Improving Library Services to Satellite Campuses: The Case of the University of Lethbridge

Abstract

A survey was done of instructors at two satellite campuses located at a distance from the main campus of the University of Lethbridge in order to ascertain both utilization and awareness of library resources and services. Results were enlightening, indicating that lack of awareness and communication is one of the biggest obstacles for these distance instructors to make use of the University Library and its services such as information literacy instruction for students.

Keywords: information literacy; distance services; faculty survey

Introduction

The University of Lethbridge (U of L) is a medium-sized research institution with an undergraduate and graduate population of approximately 8,400 students[1]. The main campus is located in Lethbridge, a small city of nearly 88,000 people[2] in southern Alberta, Canada. There is one library on the main campus which serves both the Lethbridge campus as well as two satellite campuses located in Calgary, Alberta and Edmonton, Alberta, located approximately 250 and 500 kilometres respectively from Lethbridge. The satellite campuses have much smaller student populations (663 in Calgary and 388 in Edmonton for Fall 2010)[3] and mainly contain students from the Faculty of Management, which initiated the establishment of these locations.

One of the mandates of the University Library is to "enhance the student experience", which is a stated objective in the U of L's Strategic Plan. A committee called the Student Engagement Team (SET) focuses specifically on this goal of planning and seeking out new ways to provide new or enhanced services and activities that support the overall experience of students, both local and distant. The SET is also tasked specifically with enhancing the Library's ability to serve distance students. The author is chair of this committee; she is also the subject liaison with the Faculty of Management, and as such has an increased interest and role in services for the satellite campuses. She has experimented with

teaching information literacy to first year academic writing students to students at these satellite campuses (see previous articles, [4] & [5]) and as a result of discussions with the instructors of these classes, realized that many of them are completely unaware of the resources and services available to them from the U of L Library. Many of the instructors at the satellite campuses are sessional lecturers and as such, often do not get the messages sent out to the rest of the faculty members, such as the regular offer to teach bibliographic information sessions to their classes. There is also high turnover of these instructors, who often have day jobs elsewhere and may actually teach at other institutions. The author wondered what other services the Library provided that the instructors may be unaware of and decided to conduct her own survey of instructors at these satellite campuses to find out, as well as to raise awareness of some of the resources available to them. Around this time, she also read an article[6] of another U. S. library which engaged in a similar project. The survey instrument for this article was adapted from this earlier work.

Literature Review

Many studies of online learning – and those who teach online – have been done; considerably fewer regarding those instructors working in-person at a satellite campus, and even fewer on those instructors' perceptions of library support from the main campus. One such recent article on the top was written by Kvenild & Bowles-Terry in 2011[7] and provided much of the inspiration for the current study. They found that many of the instructors teaching at their Outreach School were unfamiliar with many library services, and concluded that more efforts to educate them on remote access and market the library's services to them were needed.

In 2009, Thomsett-Scott & Frances[8] conducted a survey of instructors teaching online courses to discover their use of and desires for library service. Like Kvenild & Bowles-Terry, they found that many

of these instructors were unaware of many of the services offered by the library. Again, marketing was identified as a possible solution; the survey itself brought more awareness to the services available.

Ismail[9] surveyed both on-campus and satellite campus students and faculty enrolled in a Graduate of Social Work program. She noted a likely correlation between the instructor's knowledge of how to access and locate library resources and their students' awareness of these resources, thus pointing out the necessity of holding a library orientation for these instructors, especially those who are teaching part-time. Part-time instructors seemed to have more confidence that their students already know how to use the library. Also noted were the desire for more electronic materials and the willingness to incorporate library instruction into their classes.

Hines[10] surveyed other universities' attempts to discover what their distance faculty want from their institutions' libraries, as well as reporting her own findings of instructors at her university. While the review of other studies is now dated (initial surveys were performed between 1986-2004) she found many of the instructors aware of services and receptive to library instruction (especially tutorials or handouts which could be utilized outside of class time), but frustrated by technological issues. Her own survey, conducted in 2006, found that these faculty desired subject guides – something that was already available to them, but of which they were unaware. Results were mixed on whether instructors were willing to have library units incorporated into their class. Most seemed doubtful that their students were fully aware of the breadth of library services and how to access them, and concerns about copyright issues in an online environment were also expressed.

In 2004, a needs assessment was conducted by Shaffer, Finkelstein, Woelfl & Lyden[11] of instructors conducting online classes. Using both focus groups and a survey, they again found echoes of copyright issues which often drove instructors to use items available on the internet instead of library materials to avoid any risks of copyright infringement. Many instructors felt that their students already

possessed library skills, a common perception reported in many of the studies listed here as well as more widely in the library literature. Technology and lack of electronic materials were also cited as concerns, which may be less of a concern nearly a decade later. Lack of awareness was mentioned as one of the biggest barriers to these instructors' use of library services, and the conclusion drawn that more outreach and marketing needed to be done.

Methodology

The survey wording was based on the one used by Kvenild & Bowles-Terry[12] with adjustments made for the University of Lethbridge situation. It was set up on the free version of SurveyMonkey, a popular web-based survey service. An online survey was chosen as it seemed to be the most efficient and simple method to assess instructors' opinions, especially given that they are not located on the main campus. The survey and a description of the project was sent to the University of Lethbridge Survey Management Committee and was deemed to not require approval of the committee as we were surveying a subset of the population (U of L instructors) on our own services. An email was sent out on August 15 (Calgary) and August 16 (Edmonton), 2011 to the campus listservs via the administrative assistants at each campus inviting all instructors, both faculty and sessional, at each location to participate – 52 in Calgary, and 35 in Edmonton. A reminder email was sent on August 29, 2011 to both lists and again on September 22, 2011. The survey was open until September 30, 2011. A copy of the survey instrument is included as Appendix A, and the invitation as Appendix B. Of the 87 instructors who received the survey, 31 responses were received; a 35% response rate. While this is a good rate of return and useful for the author's purpose of providing better service to her constituents in the Faculty of Management teaching at a distance, it may not be appropriate to generalize results to a larger population or different subject areas. Please note that in reporting the survey results, because respondents could choose all answers that apply, percentages do not add up to 100%.

Results

As previously mentioned, a large proportion of the students on the Edmonton and Calgary

campuses are enrolled in classes taught by the Faculty of Management, as these campuses were

established by that faculty. However, part of the requirements for students to graduate includes taking

a broad range of other general liberal education classes such as English, academic writing, or other

general electives which are offered by the Faculty of Arts & Science; as such, some instructors may be

employed by that faculty rather than by Management. The first question established how many

respondents were teaching Management vs Arts & Science classes: 22 reported being employed by the

Faculty of Management, 8 by the Faculty of Arts & Science, and one respondent taught in both areas.

What library services are being used?

In answer to which library services were used by these instructors in their courses, only four

respondents (13%) responded that they have had a librarian visit their class (3 virtually, 1 in-person).

This is a service which used to be offered in person, but in recent years due to budget cutbacks has been

offered as a 'virtual' visit via Skype[13]. None of the respondents have utilized a librarian in their online

discussion boards, another service offered by librarians. The most popular answer to this question was

that instructors encouraged their students to get a TAL card, to which 48.4% responded in the

affirmative. TAL stands for The Alberta Library, a service which allows users to borrow materials from

other libraries, both academic and public, across the province. This is a positive finding, as it is

considered an important service for distance students to take advantage of. Some are finding alternate

ways to provide materials to their students, with 22.6% of instructors utilizing interlibrary loans and

16%, electronic course reserves. Only 9.7% have used online library tutorials; however, this is not

surprising given that the tutorials are mainly geared towards the academic writing classes which are

offered on all campuses (and which the Library often participates in), and most of the respondents were

teaching Management classes. A similar number (6.5%) use handouts prepared by a librarian.

Responses to this question are summarized in Table 1. Other open-ended responses included that

instructors did not know that library services were available to them at satellite campuses; they have

borrowed videos from the library to show in class; they do not require students to use library services or

they use textbook material only; they provided students library instruction themselves; and that their

students have an assignment which requires them to access and critique original research. One

instructor mentioned that he/she previously had a librarian do an in-person class session.

Table 1
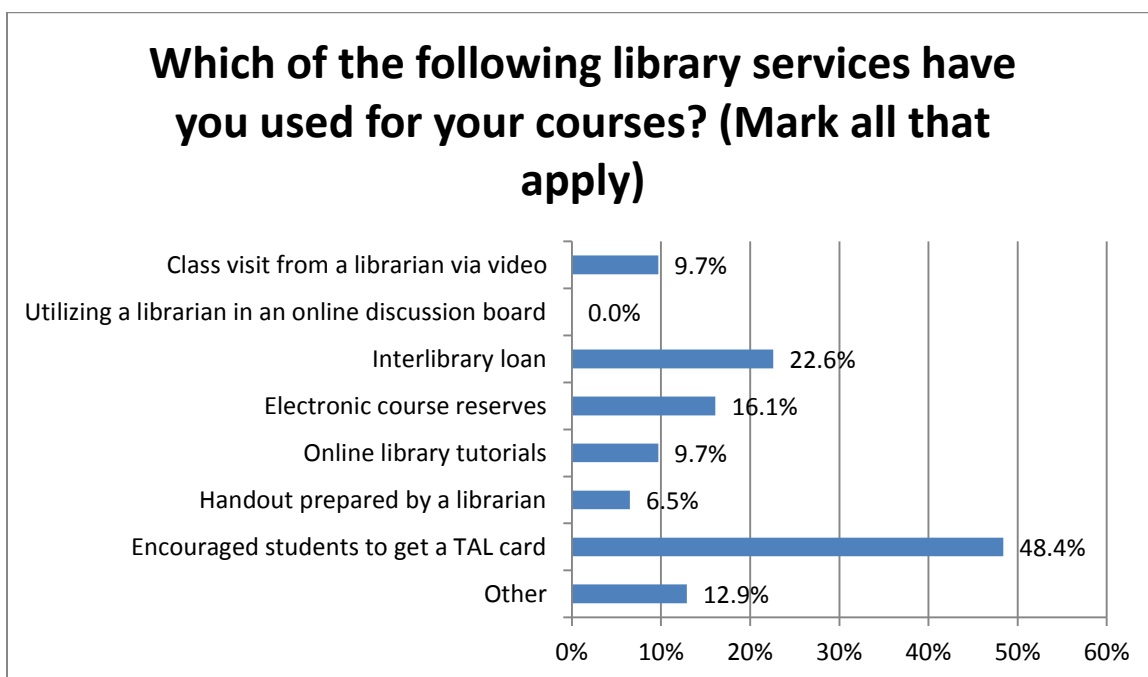
What barriers are being encountered?

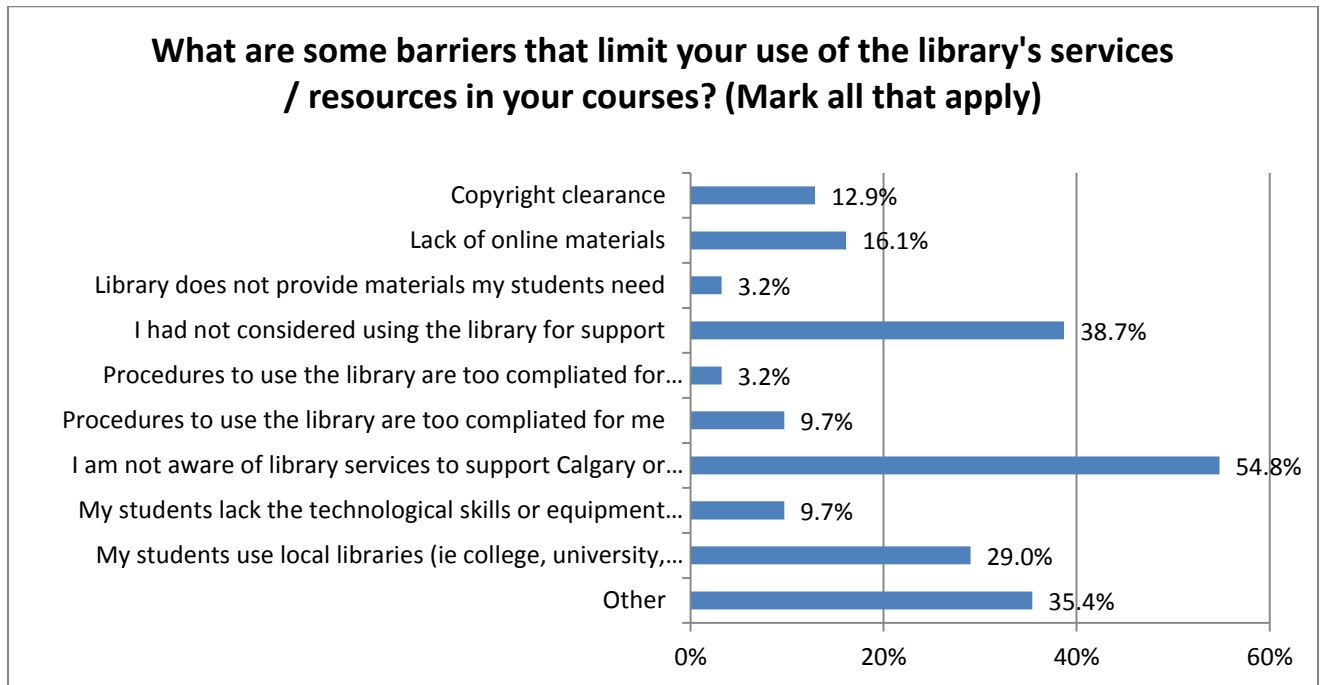The next question addressed barriers which limit the instructors' use of the Library's services

and resources in their courses. (Answers are summarized in Table 2.) Alarmingly, the largest number

(54.8%) responded that they are not aware of Library services to Calgary or Edmonton campuses. The

second-largest group (38.7%) had not considered using the Library for support. These high numbers

clearly indicate that education of and promotion to these satellite campus instructors is key to raising awareness of what is available to them through the Library. It is obvious that the usual methods of communicating with faculty members on the main campus (emails sent through the faculty listserv, participation in meetings and activities throughout campus, and more informal networking opportunities) do not reach these off-campus instructors. It may be that more targeted methods, such as the campus-specific listservs that this survey was administered through, must be used. Several (29%) respondents indicated that their students use other local libraries (college, university or public) rather than the U of L Library, which matches with the earlier question where instructors indicated that they encouraged their students to sign up for a TAL card. Lack of online materials was cited by 16.1% of respondents, which was surprising to the author as most of our journals and a growing number of books are available online. Perhaps this is another area in which education needs to be expanded; in addition, consultation with these instructors should be initiated in order to find out specifically which materials they would like to see made electronically available. Copyright clearance was a barrier for 12.9%; 9.7% said that procedures to use the Library were too complicated for them, another 3.2% said that the procedures to use the Library were too complicated for their students, and 9.7% indicated that their students lacked the technological skills or equipment to use the Library at a distance. Unfortunately, 3.2% said that the Library does not provide materials their students need – again, an opportunity to open dialogue with these instructors to discover what materials are required. 'Other' responses of barriers to Library use included short borrowing times; the fact that their students do not need to do research for their course(s)/library research is not applicable/all information required comes from a textbook; students are not aware of how to access Library materials; and lack of reliable delivery service from the main campus. These institutional issues (borrowing times and delivery service issues) should be immediately addressed and rectified for these campuses.
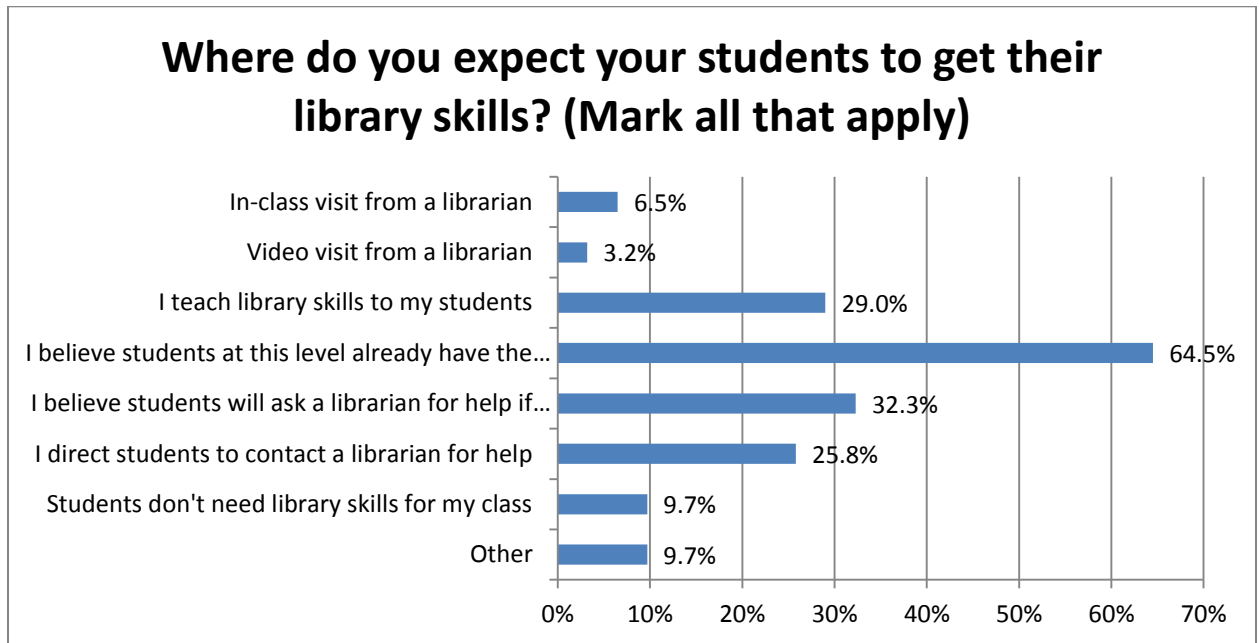
Table 2

What are some barriers that limit your use of the library's services / resources in your courses? (Mark all that apply)

Category	Percentage
Copyright clearance	12.9%
Lack of online materials	16.1%
Library does not provide materials my students need	3.2%
I had not considered using the library for support	38.7%
Procedures to use the library are too compliated for…	3.2%
Procedures to use the library are too compliated for me	9.7%
I am not aware of library services to support Calgary or…	54.8%
My students lack the technological skills or equipment…	9.7%
My students use local libraries (ie college, university,…	29.0%
Other	35.4%

Are Library resources required in the course?

On the question as to whether these instructors required students to use Library services or resources, the answers were fairly evenly split, with 52% responding yes and 48%, no. This may not be a complete surprise, especially when looked at in the context of the subject matter being taught, and the answers to some of the other questions; we can see from other open-ended answers that textbooks are often the only resources the instructors require their students to read, with perhaps some additional readings supplied by the instructors. Given that the vast majority of respondents are teaching Management courses, it makes sense that many of these courses (such as Accounting or Finance) would be textbook-based and assignments less reliant on original research.

Where do instructors expect their students to get library skills?

When asked where instructors expect their students to get their library skills, over half (64.5%) answered that they believe students at their level of instruction should already possess these skills. This is a common refrain heard from professors, both anecdotally and in the literature. However, we know from experiences in the classroom and on the reference desk that all too often, this is not the case – students are constantly asking for help with finding resources assigned by their instructors or for a research project and have no idea how to even start using the Library. In fact, results from this survey (see **Are library resources difficult to access?**) indicate that while students think they know how to access library materials, it may not be the case when it comes time for them to actually try to complete the task. There is a disconnect here, with instructors expecting their students to have learned these skills earlier, and students expecting their instructors to teach them these skills. Another 32.3% believe that students will ask for help from a librarian if they need it, and 25.8% instruct their students to ask a librarian for help. The latter statistic is heartening, as again we know both from experience and the literature that students are much more likely to contact a librarian if suggested by their instructor; however, we know students are less likely to approach the reference desk if not explicity directed there by their instructors. Over one-quarter (29%) of instructors indicated that they teach these skills to students themselves – this is a great alternative if instructors are very familiar with library procedures; however, in their answers to other questions some instructors revealed that this is not the case.. A small number (9.7%) have had a librarian visit their class, either via Skype or in person, and another 9.7% indicated that students do not need library skills for their class, again perhaps reflecting the different needs of the disciplines being taught. 'Other' responses included using the internet to find additional resources, and that having students find resources is a problem as their skills vary widely. Results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Where do you expect your students to get their library skills? (Mark all that apply)

Category	Percentage
In-class visit from a librarian	6.5%
Video visit from a librarian	3.2%
I teach library skills to my students	29.0%
I believe students at this level already have the…	64.5%
I believe students will ask a librarian for help if…	32.3%
I direct students to contact a librarian for help	25.8%
Students don't need library skills for my class	9.7%
Other	9.7%

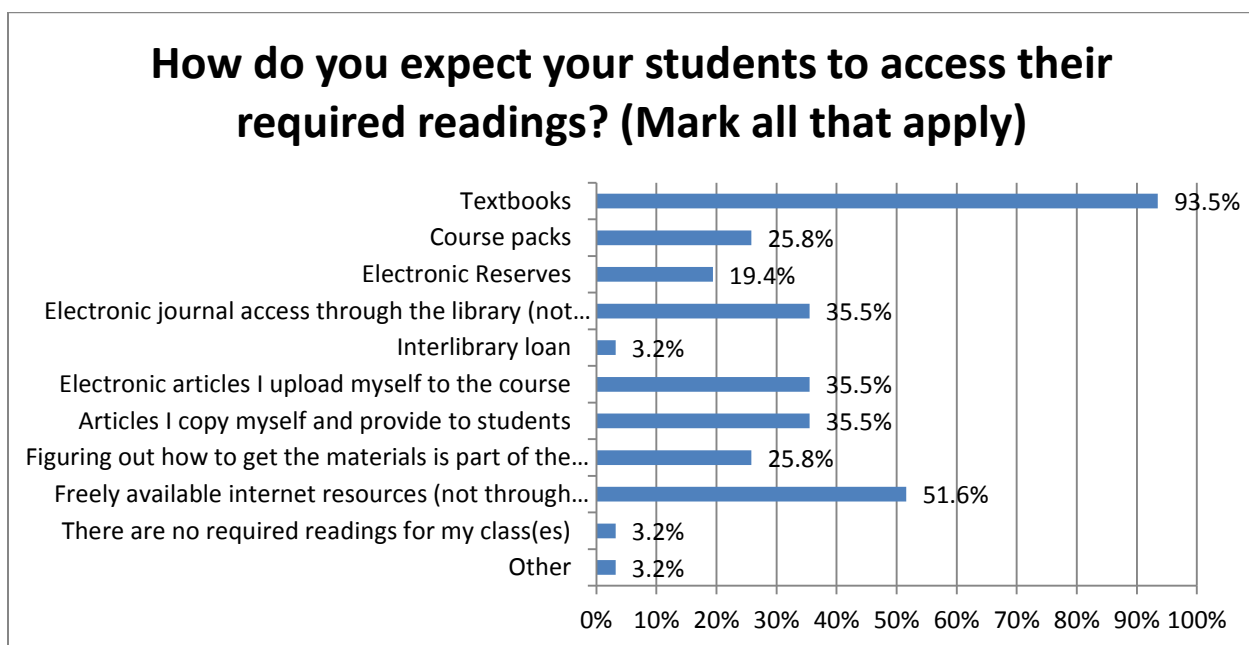**Are instructors willing to provide class time for library instruction?**

A large majority – 77% - indicated that they would be willing to provide class time for a librarian to teach their students library skills, while the remaining 23% would not. This is great news, indicating that the lack of invitations stem more from the lack of awareness of this service among instructors rather than their reluctance to provide librarians a forum.

How are students expected to access required readings?

When asked how they expect students to access their required readings, the vast majority (93.5%) answered textbooks – again keeping in form with other answers which indicate that these instructors are teaching subjects which lend themselves more to textbook readings and assignments rather than original research. An additional 51.6% say that they have students use material freely available on the internet. In equal amounts (35.5% each) instructors indicated that they have students access electronic journals through the Library, that instructors upload the articles themselves to the

course management system, or that they copy the articles themselves and provide them to students.

These last two answers may indicate that perhaps copyright rules are not being followed and that more

education on this topic should be provided. A further 25.8% provide readings to their students through

course packs, and 19.4% via electronic reserves, while 3.2% indicate that students should order these

materials via interlibrary loan, and another 3.2% have no required readings in their class(es). One-

quarter (25.8%) feel that figuring out how to access these readings is part of the students' self-

education.   See Table 4 for a summary of these results.

Table 4

How do you expect your students to access their required readings? (Mark all that apply)

Category	Percentage
Textbooks	93.5%
Course packs	25.8%
Electronic Reserves	19.4%
Electronic journal access through the library (not…	35.5%
Interlibrary loan	3.2%
Electronic articles I upload myself to the course	35.5%
Articles I copy myself and provide to students	35.5%
Figuring out how to get the materials is part of the…	25.8%
Freely available internet resources (not through…	51.6%
There are no required readings for my class(es)	3.2%
Other	3.2%

Are Library resources difficult to access?

In answer to the open-ended question, 'What do you hear from your students about the ease or

difficulty of accessing Library resources', 65% say that the topic has never come up. Other comments

included that the students' skills are highly variable, and that many of them have no idea how to

evaluate the scholarly quality of resources; and that students rely on Wikipedia without realizing that it

is not a scholarly resource. Instructors have also found that students have no idea how to use the Library databases and need one-on-one help, which they do not think they need until they attempt it themselves; that they do not know where to start; and that they have no idea about the Library, its resources, or the availability of the TAL card. Several mentioned that they thought that undergraduates have never had the need to use the Library before, while one respondent mentioned that graduate students seem more versed on the topic. One instructor mentioned a Library database on which he∕she instructs students how to access and use. Another said that students use libraries from other local institutions instead of the University of Lethbridge Library, again reflecting use of the TAL card. The lack of a reserve system at the satellite campuses was also mentioned and is an issue which should be investigated.

Did the survey help create awareness?

The next question asked if there were any Library services available to the instructors and their students that the respondents were only made aware of by the survey. In what would seem to contradict answers to previous questions, 77% said no, while only 23% said yes. This is surprising because of so many earlier answers indicating that they did not know that librarians could visit their classes, and that they or their students found Library access and use complicated.

What other services are desired?

The final question asked whether there were services not currently offered by the U of L Library that would help facilitate the instructors' teaching, and invited any other comments. Several mentioned that they would appreciate a visit from a librarian to help teach some of the information literacy and Library access skills that their students lacked. One of these specifically requested a return to the in-person visits that used to be offered, which have since been replaced by virtual visits via Skype. Previously mentioned concerns about students not understanding how to evaluate materials were

echoed here, and some of the instructors' own unfamiliarity with the U of L Library system. One respondent mentioned that they were quite happy with the Library resources for their own research, but that they had not considered how to use the Library better in their teaching. Another suggested a specific web page on the Library's web site geared to distance students. While this already exists, it perhaps needs to be highlighted to these students, and to include more tutorial information on how to access the Library.

Discussion

Looking at the results and many comments received, it is clear that the Library needs to do more to reach out to instructors on these satellite campuses. Many of them are unaware of the services available to them or even how to access the Library resources themselves, let alone how to instruct their students to do so. Good suggestions were received as to areas to improve upon, including procedural and institutional barriers such as delivery service and borrowing times, and it would seem clear that most instructors would welcome a visit by a librarian. While it may not be possible to return to on-site visits, which would obviously be ideal, perhaps the virtual visits can be pushed more strongly and their availability communicated more clearly. Obviously many of the Edmonton and Calgary instructors are not receiving the general Management listserv messages, and targeted emails need to be sent to the listservs for each campus. In addition, there appears to be opportunities to initiate dialogue with these instructors on the availability of electronic books, journals, and reserves, as well as copyright restrictions. These results mirror those found in Kvenild & Bowles-Terry[14], who also discovered that more outreach and education on library services and procedures were necessary for those instructors teaching at a distance from the main campus library, as well as the findings in other earlier studies noted in the literature review.

Conclusion

It was a very valuable exercise to conduct this survey, not only to solicit specific answers to questions asked, but to establish contact with many instructors who before now were unaware of the services and resources available to them. Two instructors included their contact information with specific requests to provide library instruction to their classes, with many others indicating that such a visit would be welcome. Good suggestions were received from respondents, and though many of the Management instructors may not have use for Library resources in their specific skills-based classes which use textbooks only, most still seem open to instructing students on how to access and use Library resources. It seems clear that the lack of previous communication between the Library and the satellite campuses, rather than a lack of willingness on behalf of the instructors to invite librarians into their classes, has been the biggest barrier to the Library's integration into these distance classes. This will be immediately rectified in coming terms by communicating sending targeted emails directly to these campus listservs, the same vehicle through which this survey was administered.

These research findings can not be generalized too greatly, as a small sample size was obtained. However, there is much valuable information to be gleaned from the answers received, and follow-up surveys can be conducted in subsequent years to ascertain whether the communication efforts made as a result of the conclusions noted here have had a positive effect.

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12. Kvenild, "Learning from Distance Faculty," p. 10-24.

13. Eva, "Using Skype,", p. 10.

14. Kvenild, "Learning from Distance Faculty," p. 10-24.

Appendix A

1. For which faculty/department do you teach? (open-ended responses)

2. Which of the following library services have you used for your course? (Mark all that apply):
    a. Class visit from a librarian via video
    b. Utilizing a librarian in an online discussion board
    c. Interlibrary loan
    d. Electronic course reserves
    e. Online library tutorials
    f. Handout prepared by a librarian
    g. Encouraged students to get a TAL* card
       author's note: TAL stands for The Alberta Library, a card which allows users to borrow materials from other institutions in the province
    h. Other

3. What are some barriers that limit your use of the library's services / resources in your courses? (Mark all that apply):
    a. Copyright clearance
    b. Lack of online materials
    c. Library does not provide materials my students need
    d. I had not considered using the library for support
    e. Procedures to use the library are too complicated for students
    f. Procedures to use the library are too complicated for me
    g. I am not aware of library services to support Calgary or Edmonton campuses
    h. My students lack the technological skills or equipment to use the library effectively from a distance
    i. My students use local libraries (ie college, university, public) instead of the U of L Library
    j. Other

4. Do you require your students to use library services or resources?
    a. Yes
    b. No

5. Where do you expect your students to get their library skills? (Mark all that apply):
    a. In-class visit from a librarian
    b. Video visit from a librarian
    c. I teach library skills to my students
    d. I believe students at this level already have the skills they need
    e. I believe students will ask a librarian for help if needed
    f. I direct students to contact a librarian for help
    g. Students don't need library skills for my class

    h. Other

6. Are you willing to give class time for a librarian to teach your students library skills?
    a. Yes
    b. No

7. How do you expect your students to access their required readings? (Mark all that apply):
    a. Textbooks
    b. Course packs
    c. Electronic reserves
    d. Electronic journal access through the library (not e-reserves)
    e. Interlibrary loan
    f. Electronic articles I upload myself to the course site
    g. Articles I copy myself and provide to students
    h. Figuring out how to get the materials is part of the student's self-education
    i. Freely available internet resources (not through the library)
    j. There are no required readings for my class(es)
    k. Other

8. What do you hear from your students about the ease or difficulty of accessing library resources? (open-ended responses)

9. Are there any library services available to you and your students that you were previously unaware of that you were made aware of by this survey?
    a. Yes
    b. No

10. Are there services not currently offered by the U of L library that could facilitate your teaching? Please elaborate, along with any other comments. (open-ended responses)

Appendix B

Hello,

As the Faculty of Management liaison librarian, as well as the librarian given the duties of teaching the satellite campus Writing 1000 library sessions, I am interested in looking at how the University of Lethbridge Library is providing services to you at a distance. To that end, I have created a SHORT survey (less than 5 minutes) to discover if the Library is providing the services you and your students need, as well as to find out what more we could do for you. I would greatly appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to fill out this brief survey and provide us some feedback, so that we may improve our library services to our satellite campuses.

You can access the survey here: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/5LY2F5P

Please note it will be open until September 30, 2011.

Thank you very much in advance for any feedback you can provide,

Nicole