Importance and impact of library resources and services for Faculty

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to better understand how faculty members at a public research university perceive the importance of the library resources, and services for their teaching, clinical practice or research and examine whether faculty's perceptions of library importance were different by disciplines. The findings revealed that online journals, databases, and Interlibrary loan (ILL) were considered by the majority of faculty as the most important for faculty's research. Findings are compared to faculty productivity, examining general trends and relationships between the importance and use of academic library resources and services. A positive correlation was found between the frequency of use of online journals and database and faculty productivity.

GOALS / OBJECTIVES / About UIC

Objectives

This research aims to examine faculty's perceptions of the university library programs and services, frequency of library resources and services use, and assess library impact on faculty research productivity.

About UIC

This study took place at the UIC, a large urban research university with 16 colleges (medicine, nursing, applied health sciences, dentistry, pharmacy, public health, social work, liberal arts and sciences, engineering, education, architecture, design & the arts, urban planning & public affairs, business administration, graduate college, honors college, and law). As a tire 1 research university, the University has about 4,500 faculty serving more than 33,000 undergraduate and graduate students. As of Spring 2022, among 4,500 faculty, about 65% of them are assistant, associate and full professor, and the rest are instructors, lecturers, and postdocs. About half of the faculty are from College of Medicine in Chicago, Liberal arts and sciences, and pharmacy. On average, faculty worked at UIC for 10 years. Among faculty who have records on their publication in the University's my activity (87%), their average publication including books, book chapters, conference proceeding and journals in the past
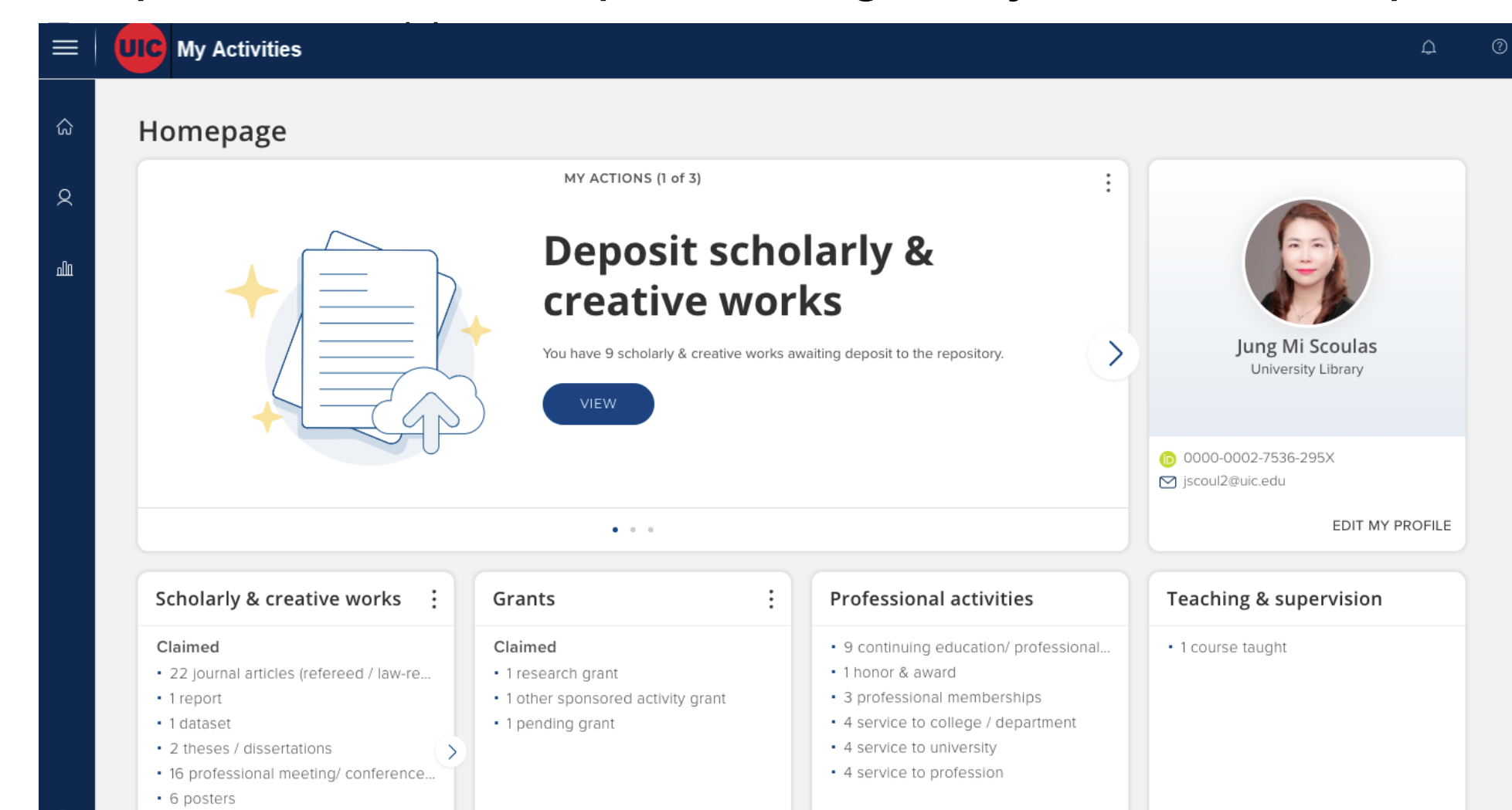
METHODS

An online survey was distributed to all faculty at the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) in Spring 2022, asking about the use and importance of library resources and services, as they relate to faculty teaching and research. Participants' demographic information was obtained in advance from the Office of Institutional Research. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the UIC (research protocol #2021-1409).

Survey instruments : An online survey was developed by the Assessment Advisory Committee to examine faculty perceptions of the importance of library resources, their use of library resources, and their perception of the library's impact on their research. Among a total of 12 questions, six questions were based on previous survey questions distributed to faculty in 2017 and 2019 and a new set of questions address topics of current interest including frequency of library use (range of library resources), potential workshop topic to gauge faculty interest, and perceptions of the library's impact on their research and scholarship success.

Data collection : The survey was distributed to about 4,500 university faculty and post-docs working at [University name redacted] February 21, 2022, closing March 25, 2022. Three reminder emails were sent to faculty who did not complete the survey in Qualtrics. A total of 557 faculty completed the survey (12% response rate).

Survey Incentives : All survey respondents were invited to enter a drawing to win one of six items valued at $100-$200 such as smart watch and wireless headphone. Contact information was destroyed after the incentives were distributed.

RESULTS

Table 1. Please rate the following in terms of importance of [University name redacted] Library support for your research or administrative responsibility (9=Extremely important, 1=Not at all, and 0=N/A)

	Very	Somewhat	Not	N/A
Print books	44.2%	24.8%	28.5%	2.6%
eBooks	70.5%	17.6%	10.9%	0.9%
Online journals	97.0%	2.1%	0.9%	-
Databases to find literature	91.6%	5.2%	2.3%	0.9%
Special collections (historical documents, archives, rare books)	28.4%	21.8%	43.0%	6.8%
Interlibrary loan (ILLiad/I-Share/document delivery)	75.8%	13.1%	9.2%	1.8%
Digital images	38.8%	23.8%	30.8%	6.6%
Assistance from a subject specialist librarian	52.1%	24.6%	20.2%	3.1%
Comprehensive literature search support	53.0%	22.6%	20.5%	3.9%

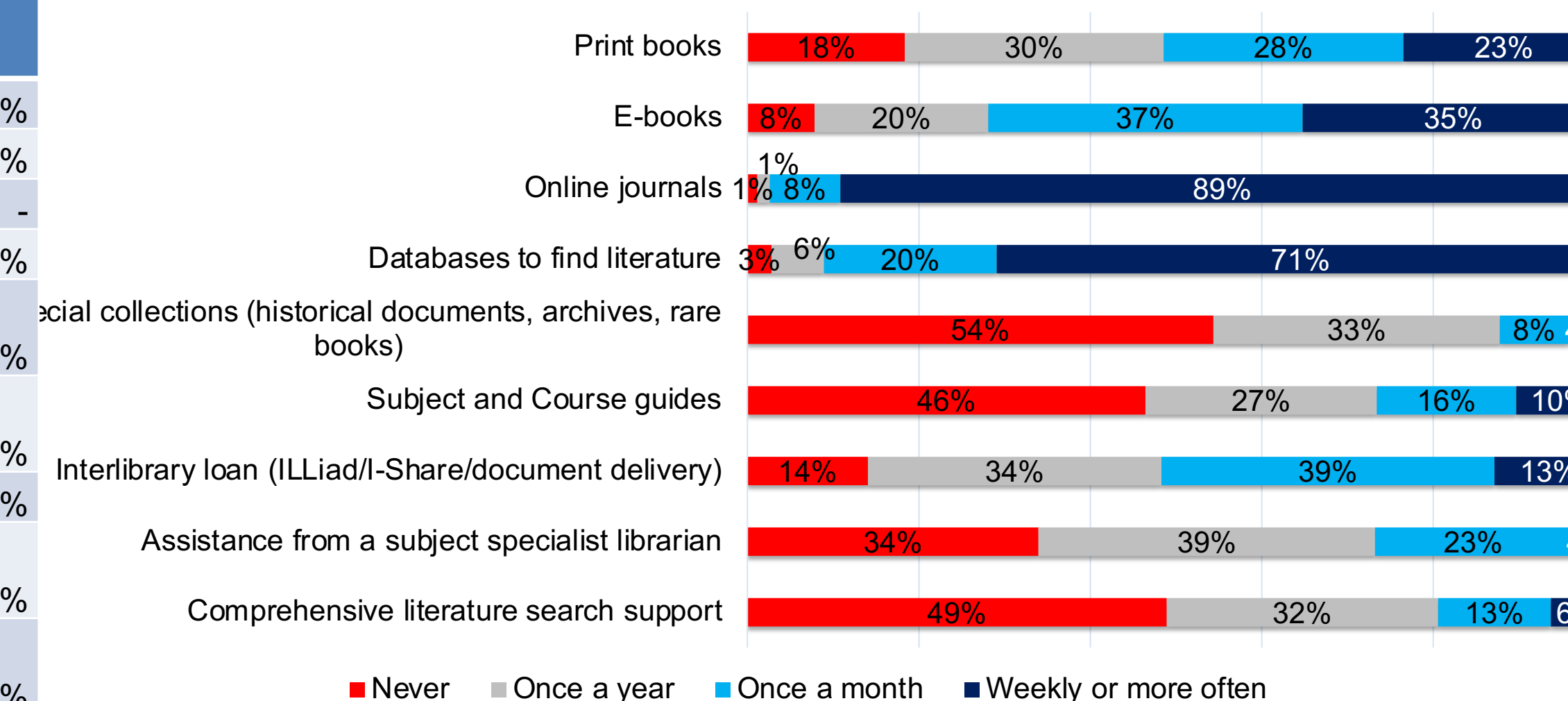Figure 1. Percentage of Library Resource and Service Use

Figure 2. Relationships between faculty's perceptions of library resources importance and their research productivity

	Print books (n=409)	E-books (n=419)	Online journals (n=431)	Databases (n=427)	Special collections (n=389)	ILL (n=419)	Digital images (n=390)	Assistance from a subject specialist librarian (n=406)	Comprehensive literature search support (n=410)
Publication (2021)	-.090	-.102*	.090	.060	-.078	.039	.076	-.018	.012
Publication (2017 to 2021)	-.082	-.095	.087	.017	-.110*	-.005	-.020	-.018	.008

Figure 3. Relationships between faculty's library resource use and their research productivity

	Print books (n=407)	E-books (n=413)	Online journals (n=418)	Databases (n=419)	Special collections	Subject and Course guides (n=400)	Interlibrary loan (n=413)	Assistance from a subject specialist librarian (n=408)	Comprehensive literature search support (n=410)
Publication (2021)	-.136**		-.095	.194**	.124*	-.055	-.099*	.076	-.014	.063
Publication (2017 to 2021)	-.162**	-.098*	.182**	.088	-.097	-.105*	.049	-.005	.031

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With respect to the relationship between productivity and the importance of the library resources for research, no library resource importance rankings (books, online journals, databases, inter-library loan) were found to be positively related to research productivity. However, there were negative correlations found between productivity and the importance of ebooks and special collections. This suggests that they are not resources utilized by the majority of faculty for research but for those that do rank them highly, they tend to publish less than other faculty. This information is confirmed when looking at the mean rankings of importance of library resources and services for research support. Faculty in the arts and humanities ranked books and special collections as important and they were also the discipline that reported the highest use of books and special collections. They likely have a smaller scholarly output, in part because their primary output is monographs (books) which are produced less frequently than journal articles. As noted in a study exploring the use of the monograph and citation patterns in the humanities, humanities scholars mainly rely on the monographs for primary and secondary sources. While articles are important to humanities research, they do not serve as a replacement for monographs.

Faculty use of the library collection and the importance of the library collection for research is highlighted through the findings of this study. The findings demonstrate a connection between faculty productivity and use of the library, where use of online journals and databases are positively correlated with faculty productivity. Journal articles, as accessed through online journals, remain important to faculty in conducting their research. At the same time, this study raised an important question, how can libraries capture the library's impact on faculty's research productivity beyond the publications? As academic libraries are pressured to demonstrate the library's impact and value for our users, it is possible to look at other outcomes such as grant submissions (accepted vs. submitted but not accepted), number of research projects in progress, number of reports and white papers deposited in institutional repository, and so on.

References

J Wolfe Thompson, "The death of the scholarly monograph in the humanities? Citation patterns in literary scholarship." *Libri* 52, no. 3 (2002): 121-136.