

International and Area Studies (IAS) Faculty:

Are They Different?

Mohamed Hamed

ORCID: 0000-0001-6897-0829

The Middle Eastern and Near Eastern Studies Librarian

Introduction:

This study sheds light on various unique or special characteristics of the faculty in International and Area Studies (IAS) departments as they were recognized by analyzing the findings of the Ithaka faculty survey at the University of California at Berkeley.

At the end of 2018, UC Berkeley Library conducted the Ithaka survey, which was sent “to 2,748 faculty members across all disciplines, including professors, associate professors, assistant professors, lecturers, and instructors in the University. In all, 811 faculty, 30% of the total, completed the survey.”¹ Among these faculty respondents, close to 15% (106 faculty) from various international and area studies (IAS) departments completed the survey.

The entire survey data was analyzed based on various demographics such as departments, divisions, age, job title, number of years in the field, and the role. So in order to better understand if faculty in the international and area studies (IAS) have special or different characteristics than the faculty campus-wide, this study analyzed the data subset for specific questions for IAS faculty respondents (106 faculty). These respondents are from ten area studies departments in the University, including: African American Studies, French, German, Italian Studies, East Asian Languages & Cultures, Near Eastern Studies, Scandinavian Languages, Slavic Languages & Literature, South & Southeast Asian Studies, and finally, Spanish & Portuguese Studies.

In its new version, the Ithaka survey consists of 35 required questions, and for UC Berkeley, the material type module was also added to make a total of 41 required questions in the survey. Selectively, this study focused only on the questions that IAS faculty showed differences from the wider faculty at the University. This selective approach limited the number of analyzed questions to 14 questions² in five areas including discovery and access, research practices and format preferences, research dissemination and publication, the role of the library, and teaching and learning.

Study limits:

The data collected from the Ithaka survey for this study focused only on the departments that are tied to the international and area studies in the University. This means that faculty with focus on global studies or specific geographical areas in the world in other departments were not included.

In addition, IAS respondents as 15% of the total Ithaka survey respondents is a small percentage, but the data could be used to highlight the big trends for IAS faculty in the University.

The survey was conducted at the end of 2018, which meant that it did not reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the views of IAS respondents. So similar studies in the future will be useful to compare the IAS faculty research and teaching characteristics before COVID and after.

¹ - Li, Chan, et al. “UC Berkeley Library Faculty Survey 2018 Report.” *EScholarship, University of California*, 23 Sept. 2019, escholarship.org/uc/item/9p90t88d.

² - Appendix A for the list of questions of focus of this study through Ithaka survey questions

Literature review:

There are several publications on the topic of area studies in general, and its similarities with other areas or disciplines such as special collections or arts and humanities. There are also studies on specific aspects of the area studies such as collaboration, collection development, or the usage of foreign language materials through citation analysis or interlibrary-loan data analysis and more. To some extent, these are related studies as they highlight specific features or characteristics of the area studies, but the closest to the current study is the recent research report, which was published in September 2020, by Ithaka S+R³.

In its recent research, Ithaka S+R in collaboration with the Modern Language Association (MLA) and fourteen US academic institutions examined the research methods and practices of language and literature scholars in the United States. The report explores scholars' activities throughout the research lifecycle starting from identifying the research topic to publishing.

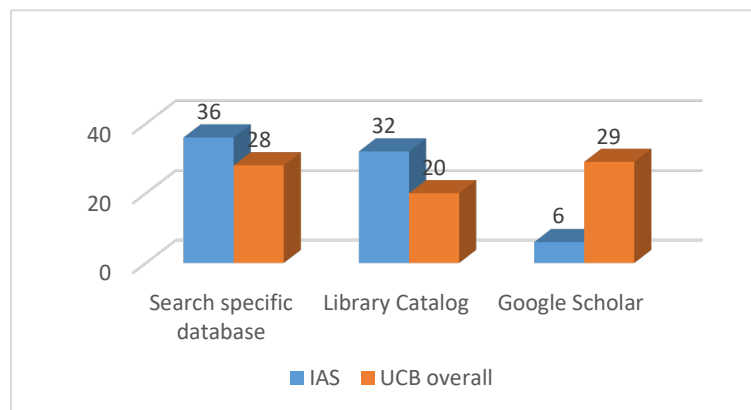
Out of 192 phone interviews conducted with scholars from the participating institutions, 40 interview transcripts were selected and analyzed as a representative sample. About three quarters (76%) of the sample were area studies scholars, where 19% were culture studies scholars, and 5% were writing studies scholars.

Because the majority of the representative sample were area studies scholars in the report, the characteristics that are highlighted through the report are largely reflecting area studies scholars, which is similar to the current study where the focus is on the international and area studies (IAS) faculty responses to the Ithaka faculty survey at Berkeley. Related findings from the report will be highlighted throughout the current study as they occur.

Survey's findings and discussion:

A. Discovery and Access:

Q1. To find new journal articles and monographs, the top choice for IAS faculty was searching a specific database. The Library catalog was the second choice, while Google Scholar came as low as 6% for IAS, however it was the top selection with 29% of the respondents, University-wide.



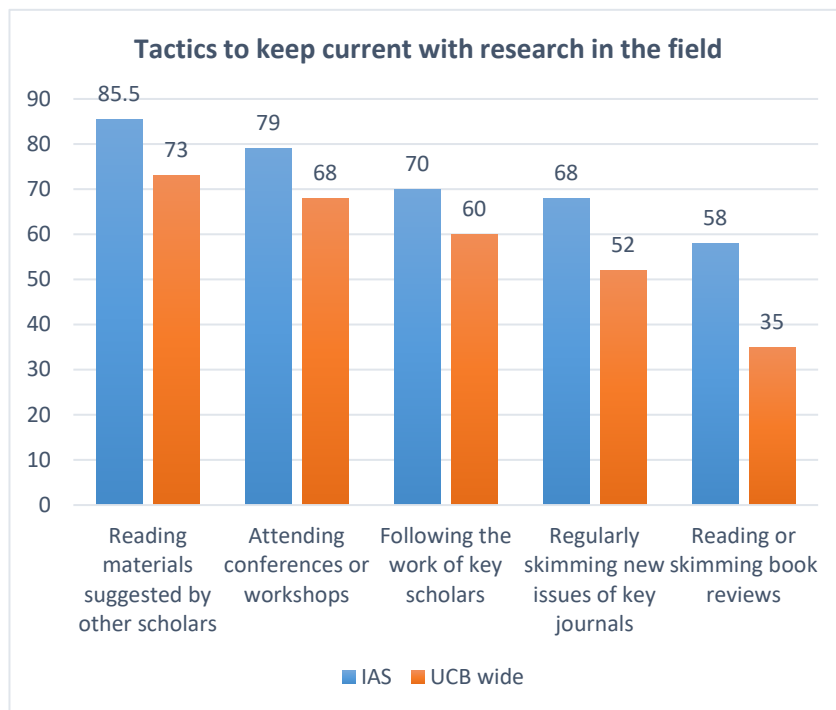
It was not clear what "database" means in this question, but respondents may have (or likely) associated the term "database" with libraries or library resources. This means that the top two sections for IAS faculty are library discovery tools. This shows that IAS faculty rely heavily on the library as the top choice to find new literature in their respected areas of interest.

Q2. Similar to the faculty University-wide, IAS faculty ranked tactics they use to keep current with research in the field, with the top choice as reading materials suggested by other scholars, followed by

³- Cooper, Danielle. "Supporting Research in Languages and Literature." *Ithaka S+R*, 22 Sept. 2020, sr.ithaka.org/publications/supporting-research-in-languages-and-literature/

attending conferences, then following works by key scholars; however, close to 60% of IAS faculty value book reviews versus 35% of the respondents University-wide.

It is clear that IAS faculty value all the listed tactics higher than other faculty in the University. I argue that this may indicate that finding information about research in IAS fields requires more effort, thus IAS faculty do all they can to keep current with research in the field. This may include obtaining information about literature published in other countries, and maybe in other languages. According to the study of the use of foreign language materials by faculty in Social Sciences at Berkeley “faculty with research interests outside the US require heavy use of foreign language materials, with 80% saying they needed these materials over 20 times in the past five years.”⁴



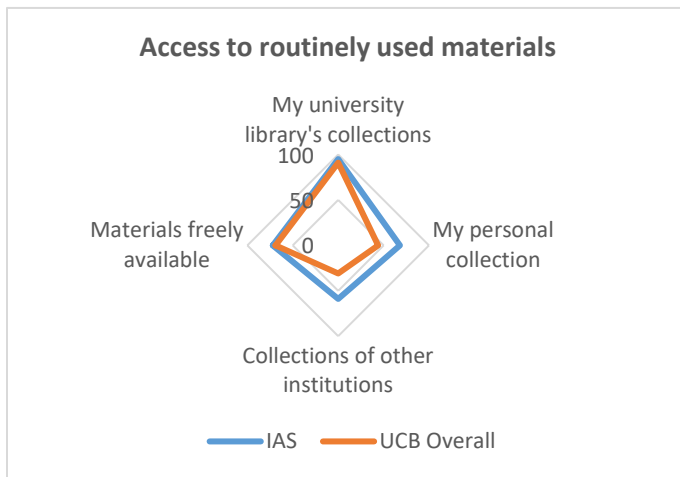
Q.5. When asked about the practice of accessing their routinely used journal articles and scholarly monographs, IAS faculty respondents agreed with faculty University-wide that the Library collections, followed by freely available materials are the top choices. However, almost 70% of the IAS faculty respondents valued their personal collections versus about 45% of the respondents University-wide.

According to the recent report published by Ithaka S+R-MLA, scholars, regardless of career stage, MLA scholars place a high value on owning print copies of books. The report lists a number of reasons for this practice, which includes⁵:

- Affection for the physical object: one of the interviewed scholars in Ithaka-MLA study said that “If there’s only one thing I love to own, it’s a book”
- Ability to annotate owned print books extensively by hand, which may not be possible either with digital copies or with library borrowed copies. Another scholar stated, “I would rank owning the book first, digital access second, and then physical library copy third.”
- Make the best use of the “opportunity to find hard-to-come-by texts published outside the United States.” This relates, to IAS scholars where some of the resources they use are not easy to obtain because they are published outside of the US, or in languages other than English.

⁴ - Edwards, Susan. “Collecting Globally, Connecting Locally.” *Library Assessment Conference Proceedings*, Sept. 2019, www.libraryassessment.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/76-Edwards-et-al-ConnectingGlobally.pdf.

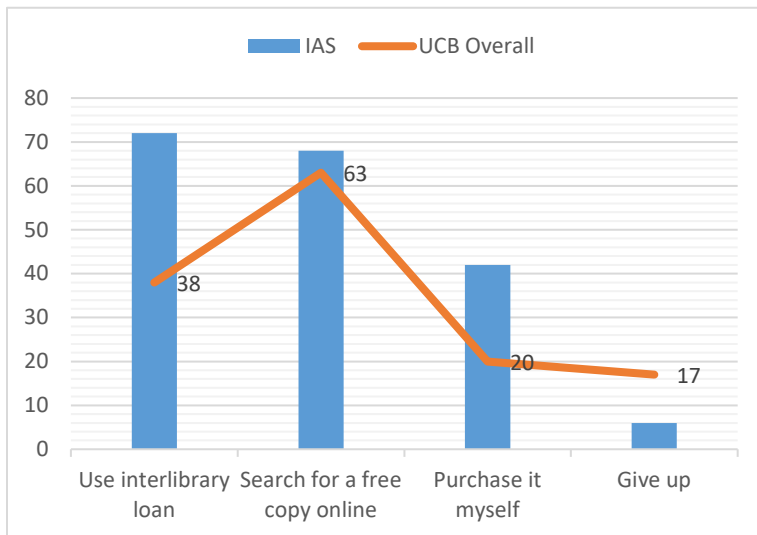
⁵ - Cooper, loc. cit.



In addition, about 60% of IAS respondents value the collections of other institutions versus a little over 30% of the faculty University-wide. IAS scholars value the collections of other institutions, as some of these collections are available to them through interlibrary loan, research visits in person or through digital access. In my opinion, libraries cannot get all the resources needed for research for IAS scholars especially for the materials published outside of the US in foreign languages. Libraries do not have the same funding, and some libraries do not have the qualified staff with

area studies knowledge and the language skills needed to acquire non-US/non-English resources.

Q. 6. When IAS faculty do not have immediate access to a journal article or a monograph, close to three quarters of IAS faculty use inter-library loan versus 38% University-wide. Again, this confirms the importance of interlibrary loan to IAS faculty as many of them think first about ILL versus other venues to access the needed article or monograph. Once more, to confirm the importance of building owned collections, 42% of IAS faculty respondents purchase materials themselves versus 20% University-wide.



In addition, both IAS and faculty University-wide value access to free online resources. It is not the top choice though for IAS as most of the IAS related resources are in print, especially the recently published materials that are published outside of the US and in foreign languages. It is also noticed that a small percentage of IAS faculty give up compared to other faculty in the University. As mentioned earlier, discovering resources related to IAS often requires big effort to find and obtain. Thus IAS faculty seek the resources they need through all

possible venues including personal networks. According to the Ithaka-MLA report, “[m]any scholars prioritize building working relationships with archivists, who can often suggest materials of interest that would not be apparent from searching catalogs or finding aids.”⁶

⁶ - Ibid.

B. Research Practices and Format Preferences:

Q. 3. Most IAS faculty respondents indicated that print monographs play a very important role in their research and teaching, while close to 65% of them also highly valued the electronic books.

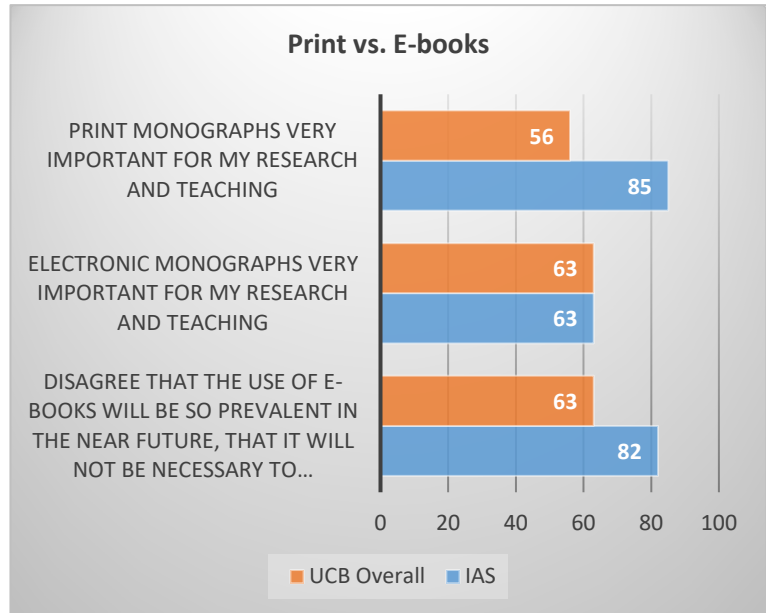
With that, most of IAS respondents disagreed that the print books will not be necessary in libraries in the near future. As stated in the introduction, this survey was conducted well before the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the UC Berkeley Library and, as at many other libraries, blocked access to print materials, leading to an increased reliance on electronic resources. One could claim that the impact of the

pandemic may change IAS faculty preference in the future. This may happen as ebooks became the safest option during the pandemic, but even with digital access arrangements such as [HathiTurst-Emergency Temporary Access Service \(ETAS\)](#), a specific library user cannot access a digital copy of a specific book through HT-ETAS unless the user's affiliated library holds a print copy of it.

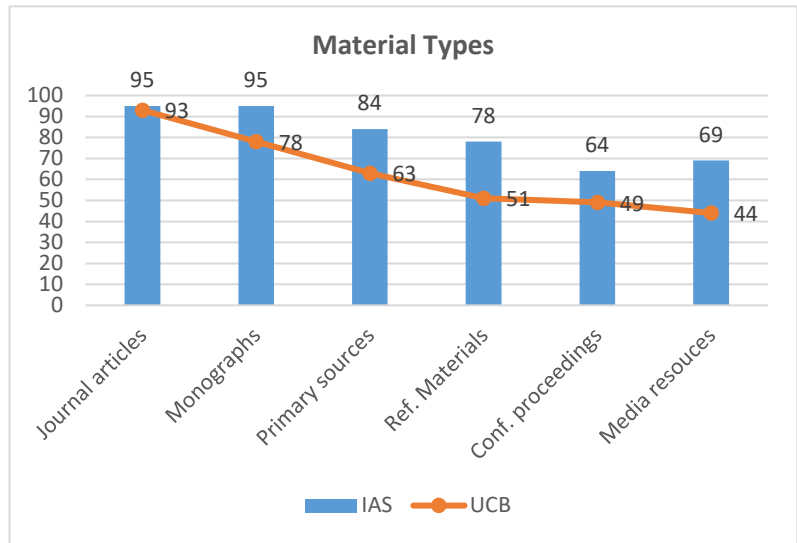
Q. 4. In this question, faculty ranked in which of the cases they prefer to use print books or e-books. Print is the preferable format for most IAS faculty as they use it for reading cover to cover in depth, reading sections in depth, comparing treatment of ideas between monographs, or skimming in whole or in part. It is worth mentioning that it is not only IAS faculty who find that reading in depth is easier in print, 83% of the faculty respondents University-wide do as well. On the other hand, IAS faculty were in favor of ebooks as books in electronic format are easier in searching for a particular topic or exploring references.

C. Material Types

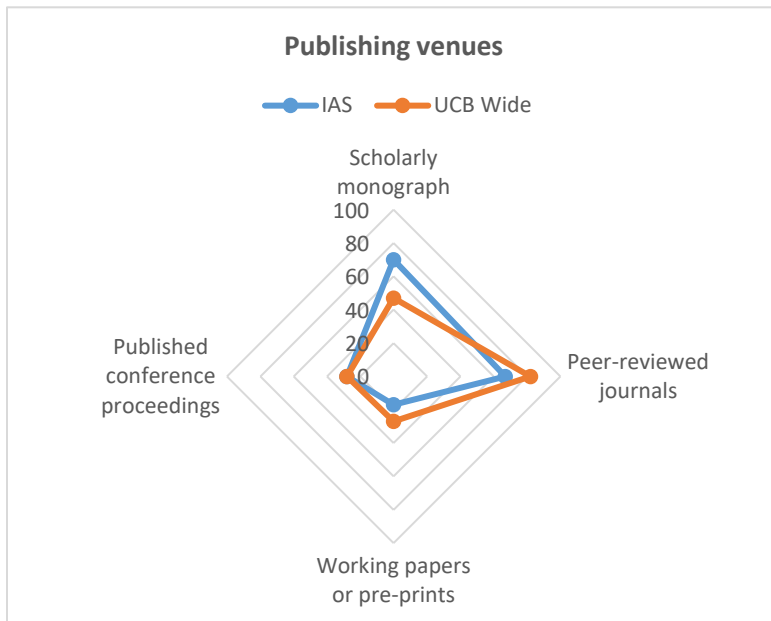
MT. 1&2. When asked about the importance of different types of scholarly materials, peer reviewed journals and scholarly monographs are still the top choices for both IAS faculty and the faculty University-wide. Similarly, primary sources are the third important material type for both sides, but it is more valued by IAS faculty respondents with 84% versus 63%.



Once more, IAS faculty respondents valued all material types higher than other faculty University-wide. Also IAS faculty highly value the importance of peer-reviewed journals and journal articles. However, as the IAS faculty have topical and regional focus, they utilize all possible resources they can access to support their research and teaching. This includes materials such as reference works, films, media and conference proceedings.



D. Research dissemination and publication:



Q. 9. Similar to faculty University-wide respondents, monographs and journal articles are the top venues of publication for IAS faculty; however, 70% of IAS faculty preferred publishing monographs versus 47% UC Berkeley wide; while 82% of faculty University-wide preferred publishing journal articles versus 67% of IAS respondents. According to the MLA-Ithaka survey, the “language and literature scholars shape their research around anticipated outputs. This means that tenure and promotion incentives—which continue to favor a narrow range of traditional, peer-reviewed outputs—strongly influence what types of

research scholars prioritize, and at what career stage they do so.”⁷ About three quarters of the faculty interviewed in the MLA-Ithaka survey were area studies faculty and the survey findings matched the IAS faculty responses in the Berkeley faculty survey.

Q. 10. When asked about the reasons for selecting specific journals to publish in, journals with high impact factor, then journals circulated widely, followed by no cost for publishing were the top factors for IAS faculty. Looking at the 10 departments analyzed in this study, most of them are included in the Arts and Humanities under the College of Letters & Science at Berkeley, where faculty are expected to publish scholarly monographs or to publish in reputable journals.

⁷ -Ibid.



No cost to publish came as an important factor for more respondents in IAS versus UC Berkeley wide. According to the faculty answers to question 18th in the survey, only 20% of IAS faculty respondents versus 53% University wide received research funding in the last five years. This may be one of the reasons behind IAS faculty care for no cost to publish.

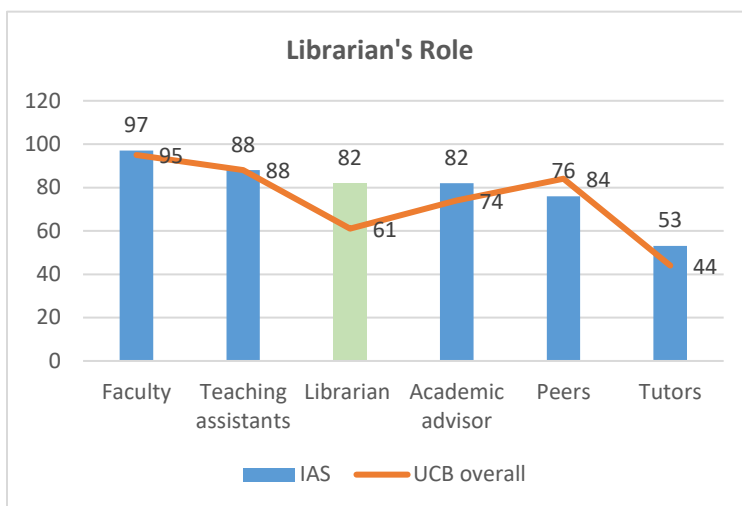
UC Berkeley and IAS faculty respondents agreed that time is an important factor for selecting a specific journal to publish in. They

also agree that no cost to read is another factor for more than 40% of the faculty respondents in both IAS and UC Berkeley wide.

More than half of the IAS faculty respondents place more value on their published articles reaching readers in developed as well as developing countries. It would not be surprising that they feel their research output about a specific area of the world should be accessible to researchers in that area.

E. Role of the Library:

Q. 25. IAS faculty respondents rate librarians as important, ranking librarians behind only the faculty themselves and their teaching assistants, both of whom serve as instructors of record in the classroom. Librarians are very/important to 82% of IAS respondents vs. 61% UC Berkeley wide, especially for their role in contributing to students' success. In addition, librarians are equally important to IAS faculty respondents as academic advisors.

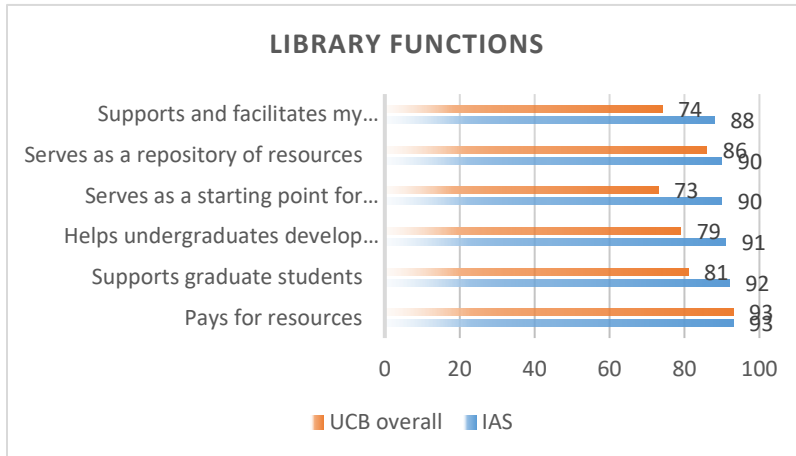


The word "librarian" is general enough to include all the library service providers. In this case, it could particularly mean the area studies librarian who works as the liaison to the IAS department. Area studies librarians curate distinctive collections and work as the mediator between the collections and the users' community. According to Carter and Whittaker, in their article on the similarities between special collections and area studies collections, they listed the following commonalities:

- "a high level of expertise in a distinguishing area
- highly focused collection development
- special handling and processing concerns (languages, fragility, format)
- a targeted but international user community (in addition to a more generalized group of local users)

- existing elements of the desired intensive liaison model
- shared history of positioning as outsiders, as siloed, or as different from the larger library system.”⁸

In my point of view, and based on the list above, one may guess that area studies librarians are important to IAS faculty due to their “special” role in supporting IAS faculty research and teaching.

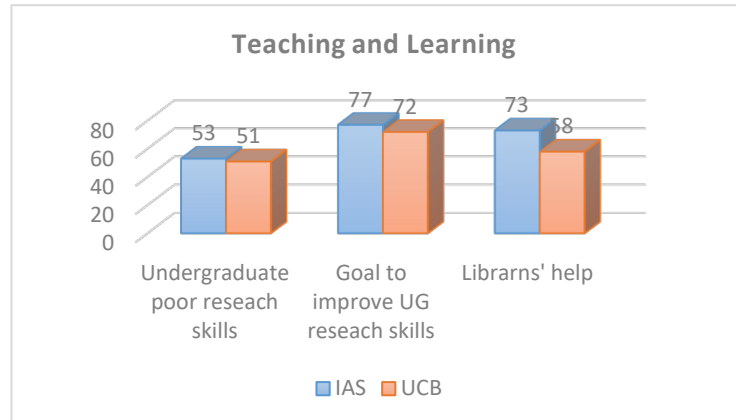


Q. 26. All the library functions are valued by faculty University-wide, but more valued by IAS faculty respondents. Not surprisingly, the Library pays for resources came as the first choice for all faculty respondents, followed by supporting students, serving as a starting point, serving as a repository of resources, supporting research activities and helping increase research productivity, in a descending order. In their answers

to this question, IAS faculty re-confirm the value of the Library for them in all aspects. With that, the Library could use the value these functions reflected in these responses to advocate for continued or additional investment from the University.

F. Teaching and Learning:

Q. 30. More than half of the faculty respondents in both IAS and UC Berkeley wide believe that their undergraduate students have poor research skills, particularly in locating and evaluating scholarly information. In response, about three quarters of faculty respondents in both groups indicated that improving undergraduate students’ research skills is an important educational goal. Also close to three quarters of the IAS faculty respondents versus about 60% of faculty respondents University-wide, indicated that librarians in the University Library contribute significantly to developing student’s research skills.



⁸ - Carter, Lisa R., and Beth M. Whittaker. “Area Studies and Special Collections: Shared Challenges, Shared Strength.” *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, vol. 15, no. 2, Mar. 2015, pp. 353–373. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1353/pla.2015.0017.

Conclusion:

International and Area Studies faculty have special characteristics that are relatively similar or close to the characteristics of the faculty University-wide, but in some cases, IAS faculty follow various research techniques and practices that are different or unique. Accordingly, when it comes to IAS faculty and their information needs, these unique characteristics, practices, types of resources, and languages should be factored in when libraries and librarians are shaping services and collections for this group.

Based on the survey findings for IAS faculty, here is a list of recommendations:

Discovery and Access:

1. Obtaining well-known disciplinary databases and making them easily accessible is useful to IAS faculty as they use them as the start point to finding new articles and monographs.
2. The library catalog is important to IAS faculty as they use it as the second important starting point. Based on that, enhancements in the library catalog in both content, discoverability and usability should help IAS faculty finding resources easier and faster.
3. IAS faculty routinely rely on the Library as well as freely available resources. They also value the collections available through other institutions as well as their personal collections. For that the connection between the library and the IAS faculty should be always active to know what is needed. In some cases, and according to agreed-upon limits, libraries may compensate IAS faculty for materials the faculty purchases during research trips.
4. IAS faculty value collections available to them through ILL at other institutions. They understand that international and foreign language collections have special characteristics and require special skills and funding support that influence the extent and the depth of the collection in libraries. For that, they rely on the ILL network for resources that they do not have immediate access to through their home institutions. Expanding the ILL network and extending the loan period for ILL materials will greatly help faculty in general and IAS faculty in particular.

Research practice and format:

5. Print books are still the most valued format for faculty in IAS, but also, they value electronic books and use them in research and teaching. They value electronic books for usability and navigation reasons, but for deep reading and analysis they value print books. Mixing between the two formats will be valued by IAS faculty, especially for books needed for teaching in assignments that require multiple or concurrent access to specific parts of the text.
6. No cost to publish was the second factor to select a specific journal to publish in, especially for IAS faculty. This could be linked to the survey finding that Faculty in IAS do not get the same level of external funding support. With that, IAS faculty could be one of the groups to target regarding funding support for publishing in open access, in particular, when payment for publishing is required.

Material Type:

7. Maintaining the Library collections in all types of resources including books, peer-reviewed journals, primary sources, conference papers, and media resources is valued by IAS faculty.

Research dissemination and publication

8. Monographs and journal articles are the top publishing venues for IAS faculty. Also, for selecting a specific journal, the high impact factor as well as no cost to publish are the top factors. IAS faculty also value if the journal is accessible in developing countries which could mean publishing in translations or in languages other than English. With that, collecting journals with high impact

factor, or supporting journals that are freely available to authors and readers is valued by faculty in IAS.

Role of the Library

9. All Library functions are valued by UC Berkeley faculty, but more valued by IAS faculty. The most obviously valued function is that the Library secures access to resources, which is not easy or not straightforward for materials in area studies or foreign languages. For that, libraries should secure adequate funding and hire staff with language expertise and area studies knowledge to provide the appropriate research support services to IAS faculty and researchers on campus.
10. In addition, Librarians are very important/important to most of the IAS faculty. Librarians help faculty in many ways, but most importantly in collection development as well as participating in developing undergraduate research skills. Librarians should be always well-connected to IAS faculty to be effective in providing the research support, where and when it is needed.

Appendix A

Survey Selected Questions for IAS

Q1. When you explore the scholarly literature to find new journal articles and monographs relevant to your research interests, how do you most often begin your process? Select one of the following:

Q2. You may employ a variety of different tactics to “keep up” with current scholarship in your field on a regular basis. Please use the scales below to rate from 10 to 1 how important each of the following methods is for staying current with new scholarship in your field. [10 = extremely important; 1 = not at all important]

Q3. Please use the 10 to 1 scales below to indicate how well each statement describes your point of view – a 10 equals “Extremely well” and a 1 equals “Not at all well.” You may pick any number on the scale. The higher the number, the better you think the statement describes your point of view. The lower the number, the less you think the statement describes your point of view. Please note: The phrase “scholarly monograph,” which appears in this question and in other questions throughout this survey, refers to a single volume book published by a scholar for an academic audience.

Q4. Below is a list of ways you may use a scholarly monograph. Please think about doing each of these things with a scholarly monograph in print format or in digital format, and use the scales below to indicate how much easier or harder it is to perform each activity in print or digital format. Please select one answer for each item.

Q5. When you think about the journal articles and scholarly monographs that you routinely use – for research as well as for teaching - how important are each of the following sources? [10 =extremely important; 1 = not at all important]

Q6. When you want a scholarly monograph or journal article that you do not have immediate access to through your college or university library’s physical or digital collections, how often do you use each of the following methods to seek access to that material?⁶⁷

Q9. [Contingent on R conducting academic research]You may have the opportunity to share the findings of your scholarly research in a variety of different formats. Please use the scales below to indicate how

often you have shared the findings of your scholarly research in each of the following ways in the past five years.

Q10. [Contingent on R conducting academic research]When it comes to influencing your decisions about journals in which to publish an article of yours, how important to you is each of the following characteristics of an academic journal? [10= extremely important; 1 = not at all important]

Q18. [Contingent on R conducting academic research]In the past five years, have you received or are you currently receiving external funding for your scholarly research from a public or government grant-making organization (such as the NSF,NIH, NEH, etc.)?

Q25. How important or unimportant are each of the following in contributing to student success at your college or university? [7 = very important; 1 = very unimportant]

Q26. How important is it to you that your college or university library provides each of the functions below or serves in the capacity listed below? [6 = extremely important; 1 = not at all important]

Q30. [R has taught any type of course in past 2 years]Please use the 10 to 1 scales below to indicate how well each statement below describes your point of view. [10 = extremely well; 1 = not at all well]

MT1. Scholars draw on a variety of different types of scholarly materials in their research. How important to your research is each of the following types of materials? [10 = extremely important; 1 = not at all important]

MT2. Some scholars use primary source materials, such as archival materials, historical newspapers, manuscripts, or images, in their teaching and research. Do you use these types of primary source materials in your teaching or research? Please select one answer.