Library IT survey highlights - 2013

In May 2013, the UOIT Library conducted an online information technology survey. 859 responses were received from UOIT and 368 from Durham College. This is the summary for the Durham College segment of population.

The majority of respondents were students (84%), followed by staff (9.4%) and faculty (4.4%). The rest were library and administration staff. 91.3 percent were from the North Campus, 7.2 percent was based on the Whitby Campus and 1.5 percent identified the Pickering Learning site as their main location.
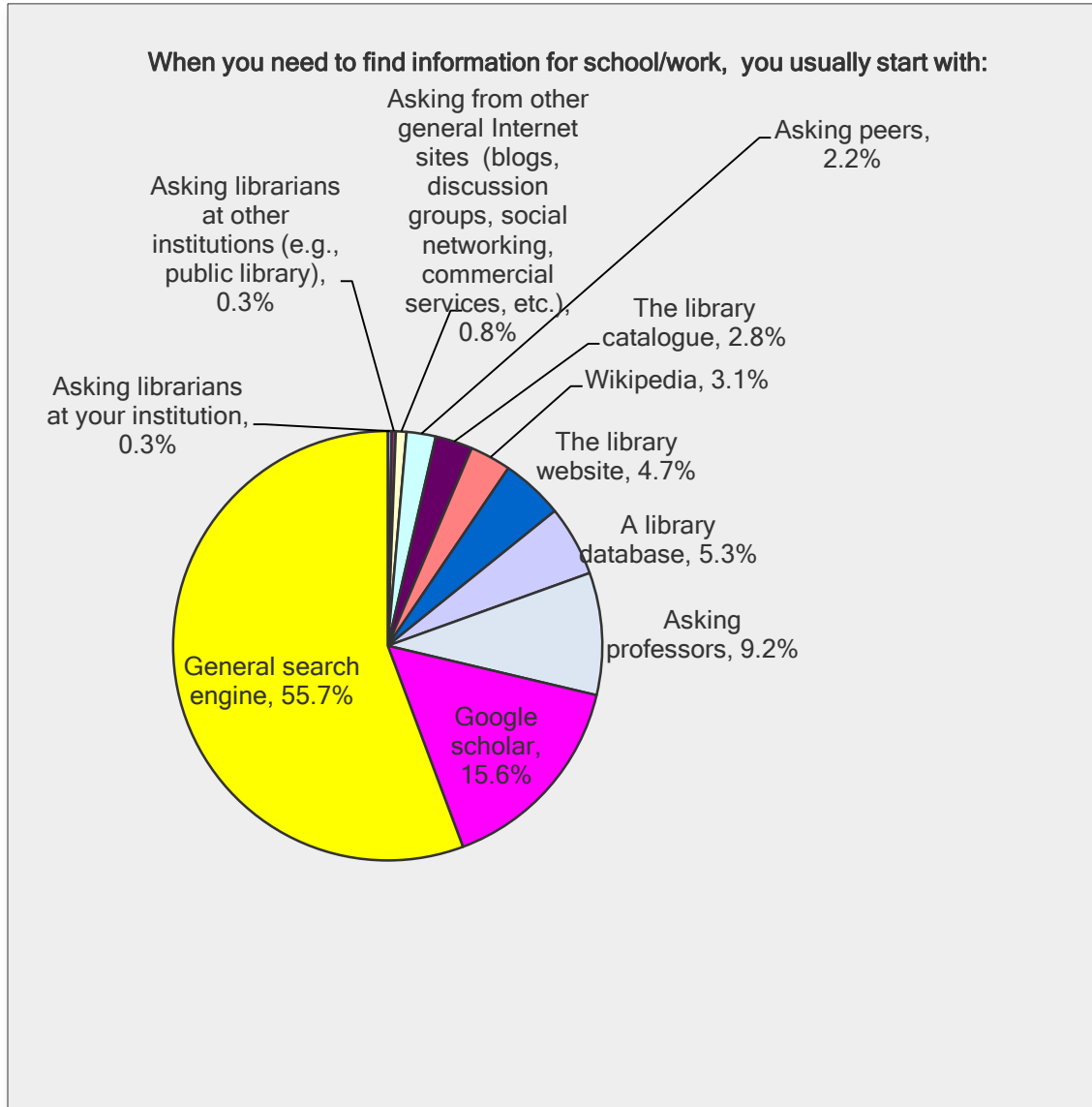
The first section of the survey asked about the use, ownership and perceived value of various technology devices in the context of teaching and learning. Mature, older technologies such as laptops, printers, scanners and copiers were used most for school and work, although smartphone use (58%) was also increasing. Tablets (17%) are still lagging in this regard, while other consumer devices such as MP3 players or standalone e-book readers are used infrequently. The devices are ranked for value in a similar the order. See Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Rating of devices

On a scale of 1-5, rate how useful these devices are, or would be (if you are not currently using them) for school/work.
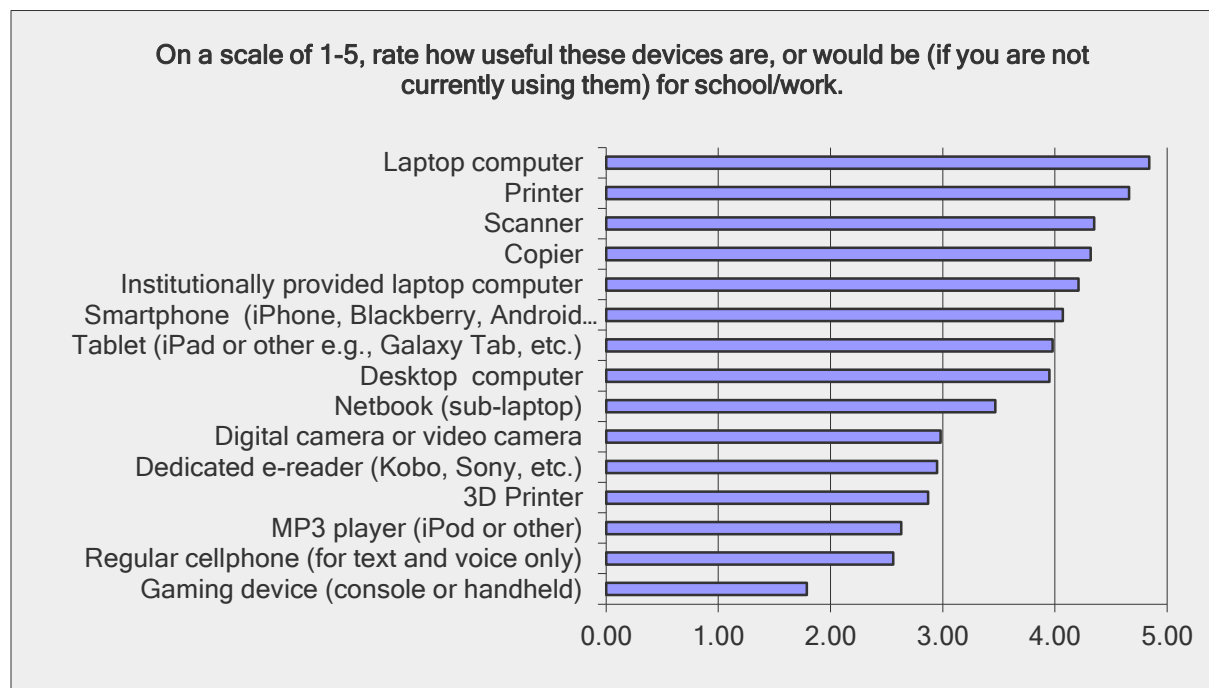
Next, users were asked about their information needs. Respondents have high expectations for school research. They either want to find everything on a topic (38% of respondents) or the most relevant items (43%). Users are mostly self-directed: they expect to find information on their own, online - although getting help from professors and librarians was also rated important. As shown in Figure 2, the library is not the starting point in this process for most users; it comes in only third behind search engines and asking professors. This is not unique to our library based on other large scale North American research studies, in fact it compares favourably.[1]

Figure 2 - Starting points for information search

When you need to find information for school/work, you usually start with:

Asking from other general Internet sites (blogs, discussion groups, social networking, commercial services, etc.), 0.8%

Asking peers, 2.2%

Asking librarians at other institutions (e.g., public library), 0.3%

Asking librarians at your institution, 0.3%

The library catalogue, 2.8%

Wikipedia, 3.1%

The library website, 4.7%

A library database, 5.3%

Asking professors, 9.2%

General search engine, 55.7%

Google scholar, 15.6%

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1 For example the latest OCLC (the largest library cooperative in the world) survey of students' perceptions reported that library web sites were selected by just 2 percent of students as the source used as the first step for an information search.

The library resources were however ranked at the top for material used for school and work, with 62 percent of respondents indicating accessing them, followed by course packs from bookstore and professors (used 59 percent of the time) and free internet resources (48 %).

The survey revealed that generally more people visit the library in person than those accessing it remotely. Accessing the network, studying (private or group work) and using the library computers were the most frequently used services. Figure 3 shows that the library databases lead the list of the most popular online tools, followed by the library research guides, and the catalogue.

Figure 3
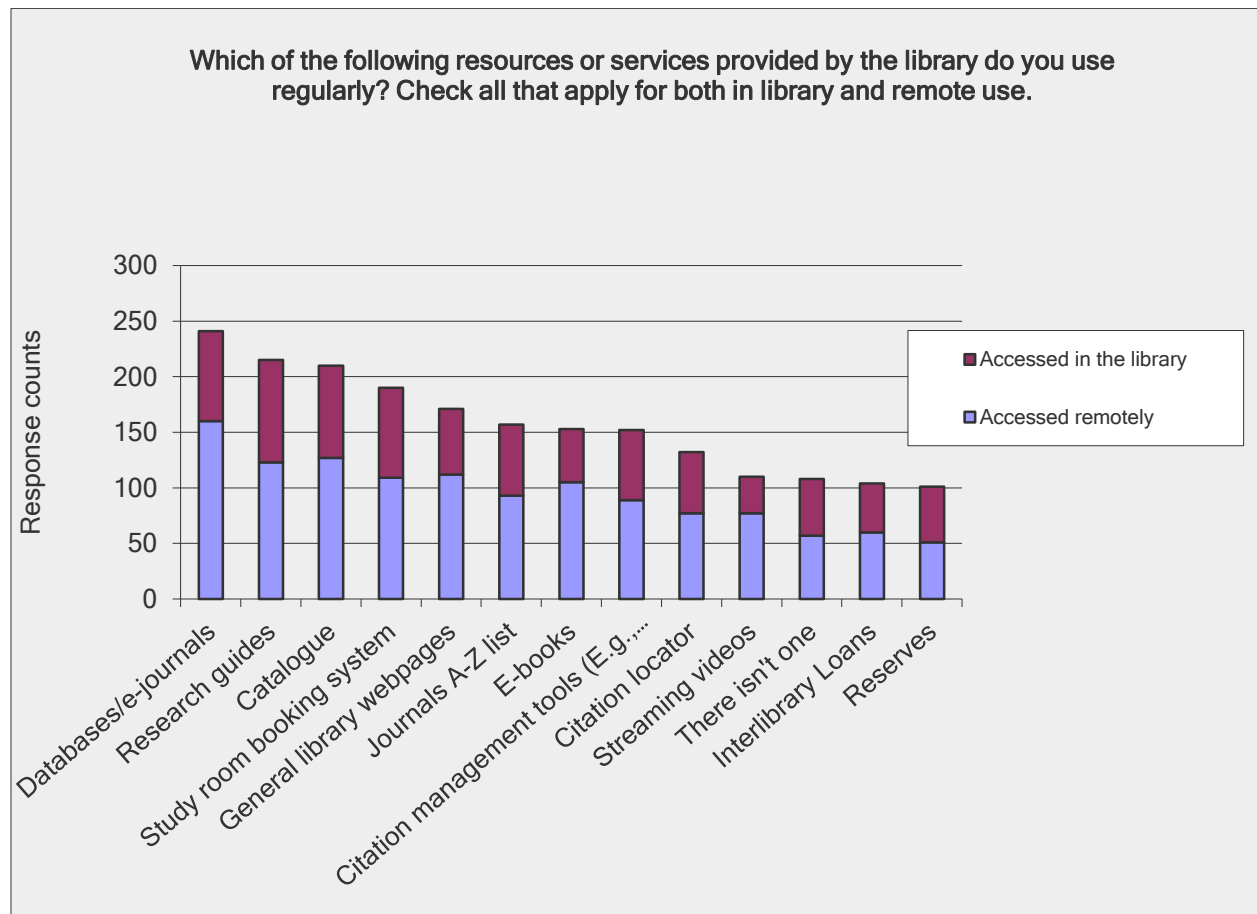
Finally, people were asked about their assessment of our online resources. These are popular tools for helping users finding what they want, although direct contact with library staff is just as important. The responses also revealed certain gaps: for example some of resources and services are not as easy to use as they should be, considering their importance to people. These findings and the detailed analysis of the entire survey will help us improving the library IT services in the coming academic year.