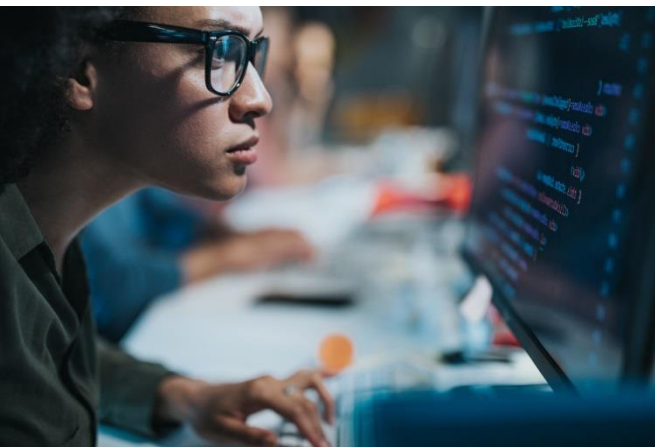# LJ LIBRARY JOURNAL

Academic Research:
The Librarian's Point of View
On the Need for Varied Content Types
2019

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Academic Research: The Librarian's Point of View On the Need for Varied Content Types

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Executive Summary

The ProQuest and *Library Journal* academic collections survey set out to better understand academic librarian perspectives on the needs and challenges facing researchers as they discover and use information as part of their research or studies.

The fundamental problem is that there are more and more channels and formats in which academic discussion takes place—blogs, videos, working papers, etc. (88% of academic librarians surveyed agreed with this assessment). This prevalence of content creates several challenges for both library users and the libraries themselves.

For library *users* (students, faculty, etc.), it has become difficult to find *all* the information that may be relevant to their research or study because it tends to be scattered across so many different formats and locations. At the same time, it can be difficult for researchers to determine which information sources are accurate, reliable, and/or trustworthy, and which are not (95% of survey respondents agreed with this assessment). Users, especially students, need to balance this with the ability to gather a variety of viewpoints and be able to draw their own conclusions, thus building important critical thinking skills (94% of survey respondents agreed with this).

For *libraries*, academic research is expanding beyond the traditional journal and monograph into ever-evolving new formats, and libraries must in turn evolve their collections to account for this (87% of survey respondents agreed with this). Complicating matters is the fact that the most appropriate content and format can vary depending on the researcher and the nature of the research (98% of survey respondents agreed with this assessment). By focusing on traditional formats, libraries may not be offering the most appropriate content type for each user.

Given the value of using multiple content types in research, what kind of research database(s) would librarians and library users find to be the most valuable? Ultimately, multi-format databases solve many or most of these problems. Essentially, having all of a library's databases and content on one platform would simplify the administration of electronic resources (66% of survey respondents agreed with this assessment). And access to a multidisciplinary, multi-format research database would help library users to discover and use the most relevant and reliable content (67% of survey respondents agreed with this assessment). The survey also found that the smaller the institution, the more agreement with this statement. There is even stronger agreement on the value of a discipline-specific, multi-format database.

Ultimately, academic faculty use a variety of resources in their teaching and learning, including scholarly journals, books, dissertations, etc., while they also overwhelmingly see value in students using a variety of resources in their studies. Providing ease of access

to all of these materials using multi-format databases can aid library users in accessing appropriate information as well as help academic library administration.[1]

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Introduction

Welcome to the ProQuest and *Library Journal* academic research report on the librarian's point of view on the need for varied content types.

This report is divided into two sections. The bulk of the short survey we conducted comprised eight questions about academic libraries' perception and use of electronic resources. Are library users challenged by the proliferation of electronic academic content? Do they struggle with separating reliable and unreliable resources? What are libraries' feelings about discipline-specific vs. multidisciplinary databases?

We also asked an open-ended question asking librarians to describe their ideal multidisciplinary database in terms of the content types, disciplines, and features it would include.

The second section presents the demographics of the individuals and institutions that responded to our survey.

How the Data in this Report Are Organized

As in most *Library Journal* survey reports, the bulk of this report provides top-level survey results in chart form—in essence, the "all responses" results, or what all academic library professionals surveyed said about a specific question. This gives an overall idea of the prevailing attitude.

Each chart is followed by a corresponding table that breaks down the survey responses by the extent to which the respondent is involved in reference materials purchasing decisions, number of students, library type (public vs. private), and job function of the respondent. Those job functions translate as:

- ADMIN LEVEL comprised of deans, directors/assistant directors, and library managers.
- WORK DIRECTLY WITH USERS including access services/circulation librarians, adult services librarians, instructional librarians, and reference/information services librarians.
- LIBRARY SUPPORT positions netting acquisitions librarians, cataloging librarians, collection development librarians, electronic resources librarians, serials librarians, systems librarians, technical services librarians, and subject specialists.

We have called out in commentary where some results in these segments caught our attention, but readers who are looking for more granularity will find much of value in these tables.

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Academic Research: The Librarian's Point of View

On our questionnaire, we presented respondents with eight statements, and asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. The statements were:
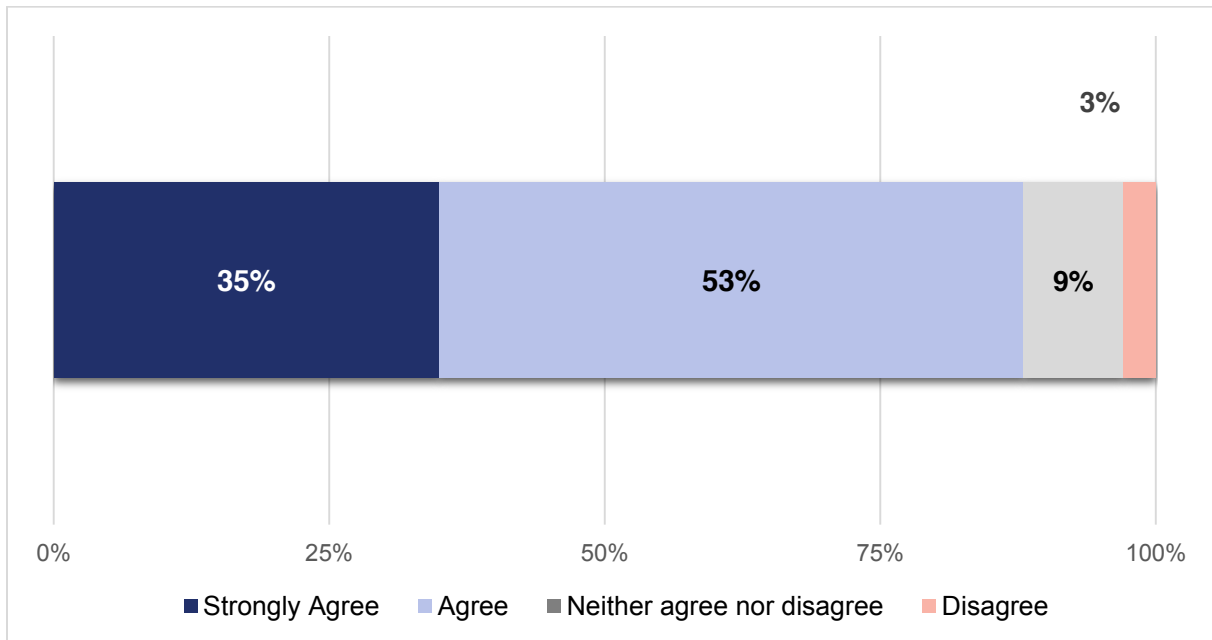
- Academic discussion takes place via more channels and different formats (e.g., blogs, videos, working papers, etc.) than ever before; library users can find it difficult to discover and use all of these sources in their own research.
- Academic research is expanding beyond the traditional journal and monograph into new formats; libraries must evolve their collections to account for this.
- Different formats and content types are more appropriate than others depending on what the researcher is trying to achieve and what stage of the research cycle they are at; it is important for students and faculty to understand the pros and cons of different content types and what to use when.
- Students often struggle to identify which information sources are accurate, reliable, and trustworthy.
- It is important for students to seek a variety of viewpoints often published in different formats so they can draw their own conclusions and build critical thinking skills.
- Access to a *multidisciplinary*, multi-format research database would help library users to discover and use the most relevant and reliable content.
- Access to a *discipline-specific*, multi-format research database would help library users to discover and use the most relevant and reliable content.
- Having all of your library databases and content on one platform would simplify the administration of electronic resources at your library.

Let's look at them one-by-one.

Information is available in more formats, via more channels than ever before

The majority of our respondents—88%—agreed that academic discussion takes place in more channels and different formats than ever and that users can find navigating them all a challenge; 35% strongly agreed with this statement.

Figure 1. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Academic discussion takes place via more channels and different formats (e.g., blogs, videos, working papers, etc.) than ever before; library users can find it difficult to discover and use all of these sources in their own research.* — **All respondents, 2019**

The table below segments respondents by the extent to which they are involved in the purchasing process and number of students. Looking at a net rating of strongly agree/agree, respondents not involved in the purchasing process gave the lowest ratings. Focusing on individual ratings, only 29% of small schools serving less than 5,000 students, *strongly* agreed that users have difficulties using multiple sources and formats, considerably lower than the 43% of schools serving larger student populations.

Table 1. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Academic discussion takes place via more channels and different formats (e.g., blogs, videos, working papers, etc.) than ever before; library users can find it difficult to discover and use all of these sources in their own research —* **Respondents by purchasing process and number of students, 2019**

	Total	Purchasing Process			# of Students		
		Final decision maker	Recom-mend mat'ls	Not involved	< 5,000	5,000 - 14,999	15,000+
Strongly Agree/Agree	88%	88%	90%	78%	90%	91%	85%
Strongly agree	35%	33%	37%	30%	29%	43%	43%
Agree	53%	55%	53%	48%	61%	48%	43%
Neither agree nor disagree	9%	9%	6%	17%	7%	7%	12%
Disagree	3%	3%	3%	5%	3%	1%	3%
Strongly disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	3%	3%	3%	5%	3%	2%	3%

Responses in the table below are segmented by whether respondents work in a public or private institution, and by the respondent's basic job function. There is not much variance across these breakdowns, although it shows that only 26% of private schools strongly agree with this statement, mirroring the lower percentage of small schools above.

Table 2. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Academic discussion takes place via more channels and different formats (e.g., blogs, videos, working papers, etc.) than ever before; library users can find it difficult to discover and use all of these sources in their own research —* **Respondents by library type, and job function, 2019**

	Academic Library		Job Function		
	Public	Private	Admin level	Work directly with users	Library support
Strongly Agree/Agree	90%	92%	89%	89%	86%
Strongly agree	39%	26%	34%	40%	37%
Agree	52%	66%	56%	49%	50%
Neither agree nor disagree	7%	7%	8%	8%	11%
Disagree	3%	1%	3%	3%	3%
Strongly disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	3%	1%	3%	3%	3%

Research must go beyond the traditional journal

Eighty-seven percent of respondents agree that academic research is expanding beyond the traditional journal, and that libraries must evolve their collections to take into account these new channels. Nearly four out of ten (39%) strongly agreed with this statement.

Figure 2. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Academic research is expanding beyond the traditional journal and monograph into new formats; libraries must evolve their collections to account for this.* **—All respondents, 2019**
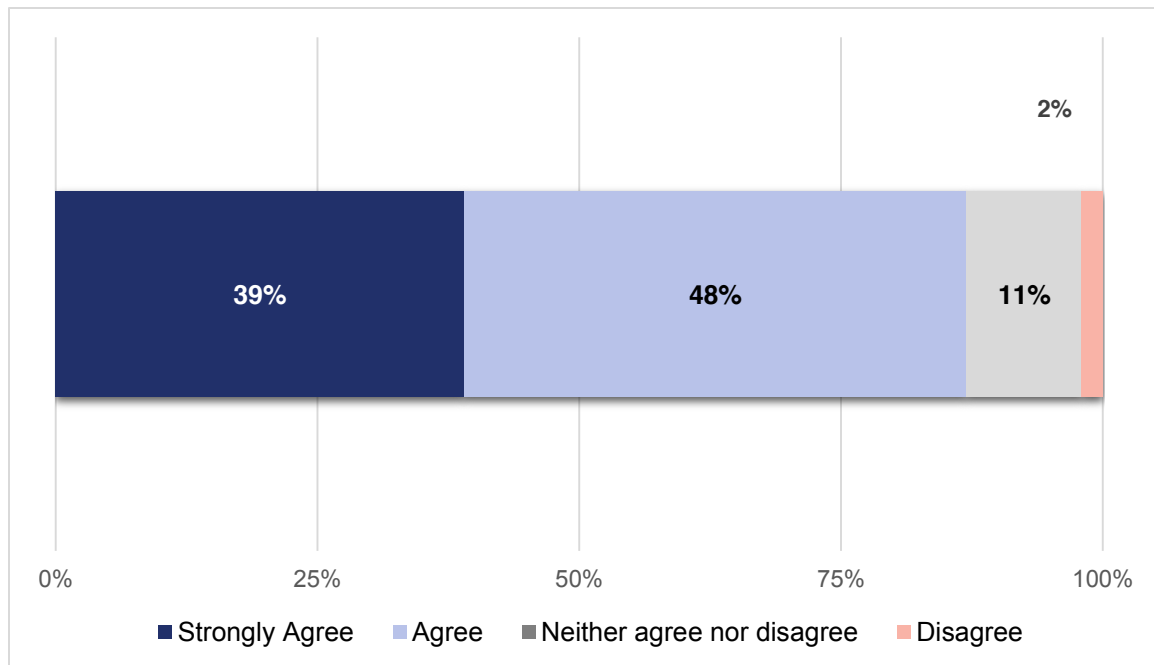
Digital library resources have been widely available for years, which may explain why respondents not involved in the recommendation or purchase of materials were highly likely to agree with this statement. Final decision makers were less likely to strongly agree, perhaps because they are responsible for the digital transformation.

Table 3. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Academic research is expanding beyond the traditional journal and monograph into new formats; libraries must evolve their collections to account for this.* **—Respondents by purchasing process and number of students, 2019**

	Total	Purchasing Process			# of Students		
		Final decision maker	Recom-mend mat'ls	Not involved	< 5,000	5,000 - 14,999	15,000+
Strongly Agree/Agree	88%	85%	89%	90%	87%	86%	90%
Strongly agree	39%	33%	44%	42%	36%	35%	43%
Agree	48%	53%	45%	48%	51%	51%	46%
Neither agree nor disagree	11%	13%	10%	8%	12%	10%	7%
Disagree	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	3%	2%
Strongly disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	3%	3%

Table 4. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Academic research is expanding beyond the traditional journal and monograph into new formats; libraries must evolve their collections to account for this.* **—Respondents by library type, and job function, 2019**

	Academic Library		Job Function		
	Public	Private	Admin level	Work directly with users	Library support
Strongly Agree/Agree	86%	85%	90%	86%	86%
Strongly agree	38%	34%	37%	40%	35%
Agree	48%	51%	53%	46%	52%
Neither agree nor disagree	12%	14%	9%	12%	11%
Disagree	2%	1%	1%	3%	2%
Strongly disagree	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	2%	1%	1%	3%	3%

Different tasks require different formats

Virtually all respondents (98%) agreed that different formats and content types are more appropriate than others, depending on the researcher and the nature of the research. Almost two-thirds (63%) strongly agreed.

Figure 3. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Different formats and content types are more appropriate than others depending on what the researcher is trying to achieve and what stage of the research cycle they are at; it is important for students and faculty to understand the pros and cons of different content types and what to use when.* **—All respondents, 2019**
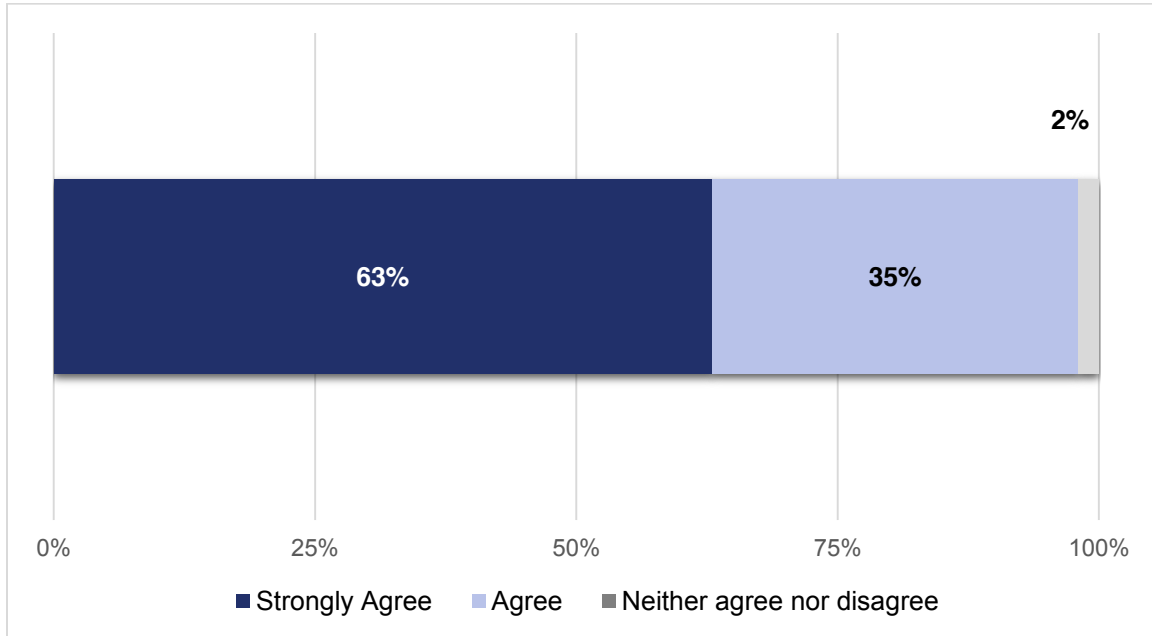
Responses varied little between segments, although respondents not involved in recommending or purchasing materials were less likely to agree with this statement.

Table 5. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Different formats and content types are more appropriate than others depending on what the researcher is trying to achieve and what stage of the research cycle they are at; it is important for students and faculty to understand the pros and cons of different content types and what to use when.* **—Respondents by purchasing process and number of students, 2019**

		Purchasing Process			# of Students		
	Total	Final decision maker	Recom- mend mat'ls	Not involved	< 5,000	5,000 - 14,999	15,000+
Strongly Agree/Agree	98%	99%	98%	89%	97%	99%	95%
Strongly agree	63%	67%	61%	58%	60%	64%	64%

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|							
Agree	35%	31%	37%	32%	38%	35%	31%
Neither agree nor disagree	2%	1%	2%	7%	3%	1%	4%
Disagree	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%
Strongly disagree	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	1%

Table 6. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Different formats and content types are more appropriate than others depending on what the researcher is trying to achieve and what stage of the research cycle they are at; it is important for students and faculty to understand the pros and cons of different content types and what to use when.* **—Respondents by library type and job function, 2019**

	Academic Library		Job Function		
	Public	Private	Admin level	Work directly with users	Library support
Strongly Agree/Agree	96%	98%	99%	97%	95%
Strongly agree	67%	54%	57%	68%	56%
Agree	29%	45%	42%	29%	39%
Neither agree nor disagree	4%	2%	1%	3%	4%
Disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Strongly disagree	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%

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Students struggle to know which sources to trust

There is also a general consensus that students struggle to identify which sources are accurate and reliable—95% agreed with the statement, 58% strongly.

Figure 4. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Students often struggle to identify which information sources are accurate, reliable, and trustworthy.* **—All respondents, 2019**
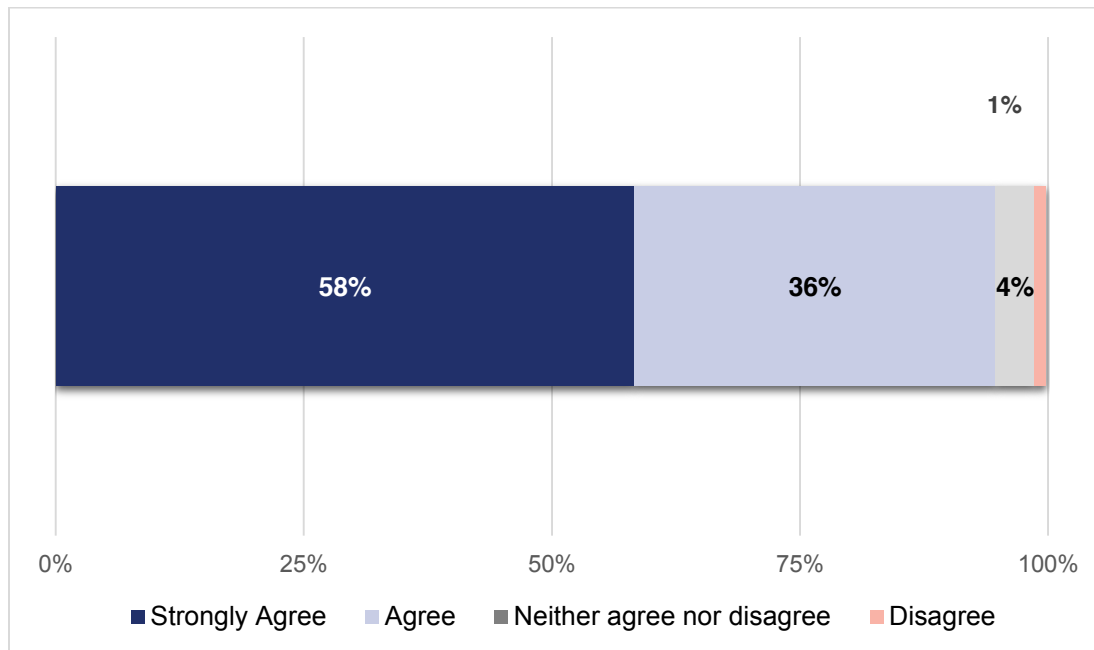
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Respondents not involved in recommending or purchasing materials were less likely to agree with this statement (only 44% strongly agree).

Table 7. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Students often struggle to identify which information sources are accurate, reliable, and trustworthy.* **—Respondents by purchasing process and number of students, 2019**

	Total	Purchasing Process			# of Students		
		Final decision maker	Recom-mend mat'ls	Not involved	< 5,000	5,000 - 14,999	15,000+
Strongly Agree/Agree	95%	96%	94%	90%	96%	96%	93%
Strongly agree	59%	60%	61%	44%	59%	64%	56%
Agree	36%	37%	33%	46%	36%	32%	37%
Neither agree nor disagree	4%	2%	5%	7%	3%	4%	5%
Disagree	1%	1%	1%	3%	1%	0%	2%
Strongly disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	1%	1%	1%	3%	2%	0%	2%

While the vast majority of respondents strongly agree/agree about students' struggles with discernment, four percent of respondents at the administrative level (vs. 0% of those who work directly with users or 1% of library support) don't think that students have a problem finding trustworthy or accurate research sources.
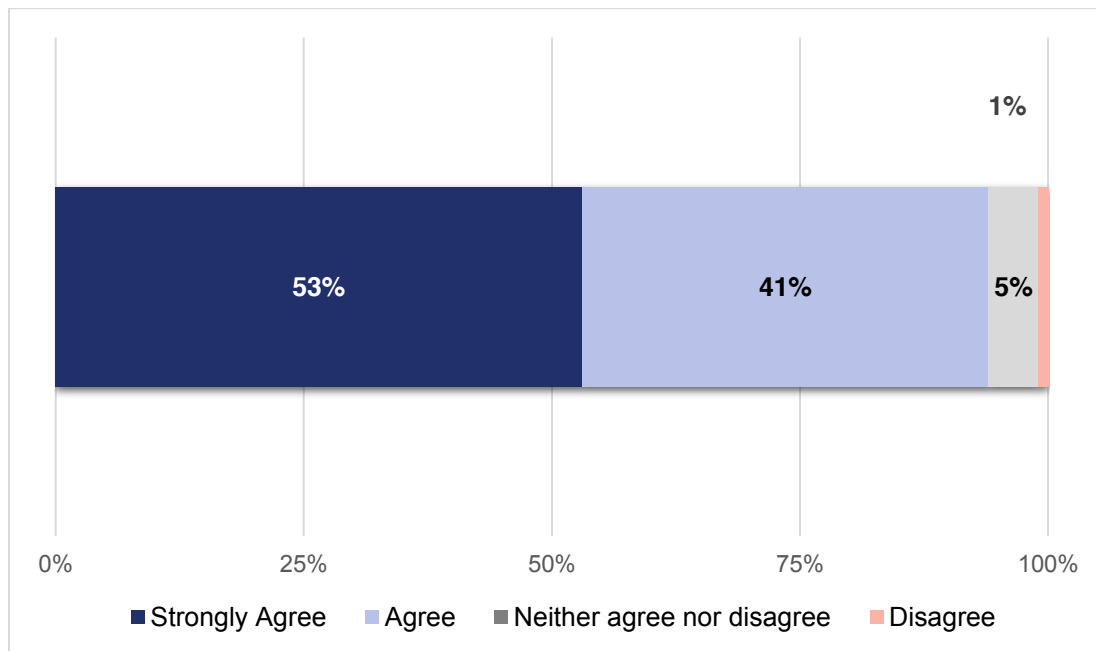
Table 8. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Students often struggle to identify which information sources are accurate, reliable, and trustworthy.* **—Respondents by library type and job function, 2019**

	Academic Library		Job Function		
	Public	Private	Admin level	Work directly with users	Library support
Strongly Agree/Agree	94%	98%	94%	96%	95%
Strongly agree	61%	56%	62%	59%	55%
Agree	32%	42%	33%	37%	39%
Neither agree nor disagree	6%	1%	2%	4%	5%
Disagree	1%	1%	3%	0%	1%
Strongly disagree	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	1%	1%	4%	0%	1%

Students should seek a variety of viewpoints

Ninety-four percent of academic libraries agree (more than one-half strongly) that students should seek a variety of viewpoints to build critical thinking skills.

Figure 5. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *It is important for students to seek a variety of viewpoints often published in different formats so they can draw their own conclusions and build critical thinking skills.* **—All respondents, 2019**

53% 41% 5% 1%

■ Strongly Agree   ■ Agree   ■ Neither agree nor disagree   ■ Disagree

Respondents not involved in recommending or purchasing materials were the least likely to agree with this statement (88% agree/strongly agree; 5% disagree/strongly disagree).

Table 9. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *It is important for students to seek a variety of viewpoints often published in different formats so they can draw their own conclusions and build critical thinking skills.* **—Respondents by purchasing process and number of students, 2019**

	Total	Purchasing Process			# of Students		
		Final decision maker	Recom-mend mat'ls	Not involved	< 5,000	5,000 - 14,999	15,000+
Strongly Agree/Agree	94%	95%	95%	88%	96%	92%	95%
Strongly agree	53%	52%	55%	44%	53%	55%	47%
Agree	41%	43%	40%	44%	42%	36%	48%
Neither agree nor disagree	5%	4%	5%	7%	4%	5%	4%
Disagree	1%	1%	0%	5%	1%	3%	1%
Strongly disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	1%	1%	0%	5%	1%	3%	1%

Academic libraries in public institutions are more likely than those in private institutions to agree, and agree strongly, with the statement.

Table 10. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *It is important for students to seek a variety of viewpoints often published in different formats so they can draw their own conclusions and build critical thinking skills.* **—Respondents by library type and job function, 2019**

	Academic Library		Job Function		
	Public	Private	Admin level	Work directly with users	Library support
Strongly Agree/Agree	96%	91%	97%	93%	93%
Strongly agree	56%	46%	54%	54%	45%
Agree	40%	45%	43%	39%	47%
Neither agree nor disagree	3%	7%	1%	6%	5%
Disagree	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%
Strongly disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%

Multidisciplinary, multi-format databases are important to researchers

Two-thirds (67%) agree that access to a multidisciplinary, multi-format database would help students find the most relevant and reliable content.

Figure 6. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Access to multidisciplinary, multi-format research database would help library users to discover and use the most relevant and reliable content.* **—All respondents, 2019**
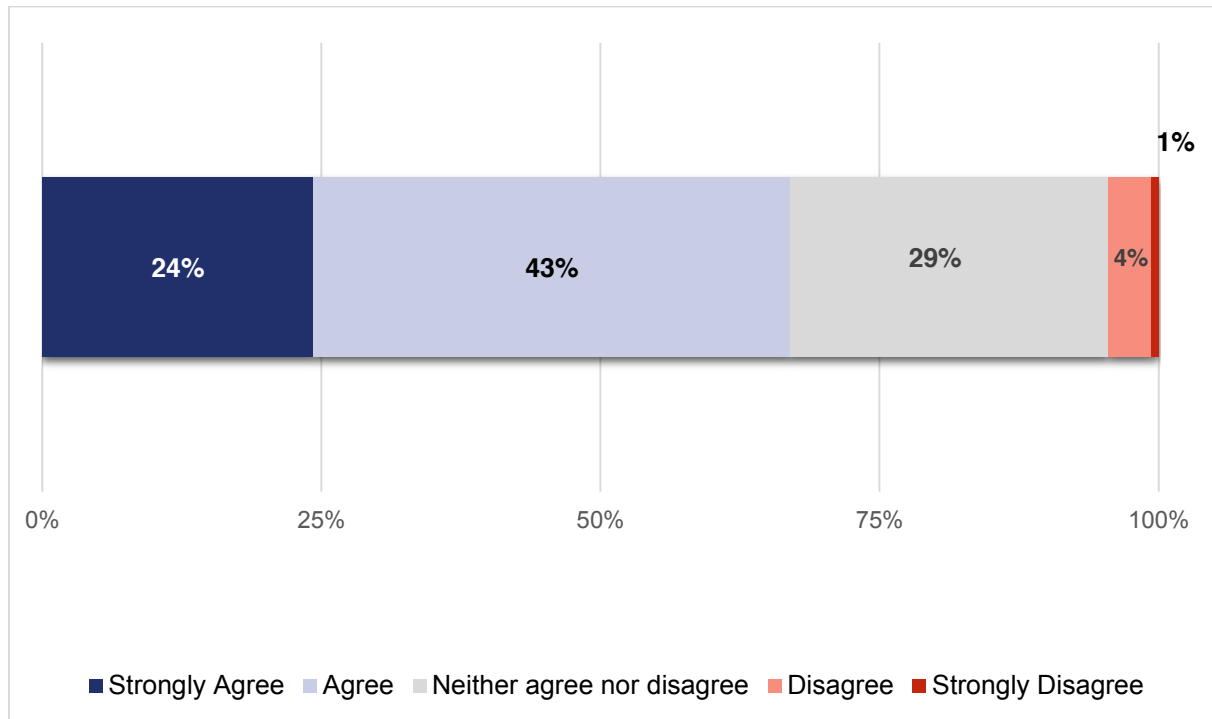
Agreement with this statement increases as the institution gets smaller —58% of the largest institutions vs. 74% of the smallest institutions agree/strongly agree.

Table 11. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Access to multidisciplinary, multi-format research database would help library users to discover and use the most relevant and reliable content.* **—Respondents by purchasing process and number of students, 2019**

		Purchasing Process			# of Students		
	Total	Final decision maker	Recom-mend mat'ls	Not involved	< 5,000	5,000 - 14,999	15,000+
Strongly Agree/Agree	67%	66%	68%	66%	74%	67%	58%
Strongly agree	24%	19%	27%	30%	30%	26%	20%
Agree	43%	47%	41%	36%	45%	41%	38%
Neither agree nor disagree	29%	28%	29%	30%	22%	28%	35%
Disagree	4%	5%	3%	2%	3%	3%	6%
Strongly disagree	1%	1%	0%	2%	1%	2%	1%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	5%	6%	4%	4%	4%	5%	7%

Respondents at the administrative level were the most likely (9%) to disagree, while also having a high level of agreement (72%). Respondents in library support were highly likely (43%) to neither agree nor disagree.
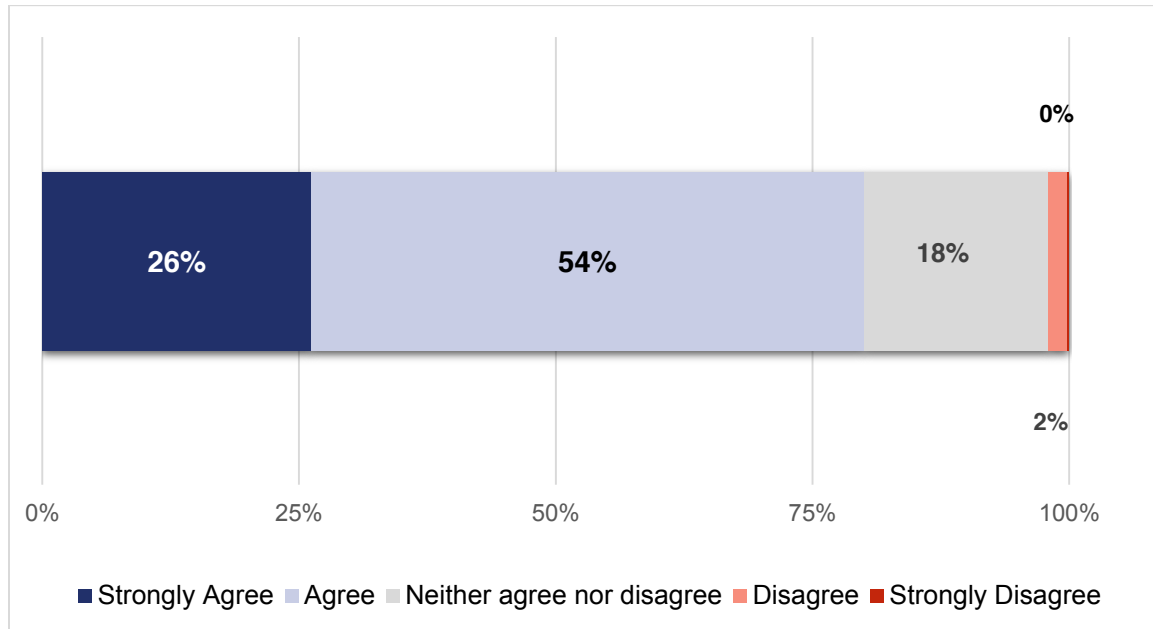
Table 12. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Access to multidisciplinary, multi-format research database would help library users to discover and use the most relevant and reliable content.* **—Respondents by library type and job function, 2019**

	Academic Library		Job Function		
	Public	Private	Admin level	Work directly with users	Library support
Strongly Agree/Agree	66%	66%	72%	72%	55%
Strongly agree	23%	20%	27%	28%	18%
Agree	43%	46%	45%	44%	36%
Neither agree nor disagree	30%	32%	19%	24%	43%
Disagree	4%	2%	7%	4%	2%
Strongly disagree	1%	0%	2%	0%	1%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	4%	2%	9%	4%	3%

Discipline-specific databases are also important

Respondents were more sanguine about a discipline-specific, multi-format database: 80% agreed, 26% strongly, that such a database would help users find the most relevant and reliable information. Only 18% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Figure 7. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Access to a discipline-specific, multi-format research database would help library users to discover and use the most relevant and reliable content.* —**All respondents, 2019**

Respondents who recommend materials were the most likely to agree (83%) with the statement about a discipline-specific, multi-format database. Agreement was fairly stable across all institution sizes.

Table 13. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Access to a discipline-specific, multi-format research database would help library users to discover and use the most relevant and reliable content.* —**Respondents by purchasing process and number of students, 2019**

	Total	Purchasing Process			# of Students		
		Final decision maker	Recom-mend mat'ls	Not involved	< 5,000	5,000 - 14,999	15,000+
Strongly Agree/Agree	80%	77%	83%	78%	80%	80%	80%
Strongly agree	26%	23%	29%	28%	29%	28%	25%
Agree	54%	54%	54%	50%	51%	52%	55%
Neither agree nor disagree	18%	21%	16%	20%	18%	16%	17%
Disagree	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	3%	3%
Strongly disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	4%	3%

Respondents in library support were notably less sanguine about a discipline-specific database, while also being the most likely to neither agree nor disagree (22%).

Table 14. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Access to a discipline-specific, multi-format research database would help library users to discover and use the most relevant and reliable content.* —**Respondents by library type and job function, 2019**

	Academic Library		Job Function		
	Public	Private	Admin level	Work directly with users	Library support
Strongly Agree/Agree	80%	77%	85%	82%	75%
Strongly agree	27%	28%	27%	28%	24%
Agree	53%	50%	58%	54%	52%
Neither agree nor disagree	18%	23%	14%	15%	22%
Disagree	2%	0%	0%	3%	3%
Strongly disagree	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	2%	0%	1%	3%	3%

A single platform simplifies library administration

Two-thirds of academic libraries feel that having all databases and other content on a single platform would simplify the administration of electronic resources—29% strongly agreed. One-fourth (24%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and 10% disagreed, 2% strongly.

Figure 8. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Having all of your library databases and content on one platform would simplify the administration of electronic resources at your library.* **—All respondents, 2019**
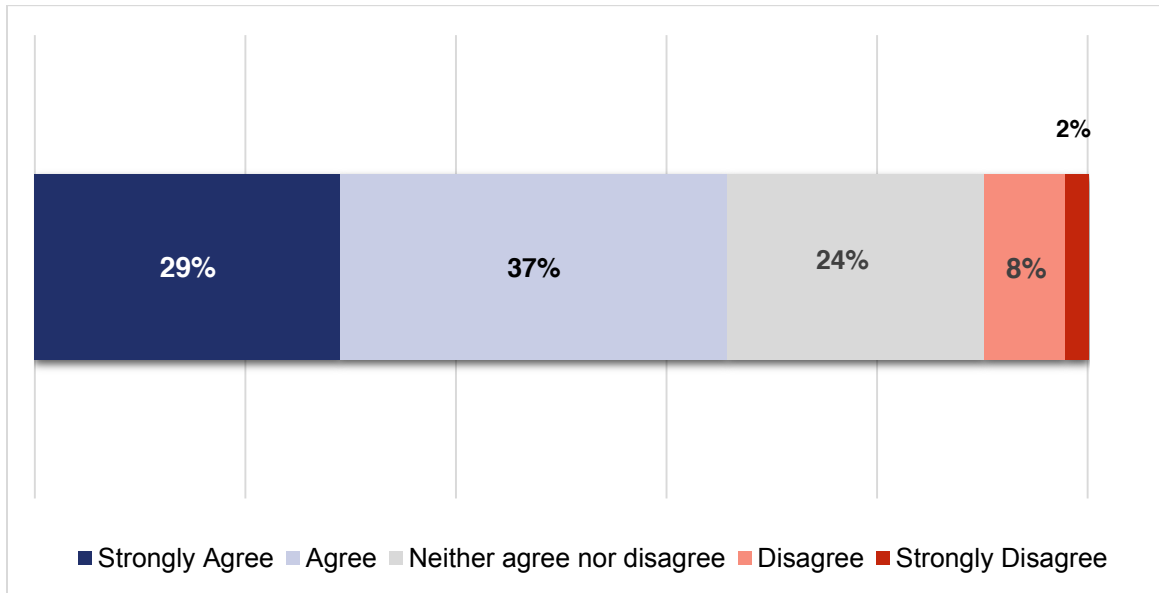
Smaller institutions were the most likely to favor having all their content on a single platform (78% agreed/strongly agreed). Sixteen percent of mid-size schools and thirteen percent of large schools disagreed about the benefits of a single-platform. Overall, two thirds of final decision makers agreed that having their databases on a single platform simplifies administration, although these respondents were the most likely to disagree (12% disagree/strongly disagree).

Table 15. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Having all of your library databases and content on one platform would simplify the administration of electronic resources at your library.* **—Respondents by purchasing process and number of students, 2019**

	Total	Purchasing Process			# of Students		
		Final decision maker	Recom-mend mat'ls	Not involved	< 5,000	5,000 - 14,999	15,000+
Strongly Agree/Agree	66%	65%	66%	66%	78%	57%	58%
Strongly agree	29%	25%	31%	30%	37%	21%	22%
Agree	37%	40%	35%	36%	41%	36%	36%
Neither agree nor disagree	24%	23%	25%	25%	15%	27%	29%
Disagree	8%	9%	6%	9%	5%	15%	8%
Strongly disagree	2%	2%	3%	0%	2%	1%	5%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	10%	12%	9%	9%	7%	16%	13%

Respondents at the administrative level were far and away the most likely to agree that a single platform would make things easier—76% agreed, 42% strongly. Library support respondents were the most likely to disagree (14%). Those who work directly with library users were the most likely to neither agree nor disagree (30%). Academic libraries in private institutions were more likely than public to agree (71% vs. 59% agree).

Table 16. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Having all of your library databases and content on one platform would simplify the administration of electronic resources at your library.* **—Respondents by library type and job function, 2019**

	Academic Library		Job Function		
	Public	Private	Admin level	Work directly with users	Library support
Strongly Agree/Agree	59%	71%	76%	59%	62%
Strongly agree	21%	30%	42%	19%	26%
Agree	37%	41%	34%	40%	35%
Neither agree nor disagree	30%	18%	15%	30%	25%
Disagree	9%	10%	7%	8%	11%
Strongly disagree	3%	2%	2%	3%	3%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	12%	11%	9%	11%	14%

Ideal Multidisciplinary Database

In an open-ended question, we asked respondents how they would design a multidisciplinary research database to best meet the needs of their institution. Responses were directed at solving the challenges outlined above, namely that academic libraries need to evolve their collections beyond journals and books to include much broader access to streaming video, primary sources, and other formats such as dissertations.

While there is a clear need for multi-format, multidisciplinary databases with a unified user experience, they also want their users to be able to search across formats within disciplines and easily access related material to help them examine and address research topics from every angle.

Librarians also desire that the database interface guide users with more options to filter through content rather than having to sift through pages of search results. In addition, source types should be easy to identify, likewise for peer-reviewed and full-text content.

To view the full text responses to this open-ended question, please visit http://c0003264.cdn2.cloudfiles.rackspacecloud.com/multidisciplinary%20research%20database%20descriptions.docx.

In Conclusion

Academic library respondents are virtually unanimous in the feeling that there are more channels than ever for research-related content, which makes research more complicated for library users as they struggle to aggregate all the relevant sources necessary for research projects, as well as determine which are the most reliable, accurate, and trustworthy. Users—especially students—also need to develop critical thinking skills and learn to draw their own conclusions, making it even more important that they be able to separate the wheat from the chaff in terms of research sources.

At the same time, academic research has expanded beyond the traditional journal and monograph, and different formats are appropriate for different circumstances, depending on the individual researcher, what s/he is researching, and/or what the aim of that research is.

What academic librarians have told us is that there is great value in being able to offer library users multi-format research databases, be they multidisciplinary or discipline-specific. Having a single platform for all databases or research content would also greatly simplify library administration.

Demographics

This section includes a profile of the institutions and individuals that responded to our survey.

Geography

The majority of the respondents to this survey were based in the United States, with less than one-fourth based outside the U.S. Less than 1% were online-only institutions.

Figure 9. Where is your institution primarily located? —All respondents, 2019
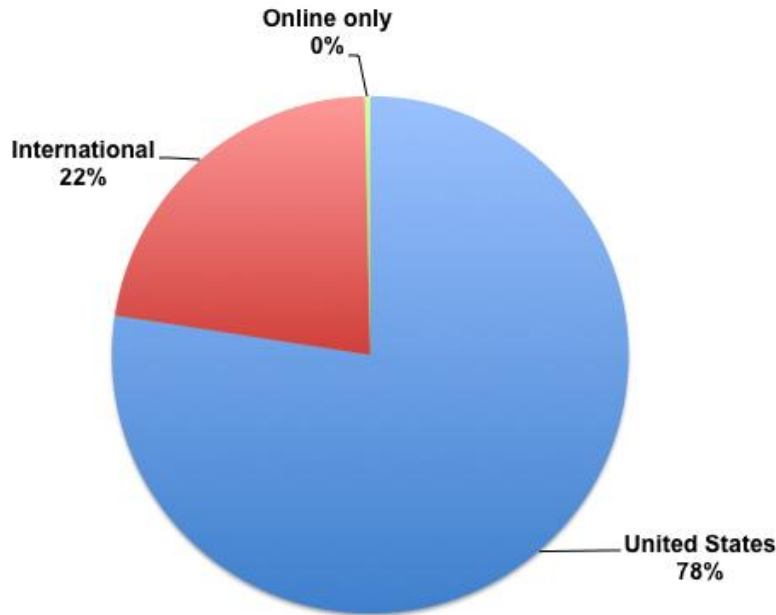

Table 17. Where is your institution primarily located? —Respondents by library type, and job function, 2019

	Academic Library		Job Function			# of Students		
	Public	Private	Admin level	Work directly with users	Library support	< 5,000	5,000 - 14,999	15,000+
United States	100%	100%	80%	78%	79%	80%	80%	74%
International	0%	0%	19%	22%	21%	19%	20%	26%
Online only	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%

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The figure below shows the regional breakdown of the 78% of respondents based in the U.S.

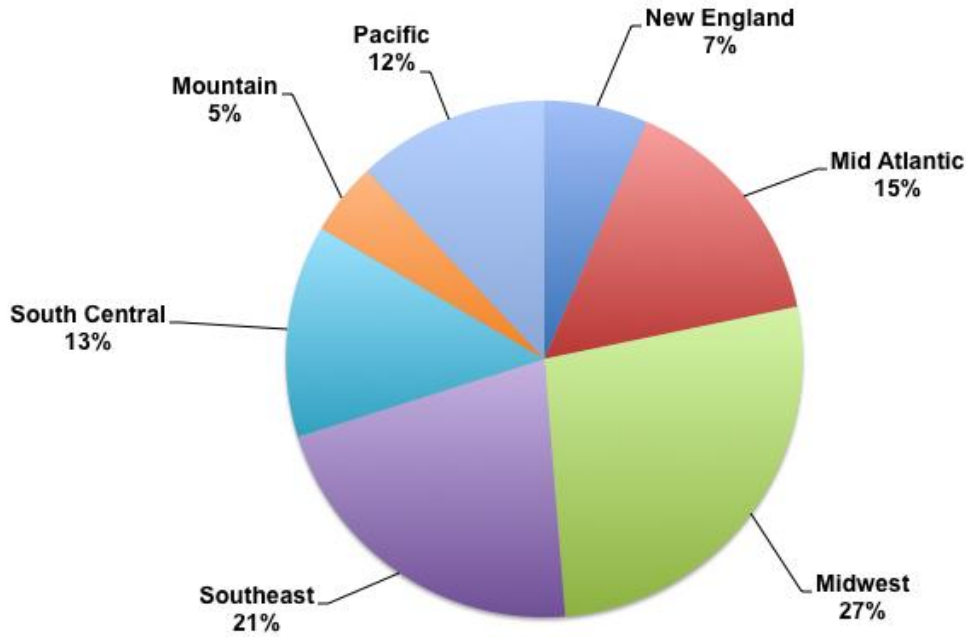**Figure 10. If US, in what state is your institution located? —U.S. respondents, 2019**

Table 18. If US, in what state is your institution located? —U.S. respondents by region, library type, and job function, 2019

	Academic Library		Job Function			# of Students		
	Public	Private	Admin level	Work directly with users	Library support	< 5,000	5,000 - 14,999	15,000+
New England	6%	8%	10%	8%	1%	10%	7%	2%
Mid Atlantic	14%	18%	8%	19%	23%	13%	26%	11%
Midwest	27%	27%	21%	30%	30%	26%	32%	26%
Southeast	19%	25%	30%	16%	18%	26%	9%	24%
South Central	16%	9%	15%	7%	16%	13%	13%	14%
Mountain	6%	3%	5%	4%	4%	3%	1%	10%
Pacific	12%	11%	11%	16%	8%	10%	12%	14%

One-third of the international respondents (22% of all respondents) are based in North America (Canada or Mexico), with 22% based in Europe, and 17% based in Australia or New Zealand.

Figure 11. If International, in what country is your institution located? —Non-U.S. respondents, 2019
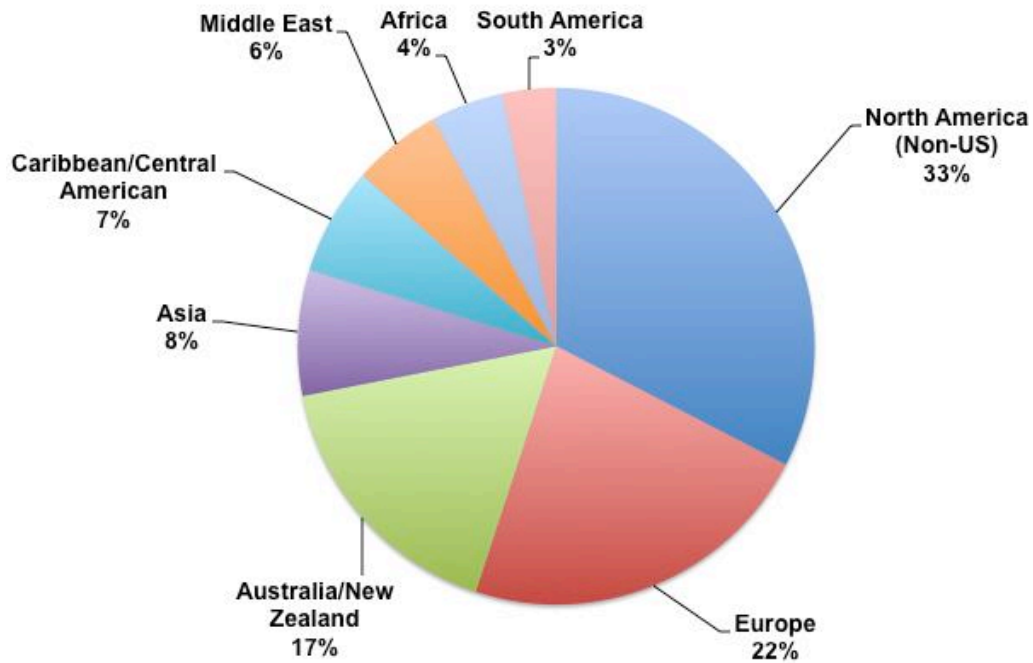
Institution Size

Academic institutions responding to our survey had a mean 11,856 students (median 7,208).

Figure 12. Approximately how many students attended your institution last term? (Please include undergraduate and graduate level students in your answer.) —All respondents, 2019
Mean # of students: 11,856/Median # of students: 7,208
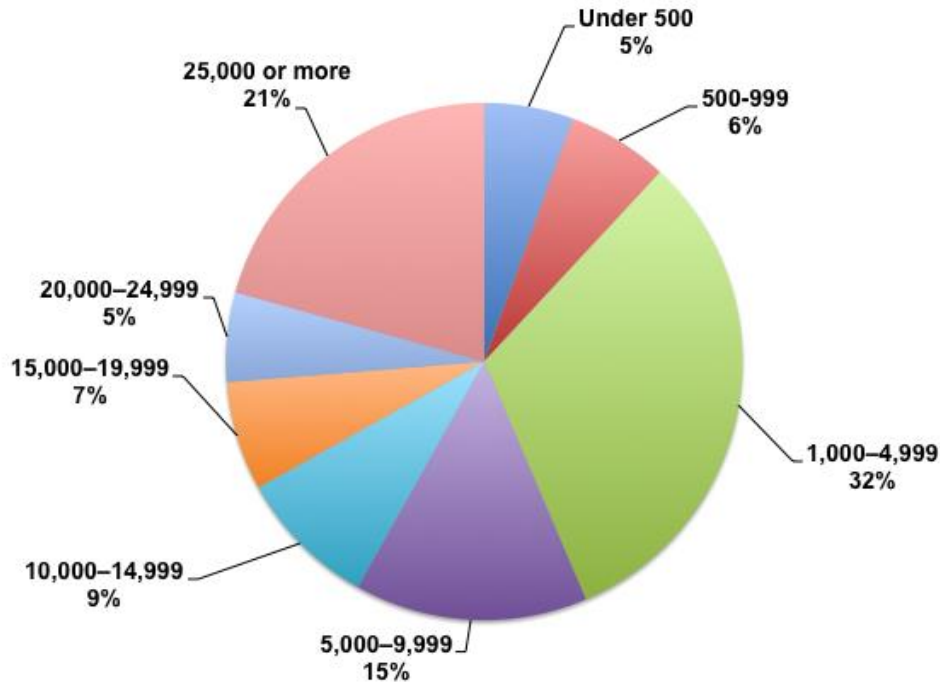
Table 19. Approximately how many students attended your institution last term? (Please include undergraduate and graduate level students in your answer.) —Respondents by region, library type, and job function, 2019

	Academic Library		Job Function		
	Public	Private	Admin level	Work directly with users	Library support
Under 500	2%	9%	11%	4%	2%
500-999	3%	11%	17%	1%	6%
1,000–4,999	21%	54%	44%	24%	30%
5,000–9,999	17%	10%	9%	19%	17%
10,000–14,999	13%	5%	7%	13%	8%
15,000–19,999	9%	5%	1%	7%	12%
20,000–24,999	10%	1%	2%	6%	6%
25,000 or more	27%	6%	11%	26%	20%
Average # students	15,301	5,844	6,777	14,098	12,606
Median # students	13,124	3,242	3,088	10,750	8,749

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Public or Private

Sixty percent of the institutions responding to our survey are public, with 40% being private.

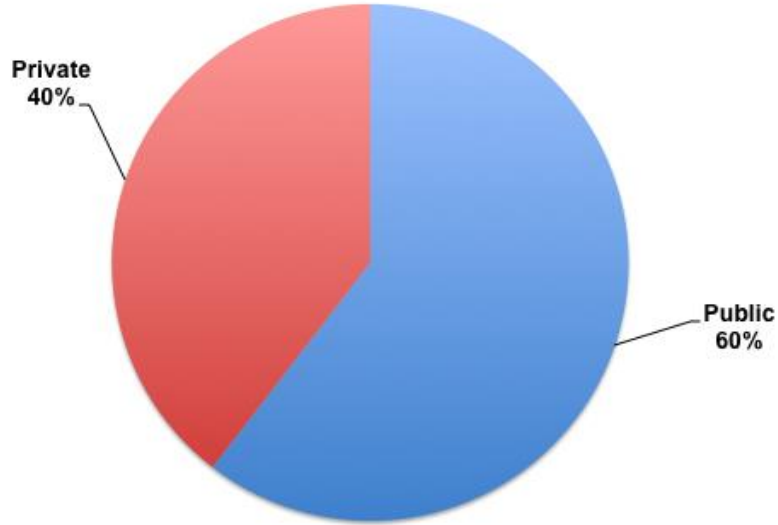**Figure 13. Is your institution public or private? —All respondents, 2019**

Table 20. Is your institution public or private? —Respondents by region and job function

	Job Function		
	Admin level	Work directly with users	Library support
Public	45%	71%	54%
Private	55%	29%	46%

Respondent Job Title

One-fourth of respondents to our survey are reference or information services librarians, while 16% are directors or assistant directors, and 12% are instructional librarians.

Figure 14. Which of the following comes closest to your job title? —All respondents, 2019
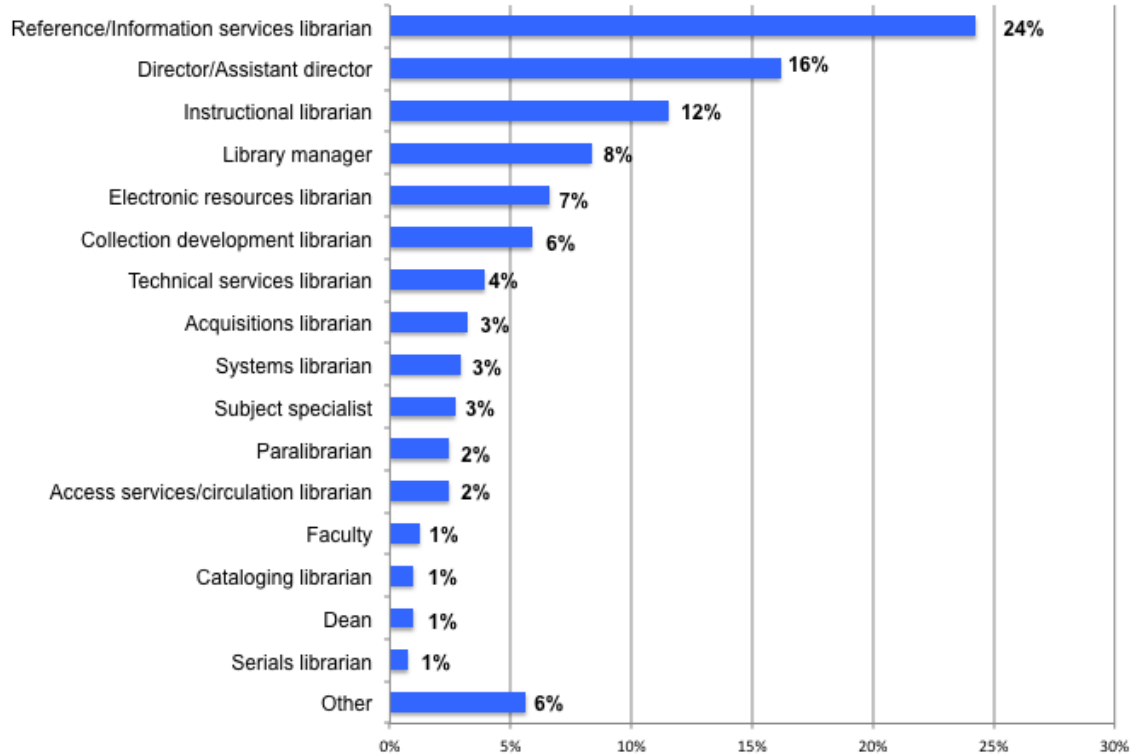
Table 21. Which of the following comes closest to your job title? —Respondents by region and library type, 2019

	Academic Library	
	Public	Private
Reference/Information services librarian	29%	15%
Director/Assistant director	14%	28%
Instructional librarian	14%	11%
Library manager	3%	7%
Electronic resources librarian	5%	8%
Collection development librarian	7%	3%
Technical services librarian	4%	5%
Acquisitions librarian	3%	4%

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	Academic Library	
	Public	Private
Systems librarian	3%	4%
Subject specialist	1%	4%
Access services/circulation librarian	3%	2%
Paralibrarian	3%	2%
Faculty	2%	1%
Dean	2%	0%
Cataloging librarian	1%	2%
Serials librarian	1%	1%
Other	5%	4%

Ninety percent of our survey respondents are involved in some way in making purchasing recommendations relative to reference materials; 38% make the final purchasing decision while 52% make recommendations about purchasing reference materials.

Figure 15. How involved are you in the recommendation or purchasing of research materials for your academic library? —All respondents, 2019

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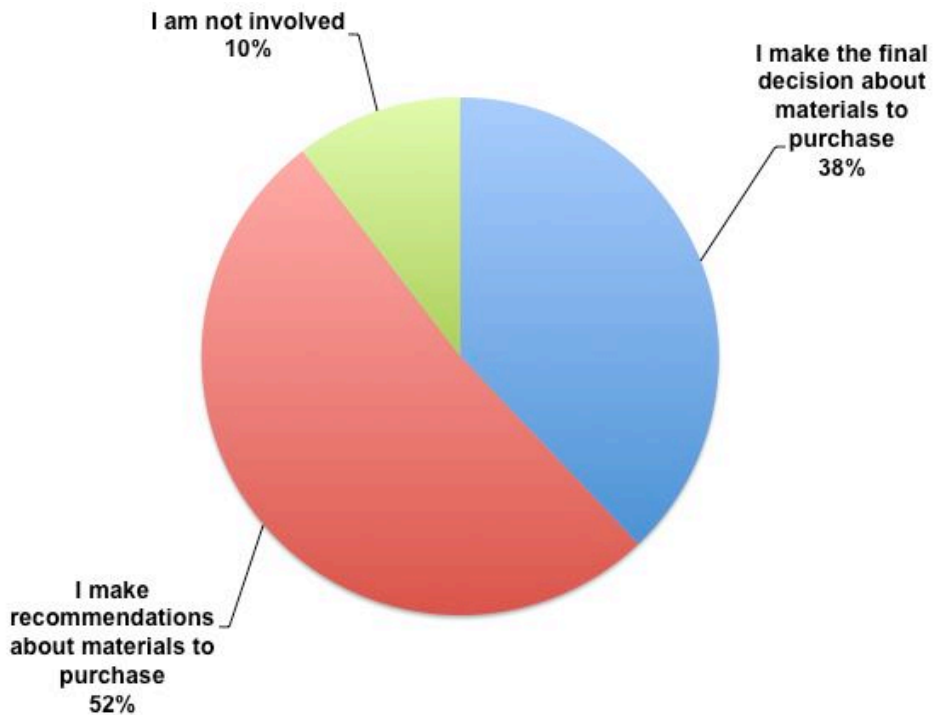
Table 22. How involved are you in the recommendation or purchasing of research materials for your academic library? —Respondents by region, library type, and job function, 2019

	Academic Library		Job Function		
	Public	Private	Admin level	Work directly with users	Library support
I make the final decision about materials to purchase	40%	36%	67%	29%	33%
I make recommendations about materials to purchase	52%	55%	30%	63%	56%
I am not involved	8%	9%	3%	8%	11%

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Methodology and Questionnaire

The survey instrument was developed jointly by *Library Journal* and ProQuest. It was emailed to a selection of U.S. and international academic librarians on February 2, with a reminder on February 12, 2019. A drawing for a $100 Amazon.com gift card was offered as incentive to reply. The study closed on February 22, 2019 with 576 responses. Results were tabulated and analyzed by *Library Journal* research.

ProQuest & *Library Journal*

Academic Collections Questionnaire

1. **How involved are you in the recommendation or purchasing of research materials for your academic library?**
   I make the final decision about materials to purchase
   I make recommendations about materials to purchase
   I am not involved

2. **How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following eight statements about academic research?**

a. **Academic discussion takes place via more channels and different formats (e.g. blogs, videos, working papers, etc.) than ever before. Library users can find it difficult to discover and use all of these sources in their own research.**

   o   Strongly agree

   o   Agree

   o   Neither agree or disagree

   o   Disagree

   o   Strongly Disagree

b. **Academic research is expanding beyond the traditional journal and monograph into new formats. Libraries must evolve their collections to account for this.**

   o   Strongly agree

   o   Agree

   o   Neither agree or disagree

   o   Disagree

   o   Strongly Disagree

c. **Different formats and content types are more appropriate than others depending on what the researcher is trying to achieve and what stage of the research cycle they are at. It is important for students and faculty to understand the pros and cons of different content types and what to use when.**

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- o   Strongly agree

- o   Agree

- o   Neither agree or disagree

- o   Disagree

- o   Strongly Disagree

d. Students often struggle to identify which information sources are accurate, reliable, and trustworthy.

- o   Strongly agree

- o   Agree

- o   Neither agree or disagree

- o   Disagree

- o   Strongly Disagree

e. It is important for students to seek a variety of viewpoints often published in different formats so they can draw their own conclusions and build critical thinking skills.

- o   Strongly agree

- o   Agree

- o   Neither agree or disagree

- o   Disagree

- o   Strongly Disagree

f. Access to a *multi-disciplinary*, multi-format research database would help library users to discover and use the most relevant and reliable content.

- o   Strongly agree

- o   Agree

- o   Neither agree or disagree

- o   Disagree

- o   Strongly Disagree

g. Access to a *discipline-specific*, multi-format research database would help library users to discover and use the most relevant and reliable content.

- o   Strongly agree

- o   Agree

- o   Neither agree or disagree

o   Disagree

o   Strongly Disagree

h. Having all of your library databases and content on one platform would simplify the administration of electronic resources at your library.

o   Strongly agree

o   Agree

o   Neither agree or disagree

o   Disagree

o   Strongly Disagree

3. Imagine you could design a multidisciplinary research database that would best meet the needs of your institution. Please describe the content types you would include and the disciplines and/or curricula it would support.

_____[OPEN ENDED]

4.   Where is your institution primarily located?
United States
International
Online only

5.   [If US] Please select the state where your institution is located from the dropdown list:
[If International] Please select the country where your institution is located from the dropdown list:

6.   Approximately how many students attended your institution last term? Please include undergraduate and graduate level students in your answer.
Under 500
500 – 999
1,000 – 4,999
5,000 – 9,999
10,000 – 14,999
15,000 – 19,999
20,000 – 24,999
25,000 or more

7.   [If in US] Is your institution public or private?
Public
Private

8.   Which of the following comes closest to your job title?
Dean
Director/Assistant director
Library manager
Access services/circulation librarian
Acquisitions librarian
Adult services librarian

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Cataloging librarian
Collection development librarian
Electronic resources librarian
Instructional librarian
Reference/Information services librarian
Serials librarian
Systems librarian
Technical services librarian
Paralibrarian
Faculty
Student
Other, please specify:_____

9. **Are you interested in being entered into a drawing to win a $100 Amazon.com gift card, if you are eligible in your area?**
Yes
No, thanks

If yes, please provide the following contact information. The winner will be notified via email and the gift card will be delivered electronically.
Name:_____
Institution:_____
Email:_____

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