

2018 Ithaka Faculty Survey Results Executive Summary

Overview

In fall 2018, the University of Massachusetts Amherst administered the Ithaka S+R Faculty Survey and by all accounts it was a success: Of the 1,301 faculty members who received an invitation from Provost John McCarthy, 401 faculty members participated, for an overall response rate of 31 percent, which is five times higher than the aggregate national response rate of six percent.

The Ithaka Faculty Survey focuses on discovering how UMass faculty conduct research and how they teach, and provides insight on the types of support and resources faculty desire. The Libraries conducted this survey with the goal of understanding faculty goals and learning their perspectives on the role of the library in helping achieve those goals. The local survey results will help the Libraries make informed decisions regarding collections, programs, and services we provide to faculty, as well as assist in benchmarking faculty perceptions and experiences against those of national peers.

Findings

The overarching message from the results is that faculty believe the library is vital to what they do. Responses reinforced our understanding that faculty have a wide variety of needs, practices, and preferences when using library resources and services. The following provides several themes of statistical interest or significance:

1. Discovery and Access

- When starting a new research project, 34% of respondents start their research using a specific research database and 29% use Google Scholar.
- 90% of respondents find library subscriptions of collections extremely important.
- 62% of respondents said they often used interlibrary loan/document delivery for items not owned by UMass Amherst.
- Print versions of scholarly monographs play a very important role in research and teaching for 48% of respondents

ACTIONS & DIRECTIONS: Prioritize resources based on faculty responses in the Ithaka Survey

2. Student Success

- 55% of respondents feel that “undergraduate students have poor skills related to locating and evaluating scholarly information.”
- 68% of respondents agreed strongly that “improving my undergraduate students’ research skills related to locating and evaluating scholarly information is an important educational goal for the courses I teach.”
- 75% of respondents indicated that librarians at UMass Amherst “library help undergraduates develop research, critical analysis, and information literacy skills.”

- 52% of respondents indicate librarians are very important or important in contributing to student success at UMass Amherst.
- 51% of respondents agree very strongly that “librarians at my college or university contribute significantly to my students’ learning by helping them to find, access, and make use of a range of secondary and primary sources in their coursework.”
- Adoption of open education resources is growing, too, with 25% of respondents reporting they have used or created open textbooks, open course modules, or open video lectures in their courses.
- 69% of respondents frequently assign course texts or materials that are low or no cost. 39% prefer to assign course texts or materials that are available through the Libraries. *Yet only 6% of faculty consult with a librarian before finalizing the selection of assigned course materials and only 9% inform a librarian when a course reading list or syllabus is finalized.*

ACTIONS & DIRECTIONS: Develop a greater understanding about the content/texts that faculty members choose to assist with selection options for the curriculum; Work with faculty members to develop sustainable and scalable options for improving undergraduate and postgraduate research skills.

3. Research Dissemination and Impact

- Journals remain the most important scholarly dissemination tool with 87% of faculty sharing the findings of their scholarly research in peer-reviewed journals.
- 59% of respondents “would be happy to see the traditional subscription-based publication model replaced entirely by an open access publication system in which all scholarly research outputs would be freely available to the public.”
- 30% of respondents say they consider whether a journal makes its articles freely available online as an important factor when deciding where to publish.
- 40% of faculty have made their research publications and/or products freely available online through the institutional repository, ScholarWorks.
- 55% of faculty say they would find it valuable for the Libraries to help them understand and negotiate favorable publication contracts.
- 44% indicate it would be valuable for the Libraries to help them assess the impact of their work following publication.

ACTIONS & DIRECTIONS: Work with faculty members to develop a deeper understanding of the research and publishing lifecycle and publishing models, formats, and tools to both optimize the use of library resources and to maximize the visibility of scholarly research output; develop strategies for promoting and encouraging greater use of [ScholarWorks](#) and other options for open access publishing.

4. Data Management

- Faculty feel fairly confident in their ability to manage data, with 87% organizing it on their own computers and 54% managing it using a cloud storage service.
- 3% said the library manages or organizes their data for them.
- 33% of respondents indicate it was difficult to organize or manage data.

- 66% of faculty indicate “it is important for researchers to organize and deposit their datasets so others can attempt to reproduce their findings.”
- 46% of respondents indicated that having the Libraries provide data management would be very valuable.

ACTIONS & DIRECTIONS: Determine the Libraries' role in managing and preserving research data.