7-1-1998

Western Washington University Library Survey Series, Fall 1996-97: Returning and Entering Students

Carl Simpson
Western Washington University

Linda D. (Linda Darlene) Clark
Western Washington University

Gary (Gary Russell) McKinney
Western Washington University

Western Washington University Library Survey Series, Fall 1996-97: Returning and Entering Students

(Report 1998-05)

Carl Simpson
Linda Clark
Gary R. McKinney

July, 1998

THIS REPORT IS DIVIDED INTO TWO SECTIONS. SECTION ONE FOCUSES ON WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY RETURNING STUDENTS AND BEGINS ON PAGE 2. SECTION TWO FOCUSES ON WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY ENTERING STUDENTS, AND BEGINS ON PAGE 23.

Section One: Returning Students

INTRODUCTION

At the request of the new University Librarian, Western's Office of Survey Research (OSR) and Office of Institutional Assessment and Testing (OIAT) worked with the library's faculty and staff to conduct a series of surveys focusing on library resources and services. Drafts of this report were reviewed by library personnel and their comments and insights were extremely valuable. These surveys were intended to provide a base of information to help guide an in-depth assessment and planning effort aimed at improving Western's library. Indeed, "Western Washington University Libraries: Organizational Directions and Major Strategies: 1998 - 2003" was published December 31, 1997, a strategic plan which utilized, among other sources of information, the findings found in this report. The library's strategic plan is available in hard copy through their main administrative offices, and on-line via the Western Libraries home page (http://lis.wwu.edu/screens/mainmenu.html).

During Fall quarter, 1996, surveys were conducted of faculty, administration/staff, returning undergraduate and graduate students, newly-entering undergraduate and graduate students, the library faculty and staff, and community library users. Section One of this report presents the findings of one of these surveys: returning undergraduate and graduate students. Section Two presents the findings from the survey of newly-entering students.

Returning students completed an extensive survey, with questions concerning their use and evaluation of library holdings, facilities and services, and recommendations for changes to the library. This report summarizes basic findings from the returning student survey. Three notes of mention are:

One: Students responding late in Fall quarter, 1996, were reflecting on their previous experiences at Western—during Spring, 1996, for some questions, and at any time as Western students for other questions. This timing has two important implications. First, we know from previous research at Western that Spring use of the library is considerably lighter than in other quarters. Second, the library use described in this report is no doubt somewhat out of date. Library technology is changing rapidly, as is students' access to computers with which to engage new library technology. The students in this survey are reporting on library use in Spring, 1996 and before.

Two: Although Western's library system includes some satellite holdings, the largest being the music library, the great majority of use is of Wilson Library. For convenience of expression, this report adopts the convention of referring to "the Western library" while recognizing the existence of plural holdings.

Three: This report is intended to provide information as background to strategic planning efforts by the library staff, faculty, and administration of Western. This creates a natural division of labor between this report and the planning bodies that will use it: this report provides concrete empirical observations with little comment, and planning bodies will interpret these and other observations within the WWU context, as a basis for planning recommendations. With this in mind, this report is written with a minimum of interpretation or discussion.

METHOD

Returning students were defined for this sample as having been enrolled at Western both in Fall, 1996, when data were collected, and in the previous Spring quarter. Nearly all had been at Western at least one full academic year. The sample of returning students was separated into three strata, sampled at disproportionate rates: graduates, advanced juniors and seniors (undergraduates having completed more than 120 credits) and undergraduates with fewer than 120 credits. For convenience, these groups are referred to in this report as returning graduates, upper-division undergraduates, and lower-division undergraduates, although these terms are somewhat inaccurate.

- All 431 returning graduate students were included in the sample because of their limited numbers and because the library is particularly important to them. A total of 263 responded, for a response rate of 61.0%. All returning graduates had been registered at Western as graduate students in the previous Spring. About one-fourth had also been undergraduates at Western for some period.

- Undergraduates with 120 or more credits are essentially all in their major and therefore likely to draw much more heavily on library resources than those with fewer credits. Of the 3550 returning students with 120+ credits, we mailed surveys to 1700 and received responses from 832 (48.9%). While that response rate is a bit below the desired rate, it is sufficient for inferences from the sample to be taken seriously. The survey was long and the timing of the project put data collection in the second half of the quarter, when students tend to have other priorities. Nonresponse is therefore likely to be relatively random.

- Undergraduates with fewer than 120 credits are important to include in an assessment of library use patterns, but are not as experienced with the library as upper division students. We therefore included a smaller sample, asked them only a subset of questions, and sent them only two reminders rather than three reminders including a second copy of the survey, as with graduates and upper-division students. As a result only 173 (28.8%) of the 600 lower-division students in our sample responded. While we have included these results in the report, the possibility of response bias is large for this group. In particular, it is likely that a disproportion of nonrespondents were infrequent library users and therefore not heavily involved in library issues. We have analyzed the pattern of differences between these students and others and are encouraged that findings follow expected patterns, suggesting no reason for concern. On the other hand, it is likely that our findings slightly overstate library use among this group.

When we report figures for all returning students, as is usually the case, responses have been weighted so that they accurately reflect the composition of all returning students at Western in Fall, 1996. When results for separate strata are presented, they are based on unweighted data.

For the combined returning student sample (N=1268), the 95% confidence error term for any given percentage finding is approximately .03. Where findings are based on fewer than the entire sample, as, for example, when we examine use levels by particular majors, the error term is larger.

FINDINGS

Findings in this report are presented in figures and tables, with commentary identifying differences among graduates, upper-division undergraduates, and lower-division undergraduates. Needless to say, use is greater at more advanced levels. While the combined figures obscure these differences, they provide the best estimate of total library use and satisfaction by all returning students.

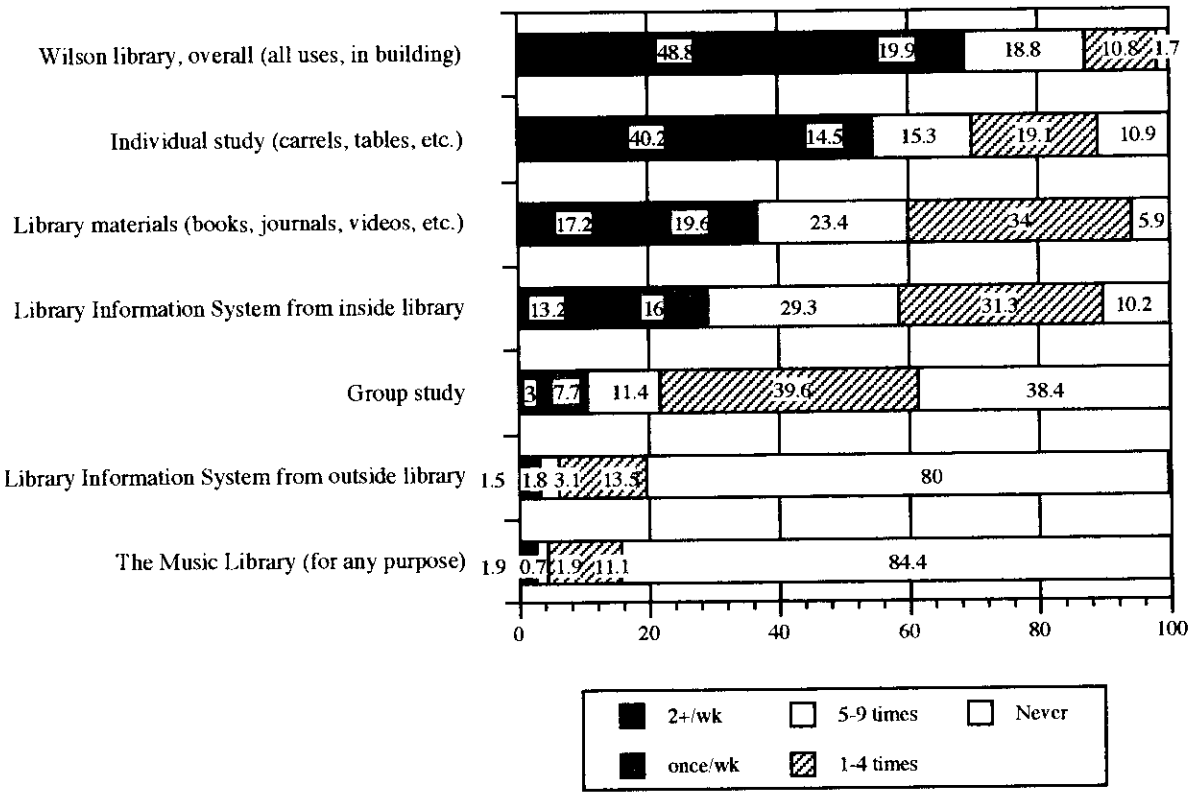
Overall Use of the Library

We asked returning students how often they used the library for any purpose during their last full quarter of enrollment, Spring, 1996. Although we would expect students to bias their responses somewhat upward because it is normative to use the library often, the findings nonetheless indicate quite high library use. About half (48.8%) report using the library at least twice a week. Another 19.9% say they use it about once a week. At the other extreme, 12.5% say they used the library four or fewer times during Spring quarter, with 1.7% of those not using it at all. (See Figure 1).

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Returning Students

On average during Spring quarter 1996, how often did returning students use WWU library facilities or services? (n=1255)

Figure 1



Among other issues, Figure 1 highlights an intriguing finding that probably says something about Western's limited study facilities as well as the kinds of assignments students receive is that students are making more frequent use of the library for individual study than to access library holdings. More precisely, over half of students accessed library materials between one and nine times during the quarter, with 36.8% doing so once a week or more often, while 54.7% study in the library at least weekly but only 34.4% do so intermittently. We know from other surveys that off-campus residents are particularly likely to use the library to study between classes. Group study is much less frequent, but common enough to be a factor in library facilities planning.

The frequency of reported use of the Library Information System (LIS) varies widely, with 13.2% saying more than twice a week and a like number, 10.2%, saying "never" during Spring quarter. On the other hand, very few returning students access the LIS from outside Wilson. Although 75.6% of students report owning a computer, and 63% say they access the world wide web at least weekly, 80.0% "never" accessed the LIS from outside Wilson during Spring quarter.

While overall use of the library differs only slightly among graduates, upper-division students and lower-division students, reasons for use vary considerably. Graduates much more often use library materials, with 56.3% of graduates doing so at least weekly, as compared to 39.9% for upper-division undergraduates and 27.7% for lower-division students. Graduates are also much more likely to access the LIS, both from inside the library and from outside. On the other hand, graduates are much less likely to use the library for study. While 34.6% of graduates study individually in the library at least weekly, 54.6% of upper-division and 58.7% of lower-division students do so.

Awareness, Use, and Perceptions of Specific Services

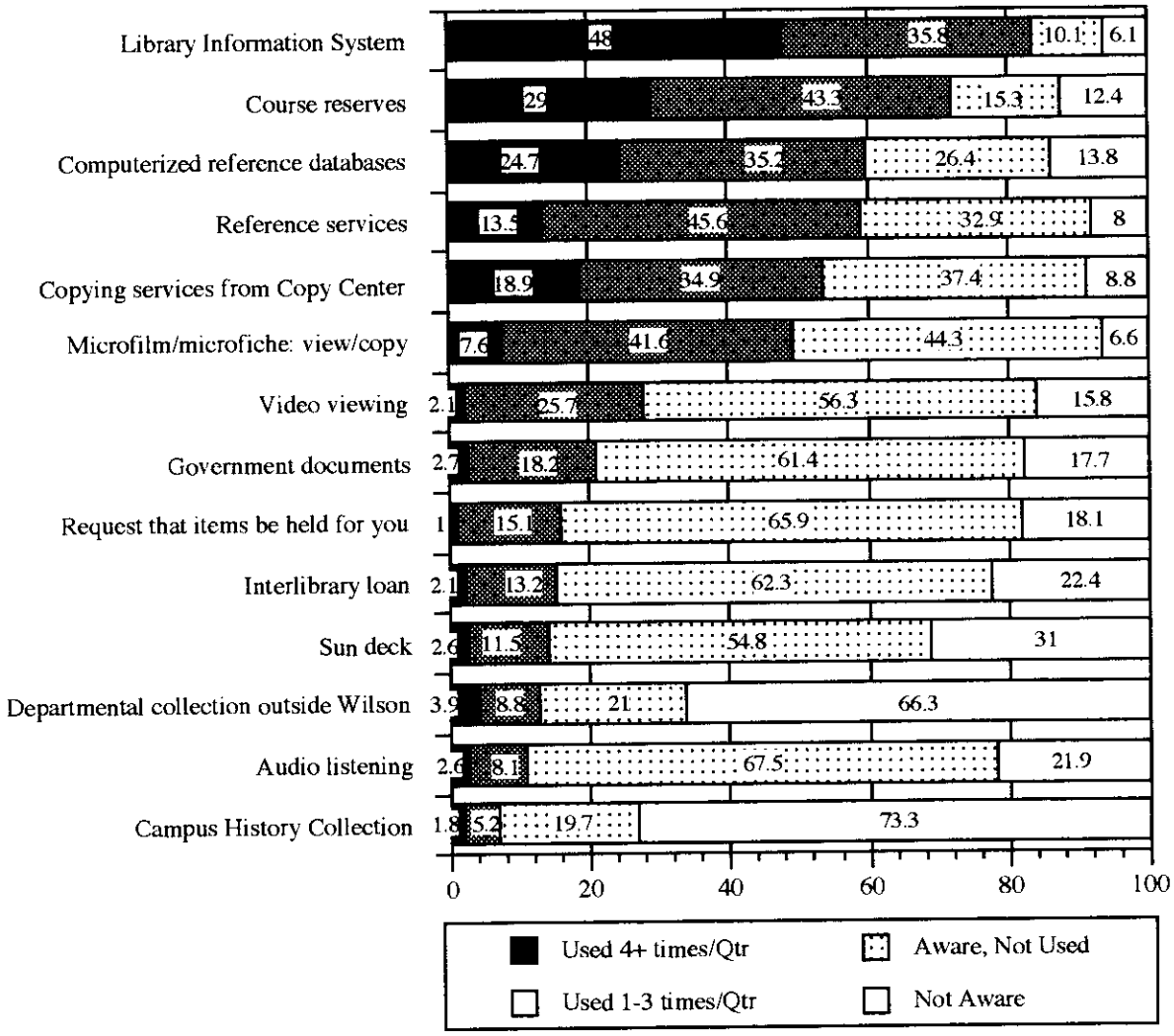
Figure 2a (page 5) provides additional information on students' use of various library services and facilities, asking about use and whether non-use stems from lack of awareness. For a number of the most basic elements of the library, fewer than one-tenth of students report lack of awareness: the Library Information System (LIS) (6.1%), reference services (8%), the copy center (8.8%) and microfilm/microfiche facilities (6.6%). On the other hand, for facilities as basic as the LIS, any lack of awareness is less than ideal.

Students' ability to pursue library research may be hampered in some cases by lack of awareness of other key resources. More than one-tenth of students appear to be unaware of computerized reference databases (13.8%), government documents (17.7%), and Interlibrary Loan (22.4%). However, awareness of such services appears to increase at the point when coursework demands it. Lower-division students are, for example, much less often aware of Interlibrary Loan (33.5%) than upper-division students (17.9%) or graduate students (3.1%). Figures are similar for unawareness of reference databases (20.8%, 10.5%, and 5.5%, respectively). The pattern is similar but less extreme for awareness of government documents.

Use of these same research tools is also very different by class standing: 48.4% of graduates say they have used Interlibrary Loan (ILL), as compared to 16.2% of upper-division students and 7.2% of lower-division students. For computerized reference databases, the corresponding figures are 80.8%, 64.3%, and 45.2%. Graduates and upper-division students also make somewhat more use of all the other services listed in Figure 2a, with the exception of the copy center, course reserves, the sun deck, the campus history collection, and video and audio facilities. However, the degree of difference is less great than for ILL and reference databases.

Are returning students aware of, and have they ever used, each WWU library service or facility listed below? (n=1258)

Figure 2a



Students who reported having used each of the services listed in Figure 2a were also asked to report their satisfaction with "availability and ease of use." Figures, displayed in Figure 2b, show most receiving reports of "good" and show relatively small differences among the various services.

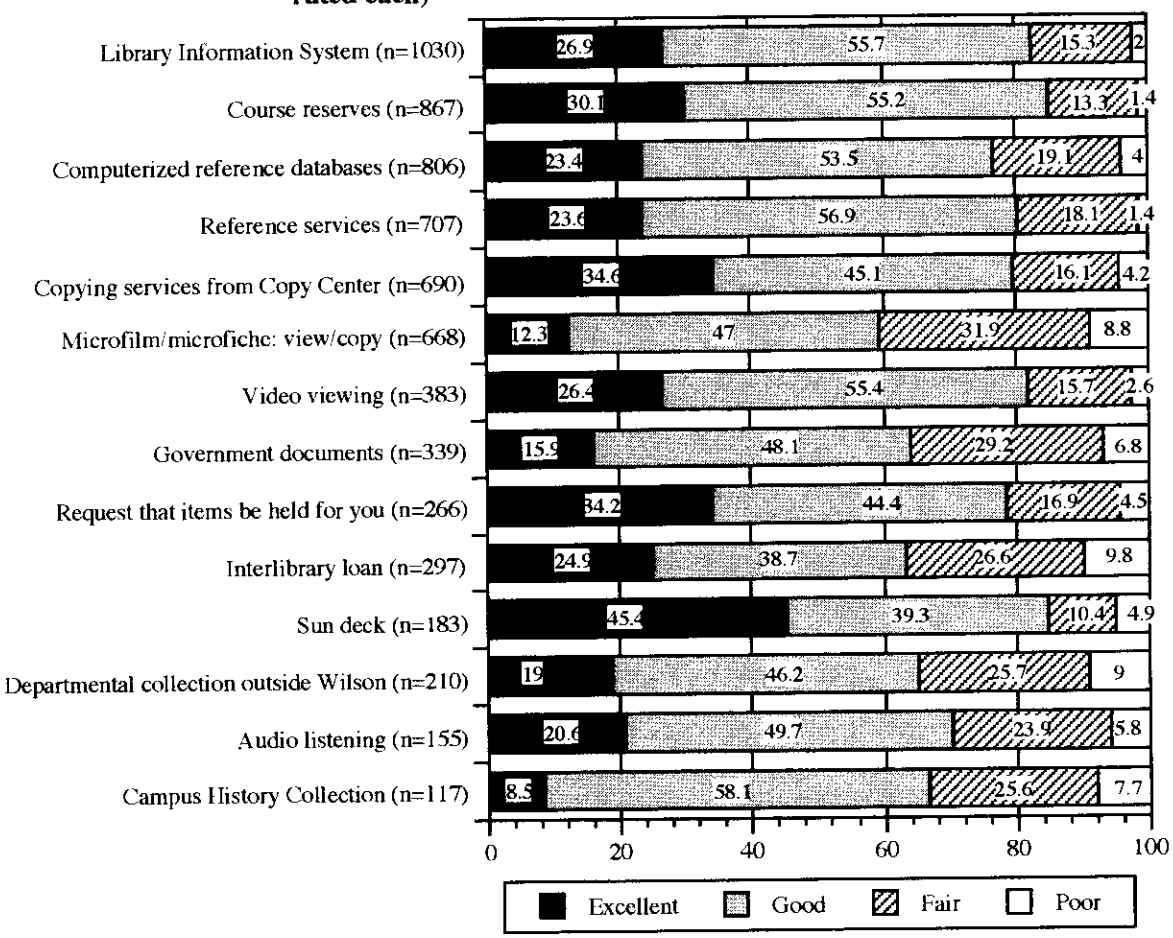
Satisfaction with the two facilities most often used, the LIS and course reserves, is particularly high. Other widely-used and highly-critical resources such as references services and reference databases generate satisfaction that is nearly as high. The only widely-used facility with rather low satisfaction is the microfilm/fiche facility. Interlibrary Loan is interesting in that it receives the largest proportion of "poor" ratings while also receiving 24.9% ratings of "excellent." In this case, ratings may depend on the success of the search for materials. It is also possible that students are reporting more or less recent use of a facility that has changed a good deal recently.

While use patterns differ dramatically by class standing, satisfaction does not. In no case is there a substantial difference in satisfaction with these services, and even marginal differences occur infrequently. Undergraduates are slightly more satisfied with the sun deck and audio facilities, while graduates are slightly more satisfied with ILL, LIS, and computerized reference databases. On the whole, however, it appears that the issue differentiating groups of students is whether or not they are aware of and make use of facilities, not how satisfied they are. This may suggest that instruction in how to use these services is less at issue than creating opportunities for students to be introduced to their use.

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Returning Students

For each WWU library service or facility listed below, how satisfied have returning students been, on average, with availability and ease of use? (n= in parentheses indicates the number who used and rated each)

Figure 2b



Course Assignments Using the Library

Students were asked how many papers requiring library use were assigned during Spring, 1996. As shown in Figure 3, over half (55.3%) had at least one paper assigned that required extensive library research, with 15.5% having three or more assigned. Three-fourths of students had papers assigned that required "some" library research and over half had some assignment other than a paper assigned that required library research. The majority of paper assignments made during Spring 1996 required library use, although 23.7% of students reported four or more papers assigned that required no library research.

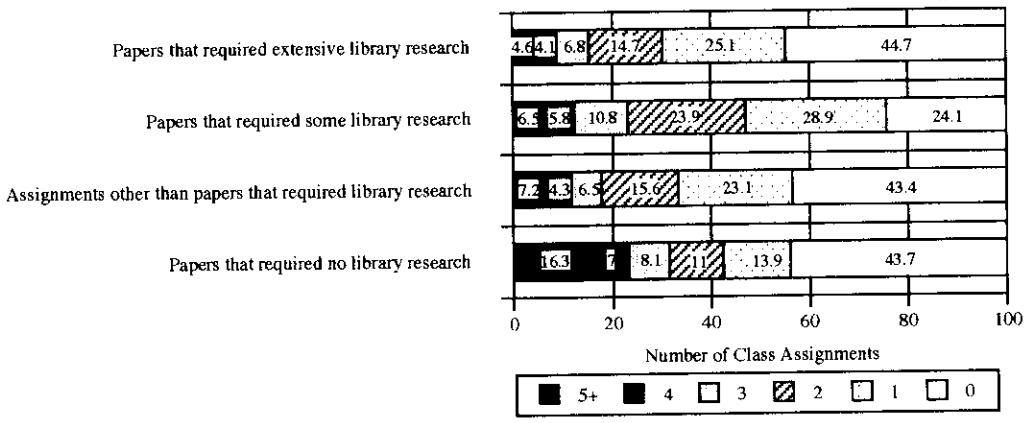
Cumulating the assignments each student received, we learn that only 13.5% of the sample received no assignments that required library work during Spring quarter. Half of these (7.8%) had no paper assignments of any kind. At the other extreme, 30.9% reported having received library assignments of all three kinds we asked about.

As would be expected, graduate students report many more paper assignments that required extensive library research. While only 44.6% of lower-division students and 59.8% of upper-division students say they received one or more assignments requiring extensive library research during Spring quarter, 73.6% of returning graduates did so. That figure is especially indicative of intense graduate library use when we take into account that the sample includes graduate students who are finishing theses and taking no classes. When we look at assignments making less intensive use of the library, however, there is no difference by year in school. Papers making no use of the library are less often assigned to graduates (31.5% versus 42.0% for both undergraduate groups).

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Returning Students

During Spring quarter 1996, how many, if any, class assignments did returning students have that required library research? (n=1243)

Figure 3



Activities as Part of a Research Paper

To provide more focused reports on the process students use to pursue library research projects, we asked them to "think about the most recent intensive library research assignment you completed at Western. For that particular project, did you engage in any activity listed below, and if so, how valuable was it?" Findings are reported as Figures 4a and 4b. Students who had completed no intensive library-based papers were directed to skip the question. It was answered by 88.4% of the sample. Nearly all those who could not respond were lower division undergraduates.

Over nine-tenths (91.9%) consulted the on-line catalog, a practice followed equally by students at all levels. The importance of an effective LIS is shown by the fact that the facility used second-most often, consultation with a reference database, was used by only 69.9% of respondents. However, use of databases varied widely by year in school. For graduates, the figure is 85.7%; for upper-division students, 73.3%, and for lower-division students, 58.7%.

Over two-thirds of students also asked librarians for help and browsed library shelves. Nearly as many asked professors for guidance. Librarians and, in particular, professors are consulted more frequently as students progress through levels of education. Browsing stacks, on the other hand, is as common for younger as for more advanced students.

Searching the World Wide Web and visiting libraries other than Western's are steps taken disproportionately by more advanced students. More than half (52.5%) of graduates, but only 27.7% of lower-division students visited other libraries, with upper-division students intermediate at 43.3%. Figures for exploring the Web are similar.

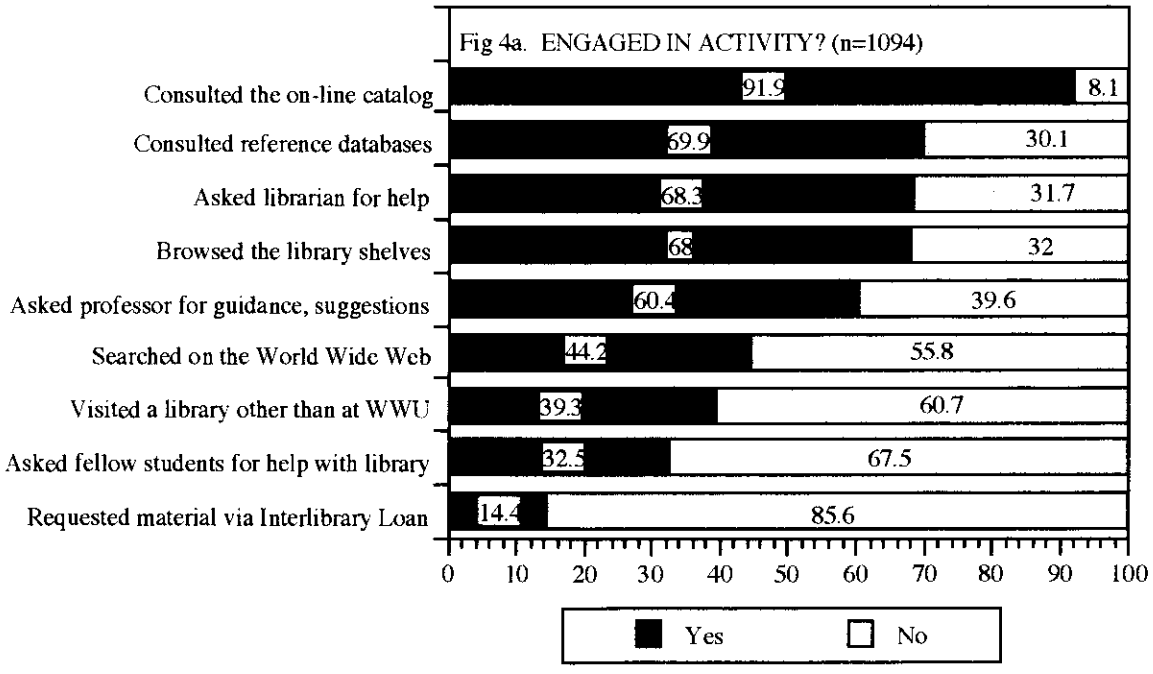
More advanced students were less likely to consult their peers than other students: 23.3% of graduates versus 31.6% of upper-division versus 37.0% of lower-division students. Yet the step that most differentiated graduates and other students is requesting materials through ILL. Nearly half of graduates (45.5%), but only 15.0% of upper-division and 5.0% of lower-division students took that step.

Overall, a developmental sequence is suggested by these findings—one that may derive partially from the complexity of the work being done, but which probably also tells us something about students' increasing mastery of library tools. More advanced students move away from asking peers and rely less completely on browsing the shelves and consulting the LIS. They move toward asking experts, searching reference databases, and reaching out for additional resources through ILL and visiting other libraries.

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Returning Students

As part of the most recent intensive library research assignment completed at Western, a) did returning students engage in each activity listed below, and b) if so, how valuable was it?

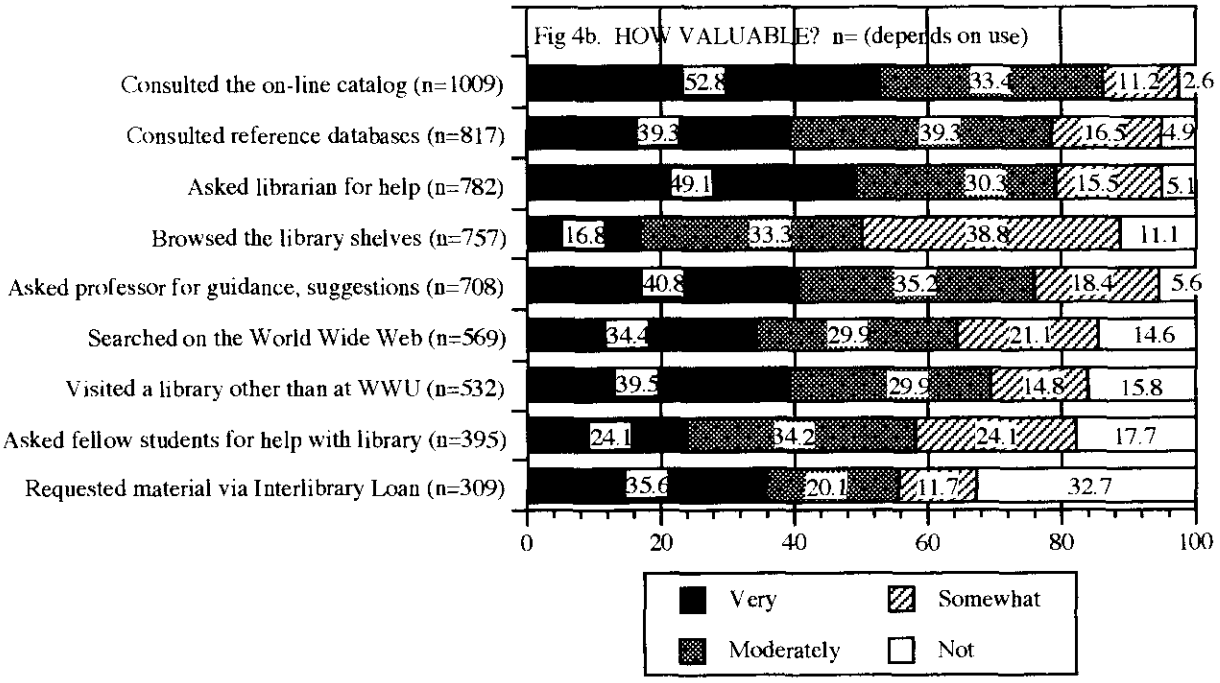
Figure 4



When we turn to the question of satisfaction with each step, we find results that are roughly supportive of that developmental sequence. While satisfaction with each step, once taken, is roughly equal across class standing for several measures, graduates are much more satisfied with their experience with ILL and with visiting other libraries, and somewhat more satisfied with their experience with reference databases. It appears that they not only make greater use of these tools, but also know more about making them work well.

Figure 4b displays overall levels of satisfaction with each tool employed during the most recent library-intensive paper. Percentages are based only on responses by the individuals who took each step. The step taken most often, consulting the on-line catalog, also proved the most consistently valuable, with 52.8% saying it was "very" valuable and another third "moderately" valuable. Consulting librarians, databases, and professors also proves valuable to most, with only about 5% saying the step provided no value.

Although most students found value in visiting another library, a substantial minority, almost all undergraduates, say the experience was "not at all" valuable. The same is true of using ILL. Some, primarily graduates, found the service very valuable, but a substantial number (32.7%) also found it "not at all" valuable. The two methods that are least focused and least reliant on expertise or technology, browsing the stacks and consulting other students, also were least likely to be valuable.



Computerized Reference Databases: Awareness, Use, and Satisfaction

One of the most rapidly expanding and most powerful technologies, and also one that adds considerably to library acquisition costs, is the set of computerized reference databases available for most fields. Feedback on student use of these resources and satisfaction with them is important for library planning. Yet given that many of these databases are focused on one field, so too will use levels be small and/or vary with the number of majors in that field. We asked students which databases they were aware of and which they used four or more times per quarter or 1-3 times per quarter. Also, among users, we asked for satisfaction with "availability and ease" of use.

The list of databases is so extensive that the presentation of data becomes complex. We therefore present raw numbers in Table 1, with the percentage who are "not aware," "aware but never used," "used 1-3 times per quarter," and "used 4+ times per quarter" shown in columns to the left, and percentages at each level of satisfaction in columns to the right. Satisfaction percentages are based on modest numbers of respondents, ranging from 480 for the Expanded Academic Index, the most frequently used database, to 10 cases for Muse and the statistical masterfile, the least often used databases. Since databases are sorted in Table 1 according to the percent of the sample who report having used them, satisfaction figures toward the top of the table are relatively reliable, while those toward the bottom of the table are subject to extreme error and are shown only because they represent the only feedback available. They should be interpreted with extreme caution. Satisfaction is based on at least 100 cases for all databases from the Expanded Academic Index down to BIOSIS in Table 1. The standard error for these reports runs from 5% to 10%. From Newsbank down through Sociofile, satisfaction ratings are based on over 50 cases, with the error term between 10% and 14%. For the remaining databases, the error grows from 15% up to about 40% as one goes down the list.

For the most part, findings in Table 1 are presented without comment, since they are so specific. Readers may find data on specific databases by perusing the table. Some patterns are valuable to point out, however. For instance, databases that are on the network are marked (**) in Table 1. Since they are more accessible than databases on stand-alone machines, the library has attempted to place the databases with highest demand on the network. By the same token, holding demand constant, databases on the network will be used more than options not on the network simply because of accessibility. Findings reinforce the importance of placement on the network. All eleven most often used databases are on the network, either the current year or in entirety. Of the eight next most often used, half are on the network. Of the 17 least often used, only two are on the network. These two, used by fewer than three percent of students despite network availability, may be candidates for replacement.

The number of different databases used by students depends on their class standing and sometimes, on their major fields. More databases may be used by more experienced library users. Consistent with that argument, graduates and upper-division students use an average of 3.6 different databases, while lower-division students average only 2.0 databases. In addition, users whose fields do not offer a single focused database meeting most needs and for whose fields many different databases are applicable may use more databases. Reporting significantly fewer than average databases used are students majoring in chemistry, foreign languages, psychology, speech pathology-audiology, technology, art, music, and general science. Major fields producing use of more databases than average are geology, journalism, Huxley, and special education.

When we look at satisfaction ratings, differences by class level and by field are few. It is likely that students assess their databases without great knowledge of the alternatives and that they adjust satisfaction to their expectations. Also, as with overall library use, it appears that students are more differentiated by access and use than by satisfaction once a facility is used. Differences in satisfaction by major field are rare. Chemistry majors are less satisfied, while PEHR and psychology majors are more satisfied than average.

Table 1: Reference databases used by returning students and satisfaction with availability and ease of use

Reference databases	Awareness & frequency of use per quarter				If used, how satisfied w/availability and ease of use*			
	not aware	aware, not used	1-3/Qtr	4+/Qtr	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Expanded Academic Index (Info Trac)**	33.5	21.1	26.1	19.3	24.8	55.4	16.9	2.9
National Newspaper Index**	38.1	27.9	25.3	8.8	20.3	56.7	20.9	2.0
ERIC**	43.5	22.7	19.2	14.7	27.4	49.6	18.0	5.0
Business Index (Info Trac)**	40.4	38.2	14.6	6.9	20.4	56.7	20.4	2.4
PsycLIT**	60.0	20.8	10.7	8.5	29.9	47.7	21.2	1.2
Applied Sciences & Tech. Abstracts**	49.1	33.9	12.4	4.5	15.2	51	28.1	5.7
Environmental Abstracts**	53.9	31.0	9.8	5.3	24.5	45.2	22.9	7.4
Social Science Citation Index (partial)**	65.9	22.8	8.9	2.4	13.9	45.7	31.1	9.3
Medline**	70.2	19.5	6.1	4.2	32.5	41.3	21.4	4.8
Biological & Agricultural Index**	59.3	30.8	7.5	2.4	13.8	45.7	31.0	9.5
BIOSIS (Biological Abstracts)**	64.2	26.5	6.9	2.4	17.1	45.0	30.6	7.2
Newsbank	68.6	22.8	7.5	1.1	12.8	55.8	24.4	7.0
America History & Life	59.7	31.9	7.4	1.0	8.9	44.4	36.7	10.0
Science Citation Index	68.3	23.4	5.4	2.9	29.1	42.7	23.6	4.5
Music Index**	61.2	30.7	7.0	1.2	5.9	50.6	35.3	8.2
Art Index**	52.7	39.1	6.4	1.7	10.4	54.2	31.3	4.2
MLA Bibliography**	69.4	22.6	5.8	2.2	16.7	52.9	25.5	4.9
Current Contents	72.0	20.7	5.0	2.3	14.3	58.3	21.4	6.0
Sport Discuss**	71.4	22.0	2.3	4.3	40.5	34.2	19.0	6.3
Exceptional Child Education Resources	72.6	21.2	4.7	1.5	16.4	50.7	27.4	5.5
Historical Abstracts	65.1	29.3	5.0	0.7	10.4	53.2	32.5	3.9
Sociofile	75.1	19.5	4.0	1.4	17.6	40.5	31.1	10.8
DocBase	78.9	16.7	3.8	0.6	5.4	44.6	41.1	8.9
Wildlife/Fisheries Review	77.4	18.2	3.5	0.8	11.7	41.7	38.3	8.3
Biography & Genealogy	68.2	27.6	3.9	0.3	14.8	38.9	37.0	9.3
GeoRef	74.5	22.3	2.6	0.6	7.7	55.8	21.2	15.4
LaserCat	75.7	21.4	2.4	0.5	26.1	39.1	23.9	10.9
Marcive**	83.2	14.2	1.8	0.9	2.3	51.2	30.2	16.3
Economic Literature Index	79.3	17.9	2.7	0.4	8.3	55.6	25.0	11.1
RecPark Discus	82.6	15.1	1.5	0.8	21.2	33.3	33.3	12.1
Disclosure	84.0	14.0	1.5	0.5	23.7	28.9	34.2	13.2
F&S Index**	83.0	15.2	1.7	0.2	9.4	40.6	34.4	15.6
Dun's Business Locator	85.5	12.7	1.6	0.2	14.8	25.9	48.1	11.1
National Trade Databank	82.9	15.5	1.4	0.1	7.4	40.7	25.9	25.9
Statistical Masterfile	83.3	15.8	0.9	0.1	4.5	22.7	54.5	18.2
Muse	85.5	13.5	0.9	0.1	0.0	17.6	52.9	29.4

*Most satisfaction percentages are based on very small numbers and are prone to serious error. Only users reported satisfaction; every one percent who used each database produce satisfaction ratings by ten students.
**This database available on the network.

Overall Satisfaction with Western's Library

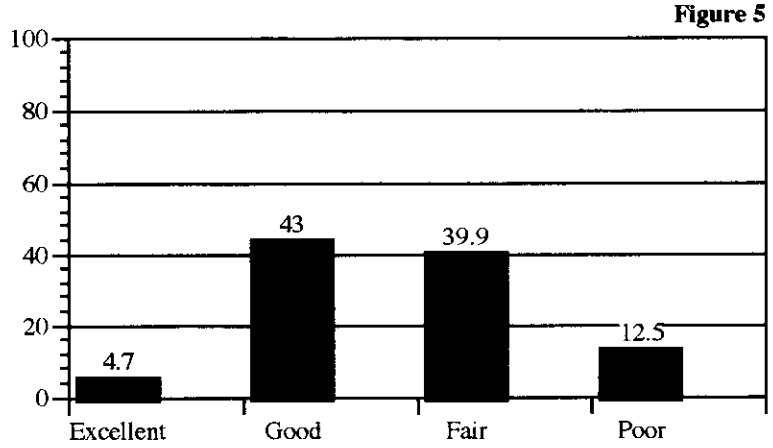
We asked students for their overall appraisal of the library in two ways. First, we asked students' own evaluations, with one question asking them to "evaluate the library resources overall, in your major field" and another asking their satisfaction with four broad aspects of the library. Results of those questions are shown in Figures 5 and 6. Second, we asked two reputational questions: "How do the professors you interact with evaluate the Western library?" and "How do the students you interact with evaluate the Western library?" These results are displayed in Figure 7.

Overall evaluation of resources in students' fields is weak, with approximately even percentages saying "good" and "fair" and more than twice as many saying "poor" as "excellent," as shown in Figure 5. It is interesting that this mix of evaluations is essentially identical among graduates, upper-division students, and lower-division students. There are also relatively few statistically reliable differences by major department, although the small numbers of respondents from most departments may make true differences difficult to identify using this dataset. Majors in music, early childhood education and English were reliably more satisfied than others, although the difference is marked only in the case of music, which has its own separate and disproportionately well funded library. Departments whose majors were reliably less satisfied than average are: chemistry, computer science, foreign languages, sociology and technology.

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Returning Students

How do returning students evaluate library resources, overall, in their major field? (n=1064)

Figure 5



Students' overall satisfaction with four aspects of the library show quite high satisfaction with "services from library employees" and "Library Information System (on-line catalog and databases)," but lower satisfaction with "library hours of operation" and "library collections (books, journals, music, documents, videos, etc.)," as shown in Figure 6. The only one of these areas with a large proportion responding "not satisfied" is hours of operation, which has been addressed in greater detail in a previous OIAT report.

These four measures help us locate where differences by class level and field occur and where they do not. First, testing differences by class level, we find no difference at all for satisfaction with the LIS or with service by library personnel. Satisfaction with hours differs by class stand-

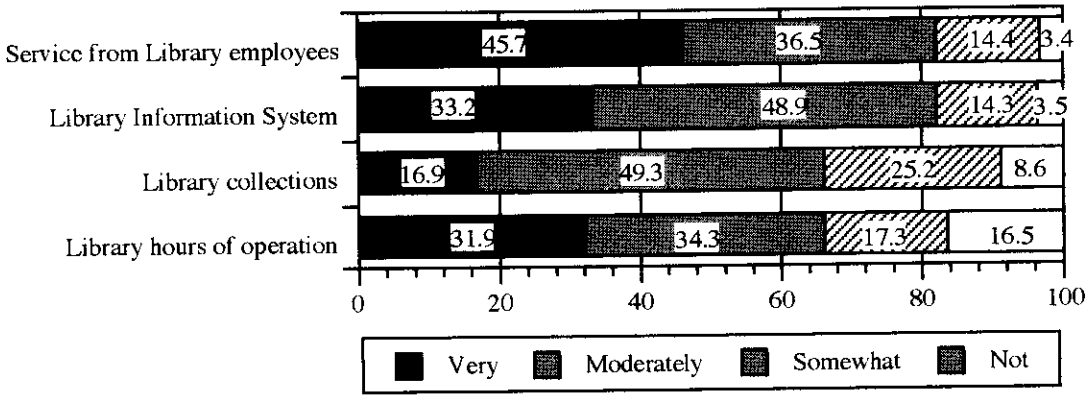
ing, with about twice as many graduates (26.1%) as lower-division students (13.6%) "not" satisfied. The most extreme differences in satisfaction by class standing are for library collections, with four times as many graduates as lower-division students (21.0% versus 5.0%) "not" satisfied.

Analysis of the two issues in Figure 6 relevant to major field—LIS, including reference databases, and collections—shows a considerable number of reliable difference by field, although none is extremely large. Departments whose majors are more satisfied than average with the LIS and databases are communications, PEHR, Fairhaven, music and special education. Those reliably less satisfied than average are anthropology, chemistry, sociology, technology, FMDS, and CBE pre-majors. In the case of holdings, two departments—math and music—are more satisfied than average, while several departments are slightly, but reliably, less satisfied than average: chemistry, foreign languages, geography, PEHR, technology, Fairhaven and Huxley.

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Returning Students

Overall, how satisfied are returning students with each of the following aspects of the Western library? (n=1229)

Figure 6



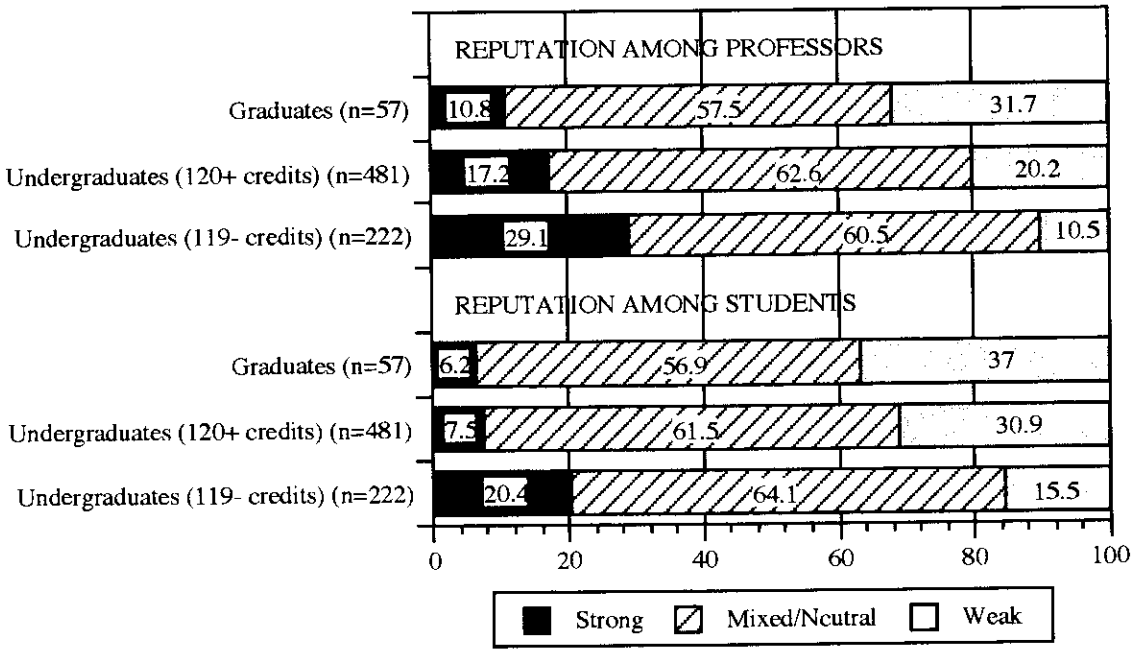
Although individual students' own satisfaction does not differ by class standing, students' reports of others' perceptions vary widely by class standing, with reported satisfaction lowest among graduates and highest among lower-division students. For that reason, Figure 7 presents findings separately for the three groups. For all groups, the "mixed/neutral" category predominates, probably because most respondents do not feel aware of others' perceptions of the library. Beyond that, for perceived evaluations by both professors and other students, graduates are more than twice as likely as lower-division students to see the library as "weak, not for serious research" and less than half as likely to see it as "strong, a good place for research." Upper-division students are intermediate to the other two groups, but closer to the graduates, suggesting that involvement in a major field and the types of work demanded of majors may be driving the reduced evaluations of more advanced students.

Surprisingly, fewer reliable differences among departments emerge with the reputational measure than with individuals' own assessments. When students estimate their professors' evaluations of the library, only two departments—chemistry and sociology—offer reliably lower than average ratings, and four—communications, journalism, PEHR, and music—are higher than average. When students estimate perceptions of other students, even fewer reliable departmental differences emerge, presumably because students have friends in many majors. Only anthropology and sociology students report reliably lower than average ratings by their student associates, and no department receives reliably higher than average ratings.

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Returning Students

Reputation of the library as a place for research, among professors and students the respondent interacts with

Figure 7



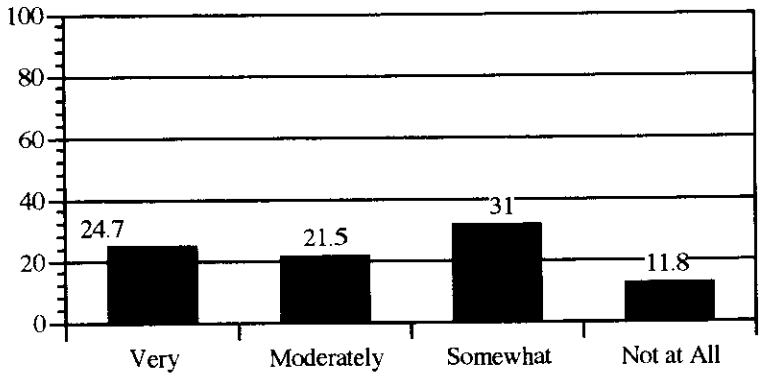
Instruction in Use of the Library

When we asked students "how valuable would additional library instruction be to you?" we found a remarkable range of responses, with roughly the same proportion saying "very," "moderately," and somewhat," and a substantial number also saying "not at all," as shown above in Figure 8. Not surprisingly, figures depend on class standing, with 60.8% of lower-division students and 56.7% of upper-division students, but only 40.0% of graduates responding "very" or "moderately." Even so, a substantial portion of students at all levels apparently feel some gap in their library education.

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Returning Students

How valuable would additional library instruction at Western be to returning students? (n=1235)

Figure 8



Quite substantial differences also exist by major field. Students in five departments are more likely than average to say additional instruction would be valuable: chemistry, foreign languages, PEHR, education (other than special education), and accounting. Seven departments produced lower than average perceived value of more instruction: computer science, math, physics, political science, sociology, art, and special education.

We also asked whether students had ever participated in each of seven types of library instruction, and, if so, how valuable it was. (Findings are displayed in Figures 9a and 9b, on page 16.) As shown in Figure 9a, four types of instruction were engaged in by at least 30% of the sample, two provided by the library, one from fellow students and one as part of courses. One-fifth report individual instruction by faculty, 12.1% took Library 125, and 3.1% took Library 201. If we cumulate these seven sources of instruction, we find 27.7% having experienced none and another 25.1% experiencing only one. The one source experienced by these students was somewhat less varied than the totals, with about nine-tenths involving a tour, instruction in a class, informal instruction by a librarian or consultation with another student. Assuming that perhaps one-third of these cases resulted in extensive, systematic instruction, with the others addressing some specific need, we could estimate that about 36% of all returning students have received next to nothing by way of instruction in the use of the library while at Western.

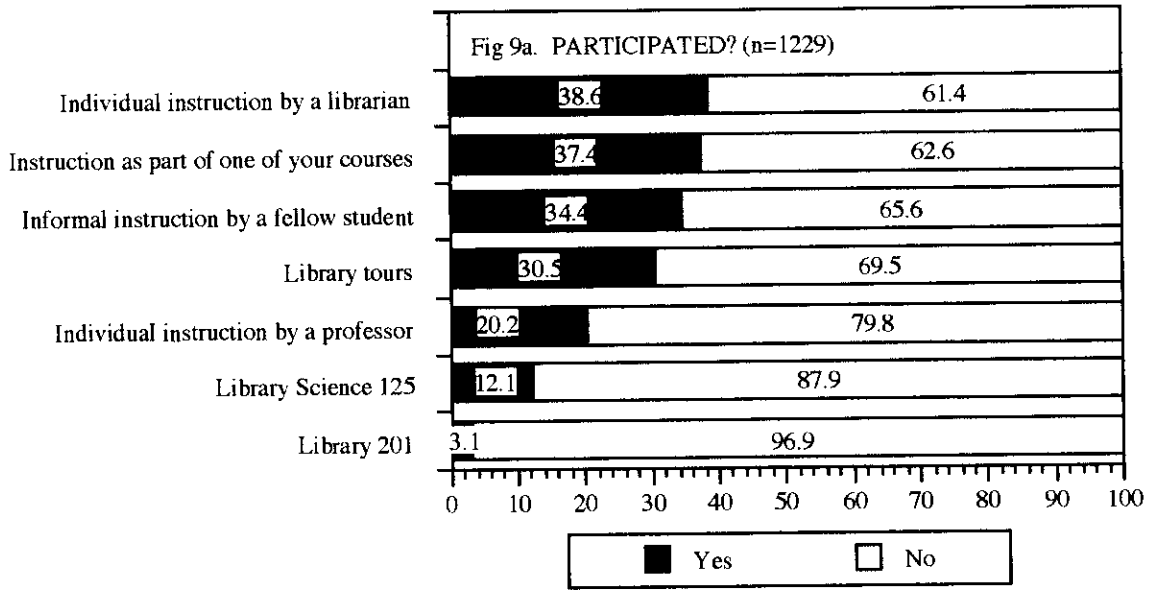
Figure 9b displays students' ratings of the value given by each source of information about the library they report having received. An intriguing pattern emerges: with one minor reversal, the more formally constructed the instruction is, the less satisfied students are with it. The one exception is that satisfaction with individual instruction by a librarian is more valuable by a wide margin than informal instruction by a fellow student. Informal instruction by students is slightly more often reported to be valuable than individual instruction by instructors. All three types of individual instruction are seen as more valuable than other modes, followed by instruction as one unit in a course, library tours, and finally, courses in library science. Informal, individual advice is, of course, more likely to be tailored to the student's specific need.

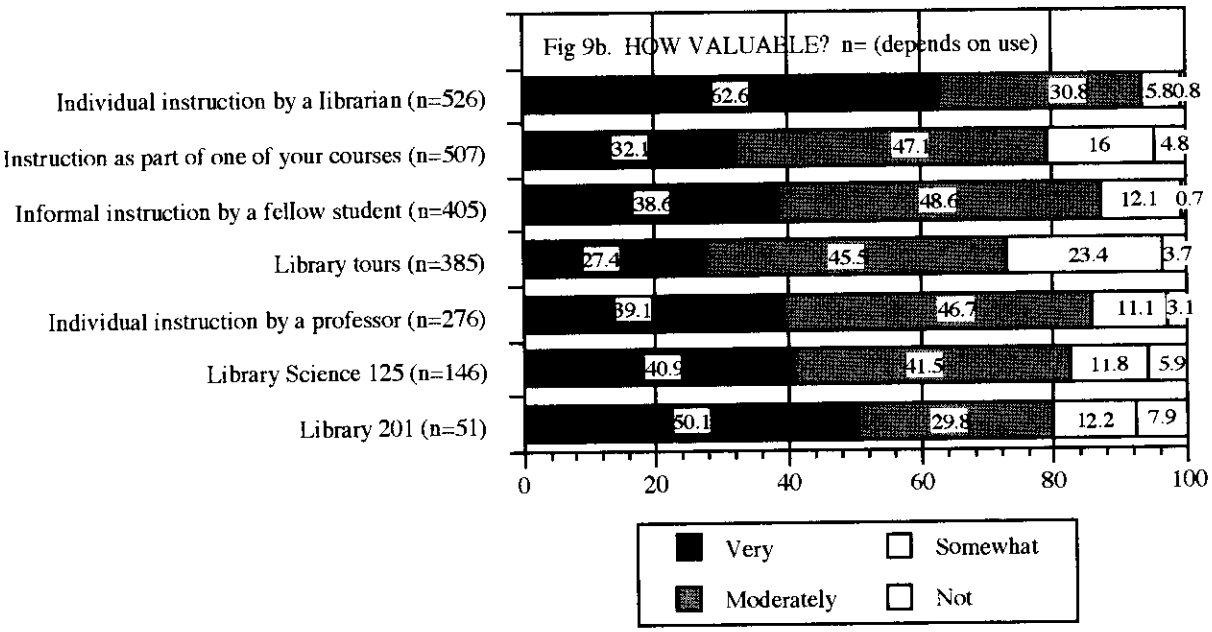
Ratings of the library courses are particularly interesting and problematic to interpret. While they generate by far the most ratings of "non" valuable, they also generate relatively high rates of "very" valuable. Apparently, their value depends upon the particular instructor or the student's background. In addition, students presumably expected a great deal more from these classes than from occasional informal instruction. Satisfaction figures for these classes are less reliable than others because of the small number of students involved.

It is also interesting that three of the four most valuable sources of information are also among the three most frequently used, and that the two least frequently used are also the two seen by those who did use them as least valuable. Finally, it is worth noting explicitly, that it is the form of instruction, not the source, that seems to influence ratings of services offered directly by library staff. While library science courses receive mixed reviews, students are nearly unanimous in praising individual instruction they receive from the same staff, and most students also found value in library tours.

a) Have returning students ever participated in any of the following types of library instruction, b) and if so, how valuable was it?

Figure 9





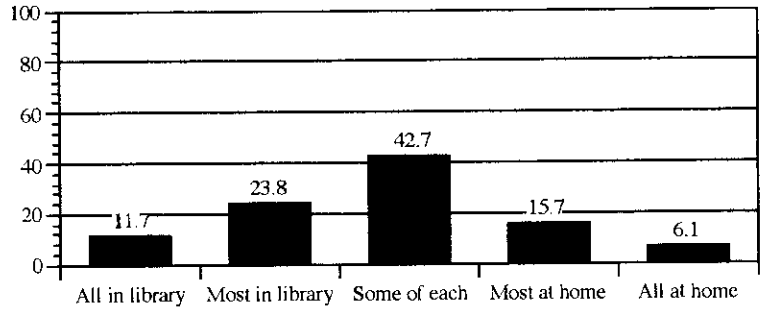
Remote Access

Increasingly, library materials can be searched and even accessed from home or office. We asked students, "if either were possible, would you prefer to do your research in the library, or to search for materials from home via computer?" While more prefer all or most in the library (35.5%) than prefer all or most at home (21.8%), 42.7% responded "some of each," as shown in Figure 10.

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Returning Students

Would returning students prefer to do research in the library, or to search for materials from home via computer? (n=1248)

Figure 10



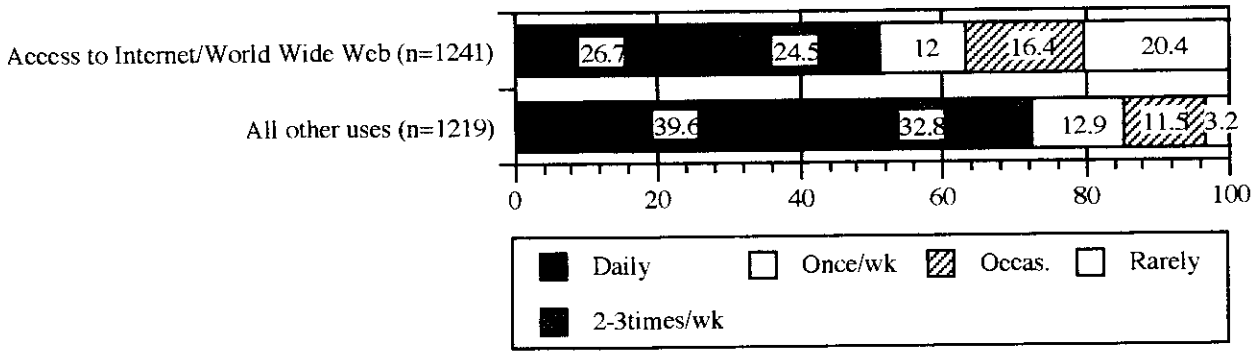
For about one-fourth (24.4%) of returning students, library search from home is not possible because they have no access to a home computer. Experience with a computer influences, but does not fully determine responses. Among students with no home computer access, 51.9% prefer to work entirely or primarily in the library. Among those with home computers, the figure is 30.4%.

All students have potential access to computers, using Western's computer labs if no computer is available at home. To get a picture of the potential for remote use of library materials, we asked all students "how often do you use a computer, either at home or in campus labs, for a) access to the Internet/World Wide Web, and b) all other uses." Responses, shown in Figure 11, indicate daily computer use by two-fifths of students and at least 2-3 times per week use by 72.4%. Computer use is not yet universal, as 14.7% report using computers only occasionally or less often and 36.8% access the Internet that seldom. On the other hand, these figures are much higher than they would have been only a few years ago, and no doubt indicate the potential for nearly universal remote access in the near future if Western wishes to move in that direction.

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Returning Students

How often do returning students use a computer, either at home or in campus labs?

Figure 11



Suggestions for Improving the Library

As a supplement to the analyses reported above on the basis of focused questions included in the body of the survey, we posed the open-ended opportunity for students to "list up to three changes that would make the Western Library more valuable to use", and to offer "any other observations or suggestions" they wished. Of the 1306 respondents to the returning student surveys, 801 offered a total of 2324 suggestions or comments. We reviewed all these, coding them into categories created inductively from the responses themselves. The results are displayed as Table 2. Comments are sorted into broad categories, with more specific categories within them. Categories are presented in order of the frequency of comments within each.

Suggestions were often quite specific, but some clear patterns emerge. For the most part, the table speaks for itself. For example, the first entry on Table 2 shows 123 of the 801 students making comments requesting additional copiers in the library. In addition, we offer a few observations.

Consistent with the trend toward greater computer access, a total of 275 suggestions focused on computers—primarily to increase their number, ease of use, and network capacity. Even more recommend extending the library's hours, with weekend hours the most common specific suggestion. The heavy use of the library as one of Western's only places of study is probably the major reason why students request extended hours. In addition, requests for more and better study space constitute one of the major categories we located. Requests for better enforcement of quiet rules presumably tap the same issue.

Although students had already expressed their evaluations of book and journal collections, 291 added suggested improvements to journal collections, primarily adding new journals, and 161 suggested expanded book purchases or other improvements to book collections. These comments reinforce the importance students give to collection development. Apparently, the questions concerning education in library use caught the attention of 155 returning students, who offered specific recommendations for ways to improve students' orientation to the library. Finally, 139 made comments concerning library staff, with approximately an even split between praise for helpful staff and requests for more helpful staff.

It is worthy of note that about 5% of all students offered positive comments, about half these on staff and half on student-oriented services, despite the fact that the question asked for suggested changes to make the library more valuable.

Table 1: Suggestions offered by returning students as to changes that would make the Western Library more valuable to students

(n = 801, with an average of 2.9 responses per respondents)

Collections	**533**
Journals/Periodicals/Magazines	**273**
Increase holdings	*190*
Add new journals in my field	99
Larger selection/greater varicty of journals	33
Update/fill-in journals in my field	26
Increasc journal collection (general comment)	26
More contemporary issues (gay/lesbian, feminist, environmental, etc.)	6
Organization	*39*
Provide accurate list of journals available in library	25
Place all journal collections together	8
Separate education journals from science journals	4
Allow journals to be checked out	2
Other periodicals	*44*
Larger variety/more copies of daily newspapers; organize better	14
More magazines/better organization	10
More periodicals (general comment)	8
Continually update time-critical materials (government documents)	5
Other journal related comments	4
Improve microfiche access	3
Books	**162**
Newer books/update collection	75
More books in my field/higher quality books	47
More books (general comment)	17
Provide accurate list of books in the library's collection	12
Repair books over break, not during the quarter	5
More current fiction	4
Other comments re: books	2
Other Comments about Collections	**98**
More/better resources and materials	41
I do my research elsewhere because the library is inadequate	27
Augment collections in particular areas	25
Other comments re: collections	5
Technology	**479**
Computers	**275**
More computers (LIS and databases)	84
Make computer system (LIS, etc.) more user-friendly	40
Upgrade computer capabilities/facilities (in general)	30
Have a computer lab inside the library	29
Access to campus computers, LIS, databases from home/off-campus	25
Hook library computers up to the Internet	23
Show location of library material on the computer screen	21
Hook all computers up to a printer; make printing from databases easier	10
Unify all computer systems (LIS, databases on all computers)	9
Link department computers to the library	4

Table 1 (continued): Student suggestions

Technology (continued)	**479**
Copiers	**147**
More copiers	123
More copy machines for microfilm/microfiche	9
Better maintenance of copy machines	7
Improved copiers (double-sided and color)	6
Make copy card system easier	2
Other comments re: Technology	**57**
Invest in/add databases (specific databases suggested)	17
Bring back old card catalogue	11
More videos; improve access to videos; organize/index videos	10
Other general technology comments	8
Better equipment for special collections	6
More microfilm readers/facilities	5
Library Facilities and Noise	**403**
Physical: Internal	**212**
More/larger group study areas; soundproof the rooms	81
More individual study space/more carrels	28
More and longer and better couches	23
More chairs and work tables	15
Eating area/lounge in library	14
Make library more comfortable in general	11
Enlarge the reserve room	9
Better chairs/more ergonomic	9
Better climate control/monitor heat	7
Improve the lighting throughout the building	5
Clean the library more often/better	4
Install bathrooms on first floor	3
Don't allow one person to monopolize group study rooms	3
Organization/Layout	**128**
Stop relocating materials/make layout less confusing	45
Organize material by subject matter; separate sections for each major	40
Establish a separate Education library	23
Provide a floor plan for directions	12
Other comments	6
Eliminate compressed stacks in basement/make holdings more accessible	2
Noise-related Comments	**51**
Better enforcement of quite rules	27
Create more quiet-study areas	12
Specify talking/no-talking areas	7
Quieter librarian voices	3
Other noise-related comments	2
Physical: External	**12**
More parking for library	7
Make library more accessible	3
Keep areas surrounding library as walking zones only	2

Table 1 (continued): Student suggestions

Library Hours	**366**
General: longer library hours	128
Extend weekend hours (including Fridays)	127
Stay open past 11:00PM	47
Open earlier during finals week	25
Be open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week	22
Other library hours comments	13
Extended holiday hours	4
Library Instruction	**153**
Brochures/pamphlets explaining the library's resources	40
More/better instruction in the use of the computers	34
More descriptive maps and signs	26
Better or more or mandatory training for students in use of library	17
Workshops/video presentations on library resources	15
More tours for new students	9
Send out informational newsletter on library resources	5
Other library education comments	7
Staff	**139**
Positive comments: staff is helpful, etc.	46
More helpful/professional staff demeanor	40
More and improved assistance with computers	34
Consistent information from staff and student staff	13
Other staff-related comments	6
Services	**99**
General positive comments: library is good, important, etc.	56
"I seldom use the library" (for various reasons)	12
Reduce late fees, make it easier to pay fees, extend grace period	10
Let students check books out longer	7
Expand library; fund it better	5
General positive comments about the music library	3
Better/more supports such as stapler, paper cutter, etc.	3
Allow students a role in acquisitions	3
Interlibrary Loan System	**31**
Make ILL system quicker	13
Improve ILL system (general comments)	10
Don't charge for the service	7
Other ILL comments	1

Section Two: Entering Students

METHOD

All students in this sample entered Western in Fall of 1996 and were surveyed 5-8 weeks afterward, during the second half of Fall quarter. The sample was separated into three strata, sampled at disproportionate rates: graduates, entering freshmen, and entering transfers.

Our attempt to complete surveys with all campus constituencies in a very limited time frame with limited personnel led to compromises which reduced the completion rate for this survey. One compromise was to invest less intensive tracking and follow-up time to entering students than to returning students. While we mailed two reminders, we did not track returns by individuals and could not therefore send out a second copy of the survey. Nor were mailings personalized. Those limitations on follow-up intensity combined with timing issues that made it impossible to send the survey out early in the quarter and the fact that new students are still adjusting to the campus, combined to produce limited return rates, as shown below.

- All 186 entering graduate students were included in the sample because of their limited numbers and because the library is particularly important to them. A total of 56 responded, for a response rate of 30.1%.
- Of the 300 entering freshmen included in our mailings, we received responses from 95, for a response rate of 31.7%.
- Of the 300 entering transfers included in our mailings, we received responses from 105, for a response rate of 35.0%.

While the information reported here is of some value, readers must be warned that return rates as low as these are a cause for concern, as they increase the possibility that the students who returned their surveys are systematically different from those who did not. If that is true, our findings could be in error to some degree. In particular, new students who had not yet had much contact with the library may have been less likely to respond, so that estimates of use levels are probably inaccurately high, although we have no basis on which to estimate to what degree. On the other hand, the particular factors that led to the low response rates in this case tend to encourage random non-response, which is much less damaging to validity. We therefore present the findings as meaningful, but with the warning that some degree of error is likely and that it is likely to be most serious in cases where students report how much they use the library.

For the combined sample of 256 entering students, the approximate 95% confidence error term for any given percentage finding is approximately .06. Where findings are based on any one stratum, the error term is larger (approximately .10 for freshmen or transfers and .13 for graduates). When we report figures for all entering students, responses have been weighted so that they accurately reflect the composition of all students entering Western in Fall, 1996. When results for separate strata are presented, they are based on unweighted data.

Sample Information

One-third (33.3%) of the sample were freshmen, just over one-third were transfers (5.9% sophomores and 31.3% juniors) and 28.2% were graduate students. Not surprisingly, most juniors (86.5%) and graduate entering students (100%) had declared majors, compared to only 38.4% of lower division students (freshmen and sophomores). Similarly, student course loads become increasingly concentrated in the major field over time, with lower division students reporting an average of .95 courses in the major, and juniors reporting an average of 3.24 courses in the major. Interestingly, students in the sample were taking about the same course loads regardless of status, averaging 3.48 courses per student for all entering students.

Findings

Findings in this report are presented in figures and tables, with commentary identifying differences among graduates, entering freshmen, and entering transfers.

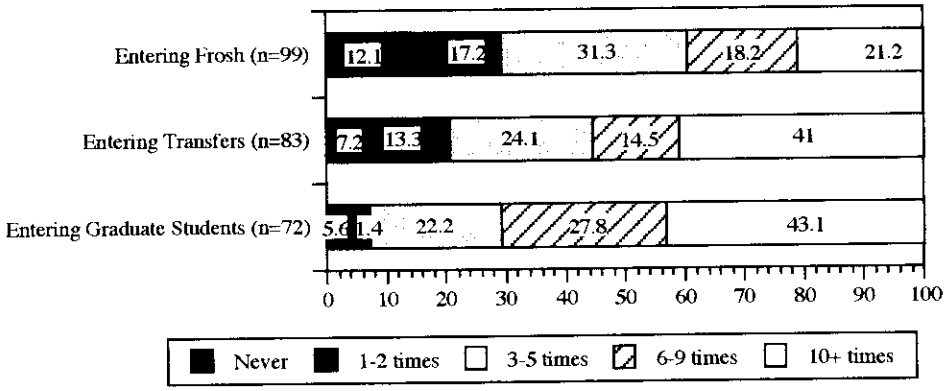
Library Use Patterns

Overall, as would be expected, library use during the first half of the first quarter at Western increases with class standing (see Figure 1). Nearly all graduates report using the library at least 3-5 times during the quarter, while 29.3% of entering freshmen used it twice or less.

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Entering Students

During Fall 1996, how often did entering students use the Western library for any reason?

Figure 1



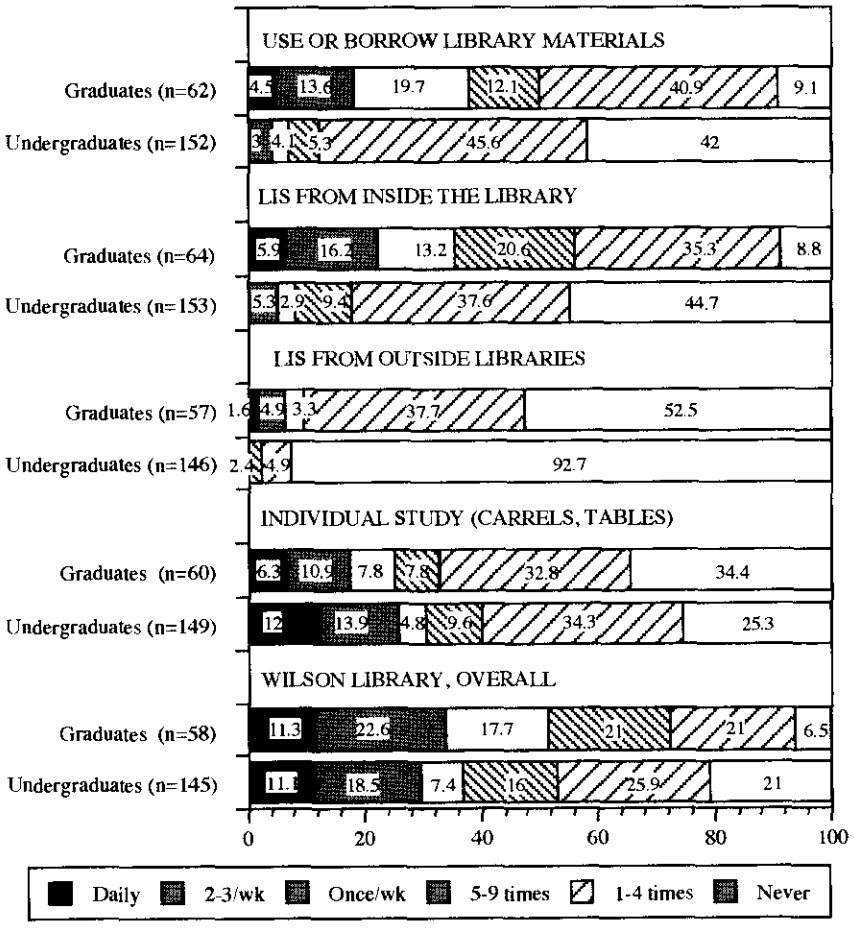
More specific uses are examined in Figure 2. Since, with one exception, the differences between entering freshmen and transfers are too small to be statistically significant with these limited samples, Figure 2 presents findings only for graduates versus all undergraduates combined. The exception is that entering freshmen borrow or use library materials significantly less often than either entering transfer students or entering graduate students.

Figure 2 shows entering graduates already using the library in ways dramatically different from undergraduate uses. While undergraduates use the library as a place to study more often than do graduates, all other uses are much more common among graduates. In particular, 50.0% of entering graduates borrow materials at least once every two weeks, as compared to 12.3% of undergraduates. Also, graduates use the LIS much more often than undergraduates from within the library, and they use access it overwhelmingly more often from outside the library. For planning purposes, it is probably important to note that by mid-to-late Fall quarter, only 6.3% if entering undergraduates had accessed the LIS from outside the library.

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Entering Students

During Fall 1996, how often did entering students use the Western library for each reason listed below?

Figure 2



Evaluation of Library Resources

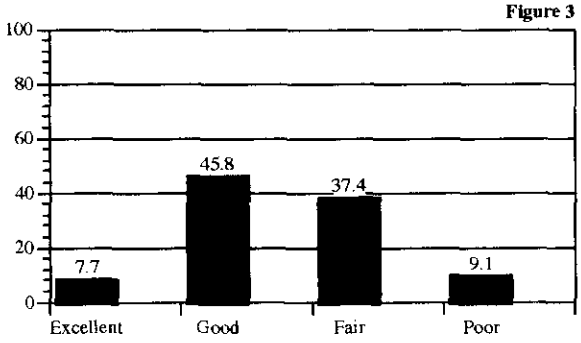
Those entering students who had chosen a major field were asked to "evaluate the library resources overall, in your major field." Nearly sixty percent responded, with 30.1% having chosen no major field and 11.3% having used the library too little to respond. The great majority of entering students rated library resources in their major fields as "good" (45.8%) or "fair" (37.4%). It is logical to assume that one reason for the preponderance of moderate ratings is that many were responding on the basis of limited exposure to library resources. These overall ratings were consistent among all groups of entering students.

Figure 3 shows more detail on the distribution of ratings. A large group of respondents failed to answer this question or else answered "don't know." Among the answering respondents, 7.7% rated resources in their fields as "excellent", 45.8% as "good," 37.4% as "fair," and 9.1% as "poor."

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Entering Students

How do entering students evaluate library resources, overall, in their major field? (n=145)

Figure 3



Satisfaction With Library Services

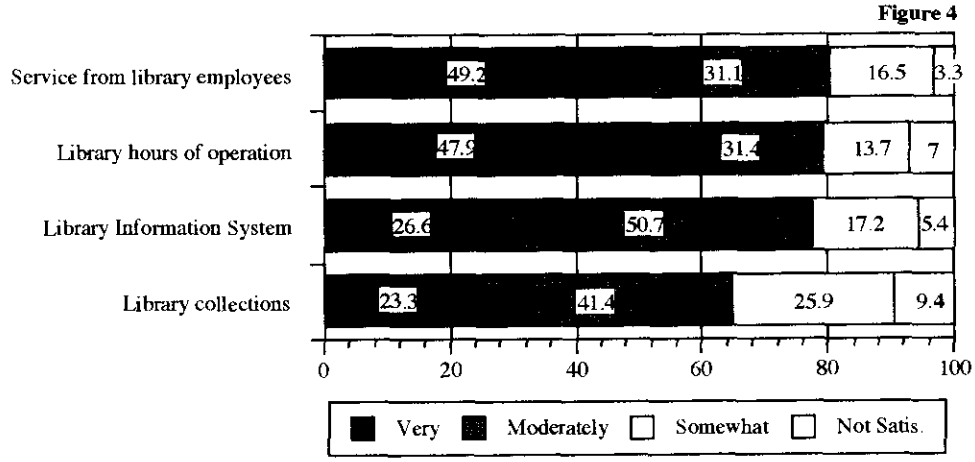
Entering students were asked to rate their satisfaction with the library information system (LIS), library collections, service from library staff, and hours of operation, on a scale of 1 = "very satisfied," 2 = "moderately satisfied," 3 = "somewhat satisfied," and 4 = "not satisfied." As shown in Figure 4, students indicate relatively high levels of satisfaction in three areas, with about 20% reporting low or relatively low satisfaction. In one case, library collections, satisfaction is lower, although still moderate, with over one-third indicating relatively low satisfaction and only 23.3% saying they are "very" satisfied.

For two of the areas, modest but statistically significant differences were noted in the satisfaction ratings of lower division (freshman and sophomore) students compared to upper division undergraduates and graduate students. Lower-division students' satisfaction with the LIS is slightly lower than that of upper-division students and graduates, while lower-division students are, on average, somewhat more satisfied with library hours of operation. These results suggest that familiarity and experience may improve satisfaction with the LIS, but may also increase felt need for expanded hours.

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Entering Students

Overall, how satisfied are entering students with each of the following aspects of the Western library?

Figure 4



Student Comments

Students were given an opportunity to submit individual comments about their satisfaction with library facilities and resources, and to make recommendations for changes which might improve their levels of satisfaction. Summaries of these comments are presented in Table 1.

Regarding facilities, supports, and layouts, substantial numbers of comments seem to be associated with making the library more "user-friendly," by improving lighting and comfort, simplifying layout , and providing more guidance for locating materials. There also seems to be substantial support for extended hours of operation, both in the evening and on weekends, and for more access to copiers and computers. Moreover, while students seem to appreciate the assistance they do receive from staff, they also want more and improved professional assistance, and especially want help staff to have appropriate computer and database expertise. With regard to collections, several requests were made to improve serial and book collections in major fields. Other comments, as shown in Table 1, were spread across a wide range of topics.

Table 1: Suggestions offered by entering students as to changes that would make the Western Library more valuable to students
(n = 243)

Library Facilities, Supports, and Layout	**81**
Physical: internal	
Make library more comfortable: better/more furniture, lighting, eating area	15
More/larger group rooms; soundproof; don't allow 1 person to use	11
More individual study space/more carrels	3
Enlarge/improve Reserve Book Room	1
Establish areas/lockers to lock up belongings	1
Organization, layout of holdings	
Stop relocating materials/less confusing layout; make them easier to find	13
Better library organization by subject matter; separate sections for each major	3
Educate/train users regarduhg layout, services, holdings	
More descriptive maps, signs, floor plan	13
More tours for new students/graduates, etc.	7
Brochures/pamphlets for resources	5
Workshops on library issues/databases	4
Better/more computer instructions (LIS, databases)	3
Better or more or mandatory training for students in library use	2

Table 1 (continued)

Technology	**64**
Computers	
More computers (LIS and databases)	17
Access to campus computers, LIS, databases from home/off-campus	10
Have a computer lab inside the library	4
Make computer system (LIS, etc.) more user friendly	4
Upgrade computer capabilities/facilities (in general)	4
Hook library computers up to the Internet	3
Unify computer system (all library resources)	2
Copiers	
More copy machines for microfilm/microfiche	12
Improved copiers (double-sided and color); better maintenance	2
Allow money to be put on copy-card from front desk	1
Other comments re: Technology	
More videos/documentaries; improve access to video; organize/index	2
Invest in/add databases (specific databases suggested)	1
Want old card catalog also	1
Other re: technology	1
Staff	**23**
More help in general	7
More and improved assistance (computer knowledge)	6
More helpful/professional staff demeanor, including student staff	5
Positive comments: helpful, etc.	5
Library Hours	**21**
General: longer library hours	9
Extend weekend hours	7
Stay open past 11:00PM	3
Open earlier during finals week	1
Be open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week	1
Journals, Periodicals, Magazines, Newspapers	**22**
Increase holdings	
Add new journals in my field	8
Larger selection/greater variety; more contemporary/progressive	3
Organize Journals	
Provide accurate list of periodicals available in library	6
Place all journal collections together	3
Other re: journals, periodicals, etc.	
Update time-critical materials (include government documents)	4
Larger variety/more copies of daily newspapers; organize better	3

Table 1 (continued)

Books	**11**
Newer books	6
More books in my field	3
More current fiction	2
Other Comments About Collections	**9**
More/better resources/materials	7
Augment collections in particular areas (e.g. Env., Ethics, Law, etc.)	1
Current library collections inadequate	1
Interlibrary Loan System	**8**
Improve/speed up ILL System	4
No charges/cheaper	3
More feedback/follow-up from staff	1
Noise-related Comments	**4**
Enforcement of quiet rules, including no eating rule	2
Create more quiet study areas	2

Awareness and Use of Library Resources

Students were asked whether they were aware of various library resources and whether they used these resources, either at Western or at other libraries. Responses to these questions varied widely according to student status as lower-division, upper-division, or graduate student. Figures 5a and 5b summarize these responses, by group, for each library resource, both for Western and for other libraries.

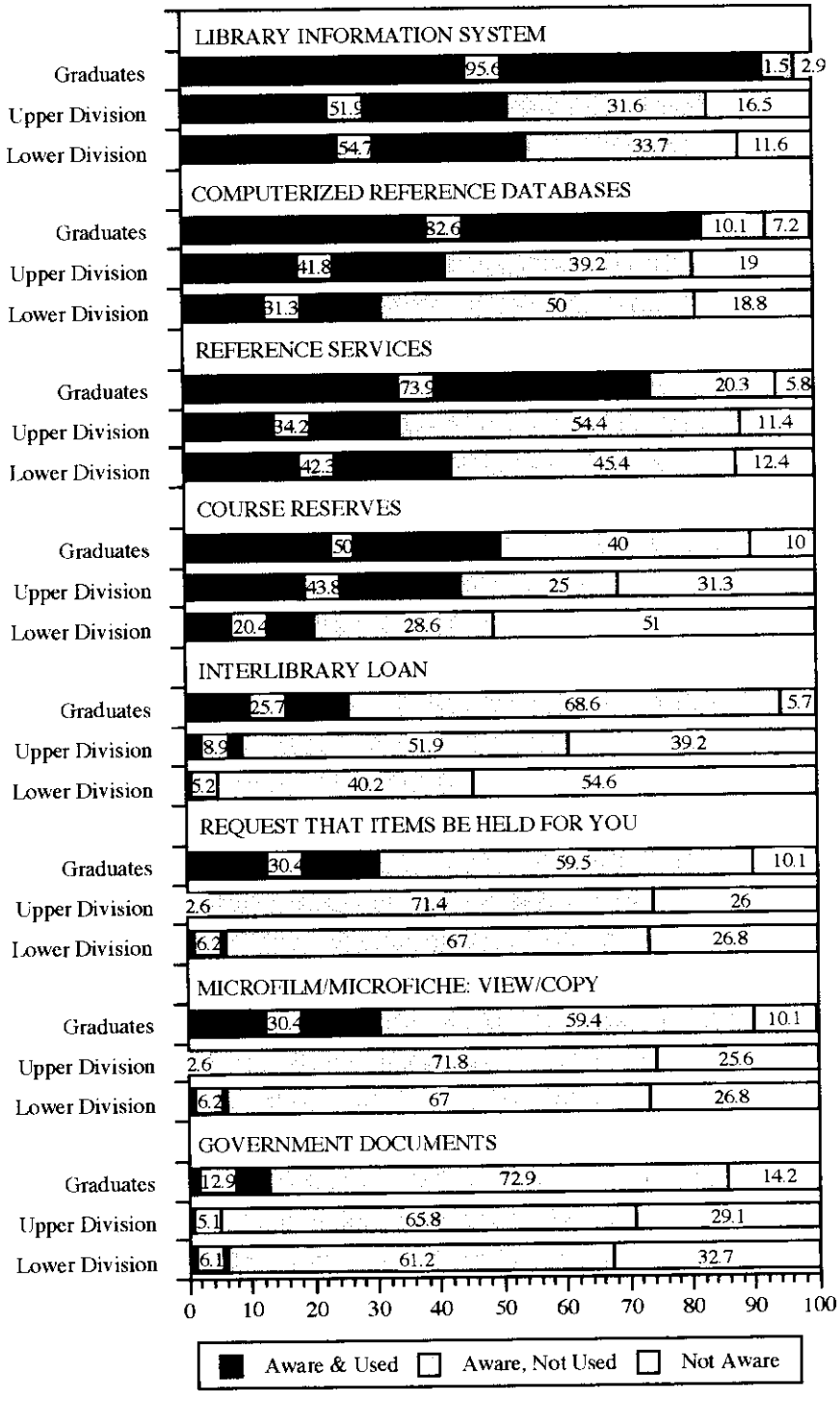
A dominant trend is that awareness and use increase with student experience. In all cases, graduate students are significantly more aware and more likely to use the various resources than are undergraduates. In addition, every statistically significant difference between upper- and lower-division undergraduates indicates that upper-division students are more aware and more likely to have used the resource than lower-division students.

Figure 5a shows that during their first half quarter here, the great majority of students have become aware of, and many have used, the most basic aspects of the library: the LIS, computerized reference databases and reference services. Figure 5b shows considerable experience among all groups with most, but not all, aspects of library systems prior to entering Western. About half of graduates and upper-division undergraduates have also used course reserves. For other library resources we asked about, use is much heavier by graduates than by undergraduates.

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Entering Students

So far at Western, have entering students used each service or facility listed below? (n= *)

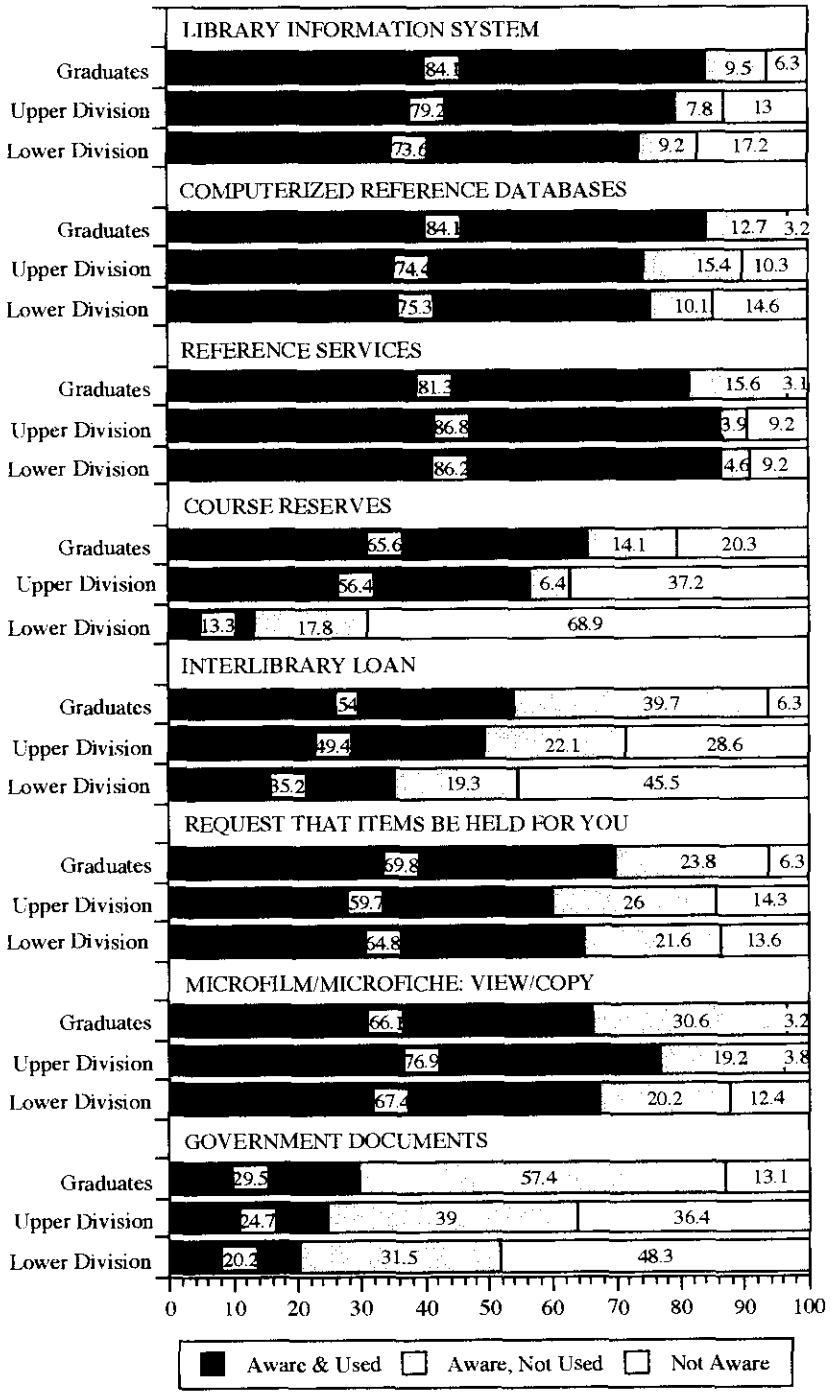
Figure 5a



* Graduates (n=70); Upper Div. (n=79); Lower Div. (n=99)

Have entering students *used* each service or facility listed below at other libraries prior to Western? (n= *)

Figure 5b



* Graduates (n=70); Upper Div. (n=79); Lower Div. (n=99)

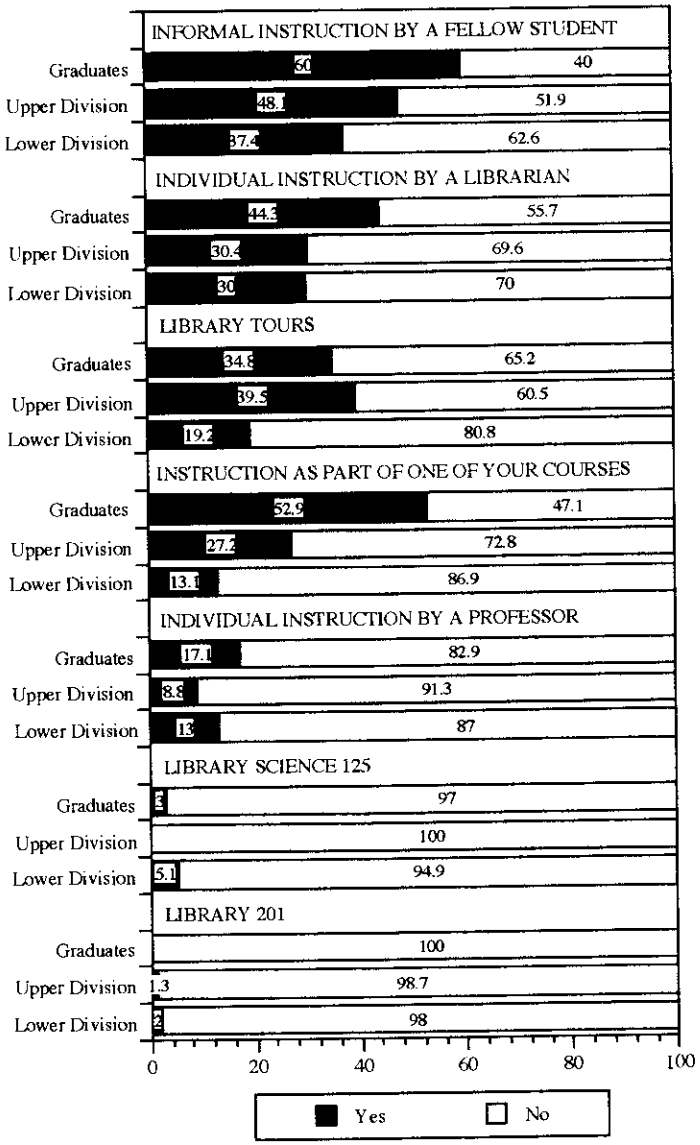
Participation and Evaluation of Library Instruction

While students' experience with libraries prior to arriving at Western is quite extensive, the level of participation of entering students in various forms of library instruction is very low, as shown in Figure 6a. For example, fewer than one-third of entering students say they have ever had a library tour. Remarkably, fewer than half say they ever received informal instruction from a fellow student, a common form of instruction among returning Western students. Fewer than one-third report ever receiving instruction from a librarian. Barely over one in ten received individual instruction from a professor, although nearly 30% of transfers and graduates had at some time received library instruction as part of a class.

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Entering Students

Have entering students ever participated in any of the following types of library instruction? (n= *)

Figure 6a



* Graduates (n=70); Upper Div. (n=79); Lower Div. (n=99)

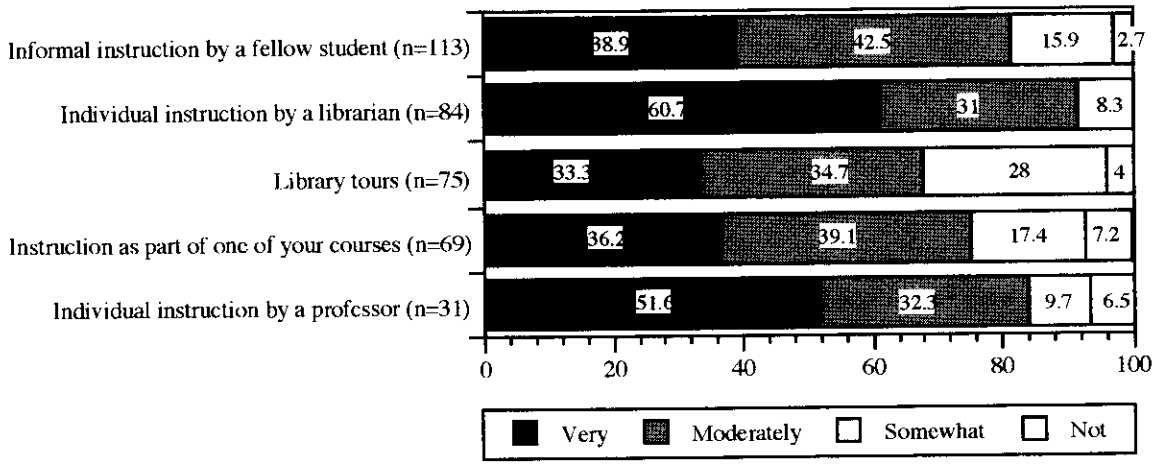
As would be expected, lower-division undergraduates were significantly less likely to have participated in several forms of library instruction than upper-division or graduate students. They were less likely to have participated in a library tour, in library instruction for class, in individual librarian instruction, and in individual student instruction.

We asked students who did participate in each type of instruction to evaluate how valuable it was. The modest numbers of cases and the similarity of responses across class level led us to report overall satisfaction among students of all class levels. Findings, displayed as Figure 6b, show very high levels of satisfaction. Individualized instruction was seen as especially valuable, with course instruction and library tours also evaluated very positively. Two types of instruction, participation in Library 201 and Library Science 125, are omitted from Figure 6b because too few students had participated to allow ratings to be meaningful.

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Entering Students

Among entering students who have ever participated in any of the following types of library instruction, how valuable was it?

Figure 6b



Value of Additional Library Instruction

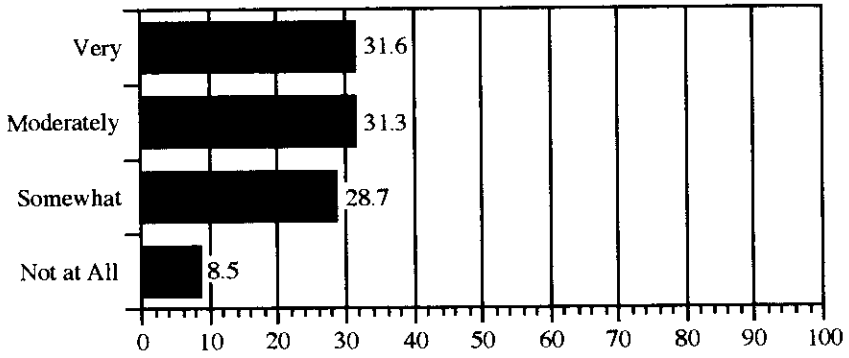
A considerable proportion of entering students place value on the possibility of additional library instruction, as shown in Figure 7. Nearly two-thirds (62.9%) say additional instruction would ;be at least "moderately" valuable. Only 8.5% say it would be "not at all" valuable.

The value placed on additional instruction, is higher among lower-division students than among upper-division students and lowest among graduates, presumably reflecting the fact that less experienced students report having had less instruction and also less direct experience with libraries. It might prove useful to assess what sort of instruction these younger students would most appreciate early in their academic careers, since the evidence suggests that their needs may be somewhat different from those of more experienced students.

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Entering Students

How valuable would additional library instruction at Western be to entering students? (n=249)

Figure 7



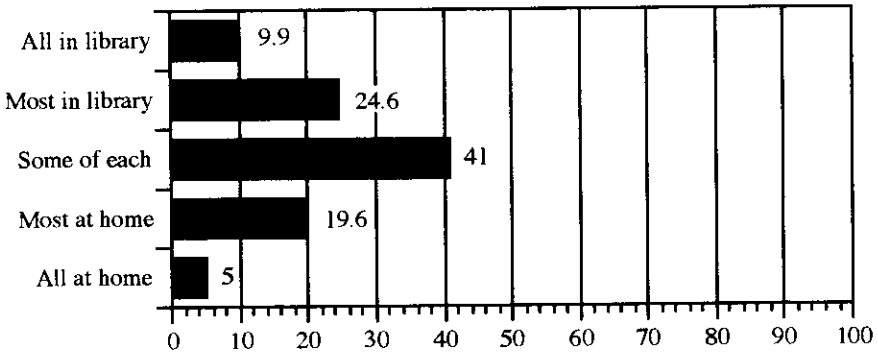
Research Preferences

Entering students were asked about their preferences for doing research in the library versus searching for materials from home via computer. As shown in Figure 8, responses are evenly distributed across the range of choices, with the most common response squarely in the middle: "some of each." Only ten percent prefer working entirely in the library, illustrating the degree to which students have acclimated to the changing nature of information technology. This pattern was consistent for all students.

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Entering Students

Would entering students prefer to do research in the library, or to search for materials from home via computer? (n=249)

Figure 8



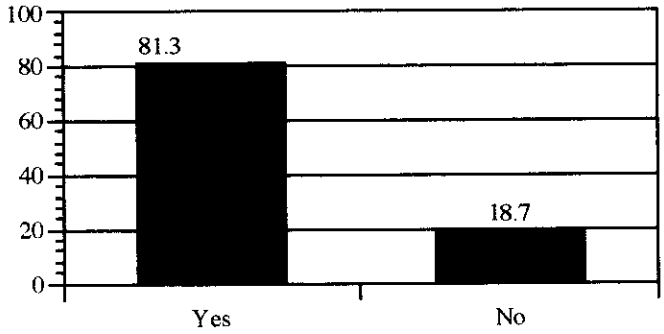
Computer Access and Use

Exploring further the question of students' readiness to make use of library information technology, we asked how many have access to a computer in their residence, learning that 81.3% of entering students do (see Figure 9). This pattern holds for both graduate and undergraduate students. Of course, some of those computers are not capable of accessing the Internet or LIS.

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Entering Students

Do entering students own or have access to a computer in their residence? (n=249)

Figure 9



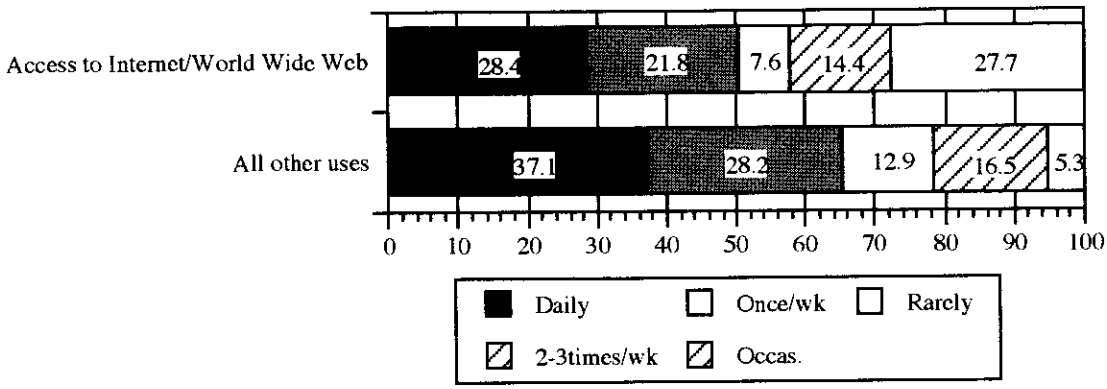
As shown in Figure 10, students are about evenly split between those who use the World Wide Web daily or several times a week (50.2%), and those who use the Web occasionally to rarely (49.7%). This pattern is consistent for all groups of entering students regardless of class standing or avenue of entry into Western. Since this question specified Internet use "either at home or in campus labs," we cannot say with any certainty what proportion of home computers are capable of accessing the Internet or how many were connected at the time of the survey.

Average levels of computer uses other than the Internet use are higher that Internet use, as also shown in Figure 10. Two-thirds (65.3%) of respondents indicate a relatively intensive use (daily or 2-3 times per week), and a third (34.7%) indicated relatively low levels of use (one or fewer uses per week).

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Entering Students

How often do entering students use a computer, either at home or in campus labs? (n=249

Figure 10

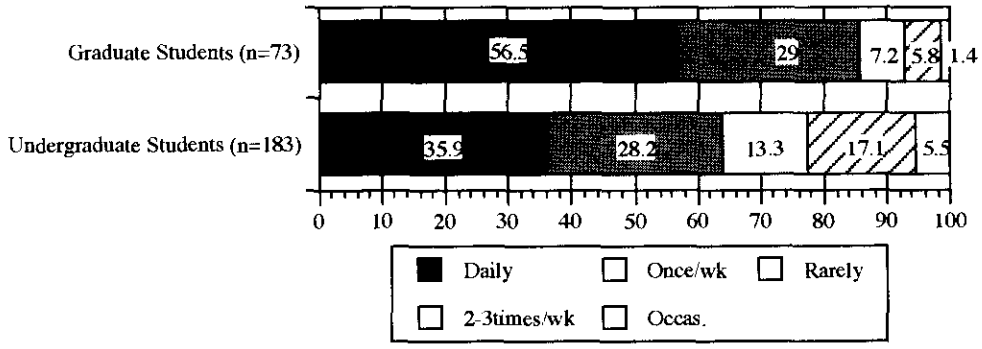


As shown in Figure 11, graduate students use computers for purposes other than accessing the World Wide Web significantly more intensively than undergraduates; 85.5% of graduate students indicate relatively intensive computer use, compared to 64.1% of undergraduates.

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Entering Students

How often do graduate and undergraduate students use a computer for "other uses" than access to Internet/World Wide Web?

Figure 11



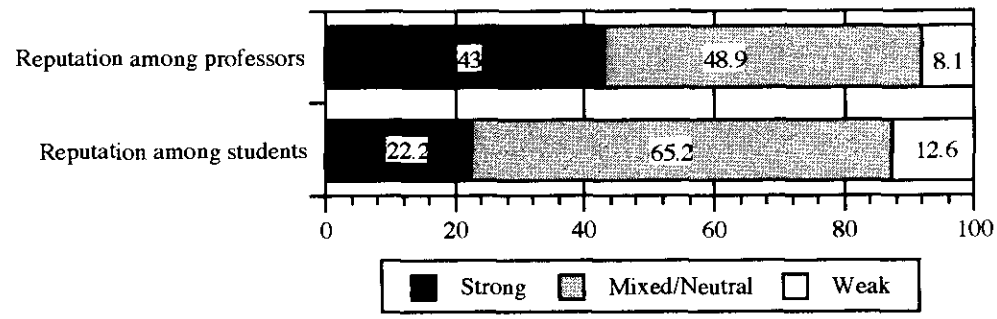
Library Image

The last two questions asked about entering students' initial impressions of their professors' and other students' evaluations of the library on a scale of "Strong, good for research," to "Weak, not for serious research." Overall, as shown in Figure 12, students felt their professors regarded the library relatively highly, with 43.0% believing it "Strong," 48.9% believing it "mixed," and 8.1% rating it as "weak." Interestingly, they felt other students judged the library more harshly than professors, with only 22.2% rating it "strong," 65.2% rating it "mixed," and 12.6 rating it as "weak."

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Entering Students

Reputation of the library as a place for research, among professors and students the respondent interacts with (n=249)

Figure 12

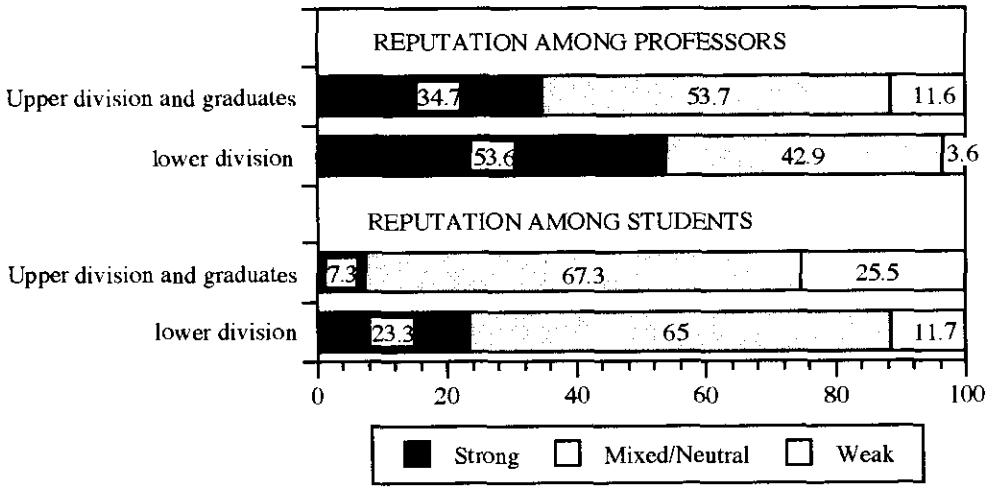


In addition, there are significant differences among groups on these questions, as shown in Figure 13. Over half (53.6%) of lower-division students believed their professors regarded the library as "strong;" another 42.9% regarded it as "mixed;" and only 3.6% regarded it as "weak." By comparison, upper-division and grad students felt their professors were more critical, with 34.7% rating the library as "strong," 53.7% as "mixed," and 11.6% rating it as "weak." Presumably, students identify professors with the university and therefore with positive evaluations of it, but more advanced students have greater exposure to professors' mixed reviews of the library and its ability to address research needs.

W.W.U. Library Survey, Fall 1996: Entering Students

Reputation of the library as a place for research, among professors and students the respondent interacts with

Figure 13



With regard to perceptions of other students' ratings of the library, graduate students seemed to believe that fellow students had lower opinions of the library than undergraduate students, with only 7.3% of grad students believing other students rated the library as "strong," 67.3% rated it "mixed," and 25.5% regarded it as "weak." This differs significantly from undergraduate perceptions, with 23.3% believing other students rated the library as "strong," 65% as "mixed," and 11.7% as "weak. It is likely that the "other" students referred to in each case are mostly at the same level as the respondents and that research needs are, in fact, more fully met for undergraduates than for graduates.

Essentially, these results imply three relationships of interest. First, as students become more experienced, as they move from lower-division to upper-division to graduate student, they come to believe their professors are increasingly critical. Second, the same pattern is true regarding perceptions of other students' evaluations. Third, at any level, students believe other students evaluate the library less positively than do professors.