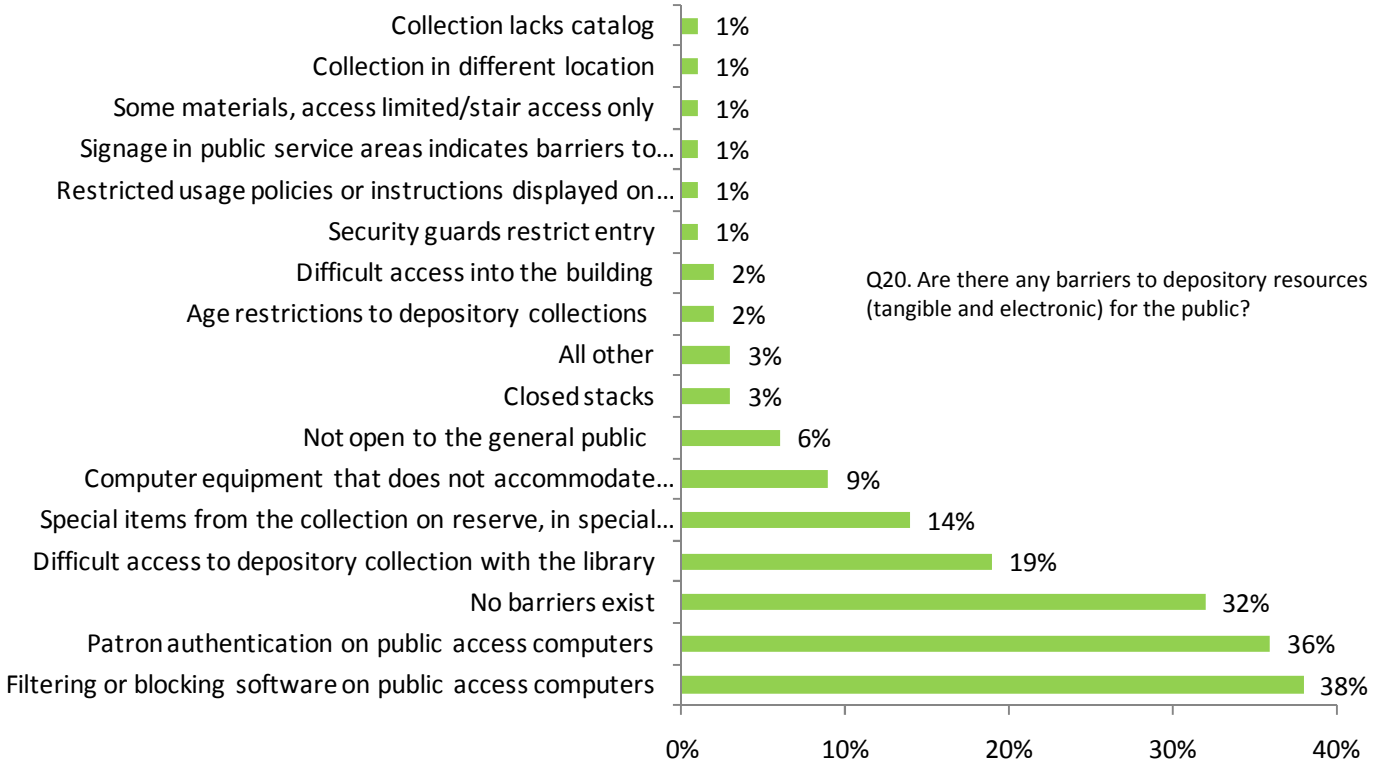
Q18. Please indicate if you provide piece level records for the following types of tangible materials received within the past five years.



Books and serials lead the online materials disseminated by FDLP which are included in library catalogs.

Q18a. Do you include records in your catalog for the following types of online materials disseminated through the FDLP?

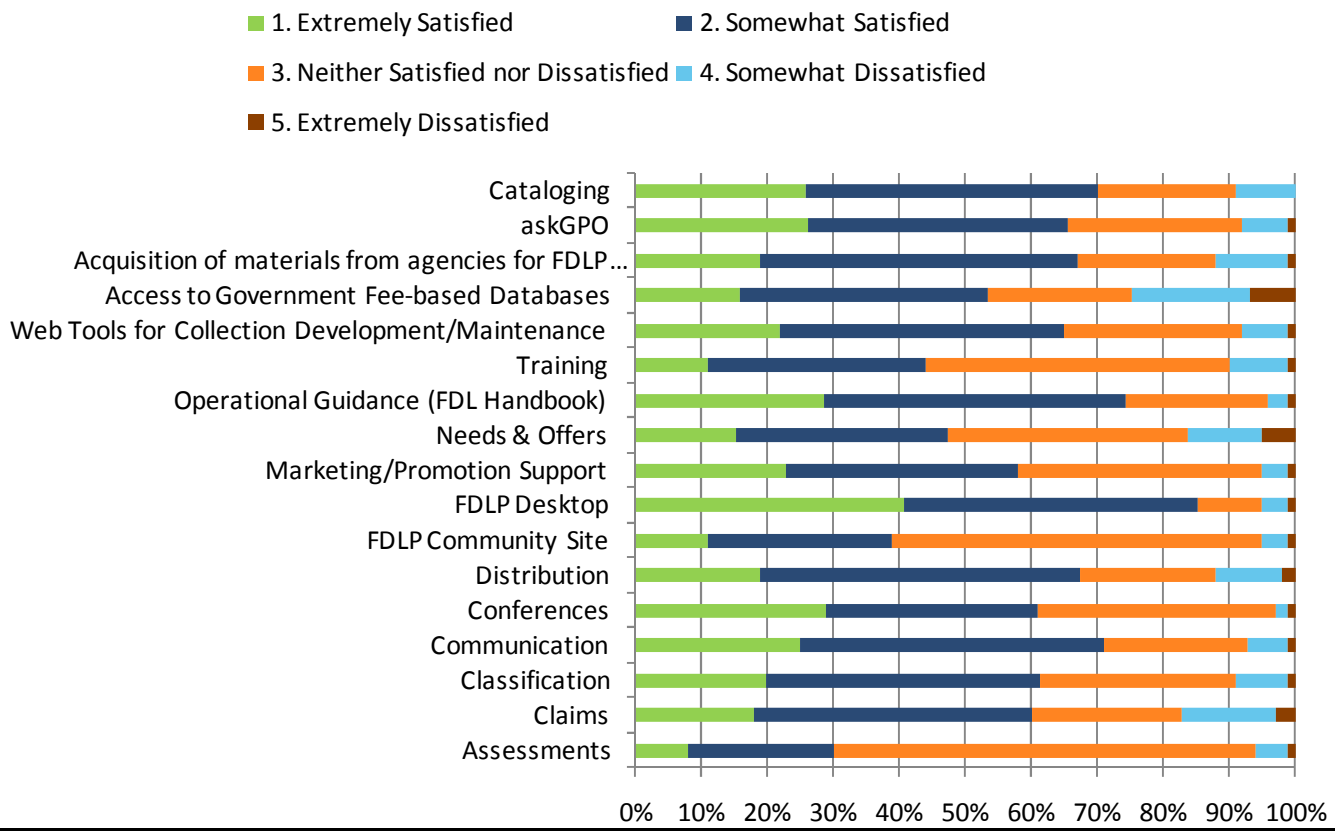
Barriers to Access



Q20. Are there any barriers to depository resources (tangible and electronic) for the public?

32% respondents reported no barriers for the public to access depository materials (tangible or electronic). Barriers themselves clustered around computer access issues (authentication and filtering/blocking software), and the difficulty of accessing the collection within the library.

Satisfaction with FDLP Services



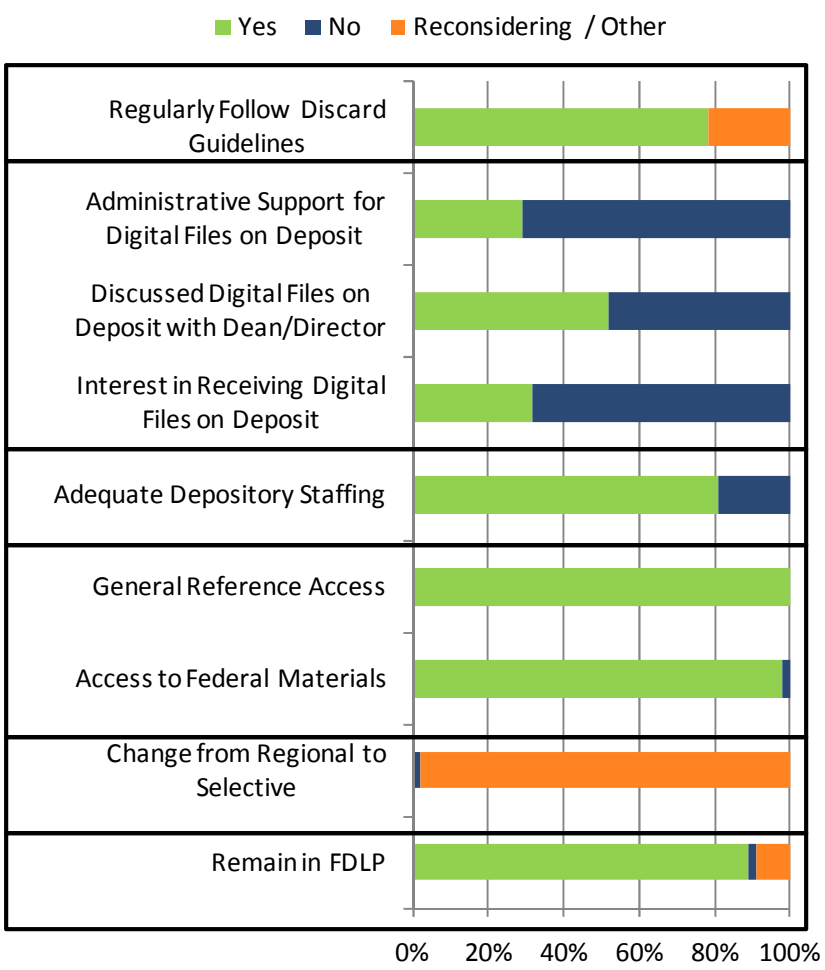
Q11. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with FDLP services?

-More than 60% respondents were pleased (Extremely or Somewhat Satisfied) with FDLP Desktop, the FDL Handbook, Conferences, askGPO, Cataloging, Communication, Web Tools, Classification, Distribution, and Acquisition of Agency Materials.

- Greatest levels of dissatisfaction were related to Access to Government Fee-based Databases, Needs and Offers, and Claims.

Select Characteristics

- **Discards**. More than 75% of respondents regularly follow discard policies; the remaining respondents do follow policies but do not have a regular process.
- **Digital Deposit**. ~30% per cent respondents are interested in receiving digital files on deposit. 52% have discussed this interest with Dean/Director, but less than 30% feel they have Administrative Support.
- **Adequate Staffing**. The vast majority of respondents believe staffing levels for depository services are adequate.
- **Access** to Federal materials and general reference services in all formats is all but universal.
- **Regional / Selective**. Only 1% respondents indicated consideration of status change. Most respondents were not regionals, so response was Not Applicable ("Other").
- **Remain in FDLP**. 2% of respondents were not remaining in FDLP, while 9% respondents were considering options.



See Survey source questions, following page.

Select Characteristics – Survey Questions

- **Discards**. Q19. Are depository discards regularly processed in conformance with GPO instructions found in the Federal Depository Library Handbook and regional guidelines or state plans, if applicable?

- **Digital Deposit**. Q18a. Please answer the following questions related to receiving deposit digital files of online publications

- **Adequate Staffing**. Q16. Do you find that depository staffing is adequate to fulfill basic depository responsibilities?

- **Access.** Q14. May any member of the general public access and use Federal government information resources in all formats at your library? Q15. Does the library provide reference service for the general public?
-
- **Regional / Selective**. Q12. Does your library plan to remain in the FDLP?

- **Remain in FDLP**. Q12. Does your library plan to remain in the FDLP?

 See questions, following page. Q12, 14, 15,, 18, 19

Q18a. Please answer the following questions related to receiving deposit digital files of online publications

Conclusion – Public Libraries Segment Analysis

APPENDIX – SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

(attached as WORD document)

About Outsell

The information, analysis, and opinions (the "Content") contained herein are based on the qualitative and quantitative research methods of Outsell, Inc. and its staff's extensive professional expertise in the industry. Outsell has used its best efforts and judgment in the compilation and presentation of the Content and to ensure to the best of its ability that the Content is accurate as of the date published. However, the industry information covered by this report is subject to rapid change. Outsell makes no representations or warranties, express or implied, concerning or relating to the accuracy of the Content in this report and Outsell assumes no liability related to claims concerning the Content of this report.

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