



MINES at Boston University

Boston University Assessment Committee

Dan Benedetti, Brendan DeRoo, Ellen Frentzen, David Fristrom, Thomas Hohenstein, Linda Plunket, Steve Smith, Konstantin Starikov, Sarah Struble

INTRODUCTION

TITLE:
MINES at Boston University

OBJECTIVE:
To examine the use of online library collections at a major research university using MINES for Libraries®, an online transaction-based survey tool developed by Brinley Franklin and Terry Plum.

BACKGROUND

From March 2014 through February 2015, the BU Libraries Assessment Committee employed a technique called MINES to survey patrons on their use of the library's online collection. For the first time, this survey allowed the library to see who was using its online collection, and why it was being used.

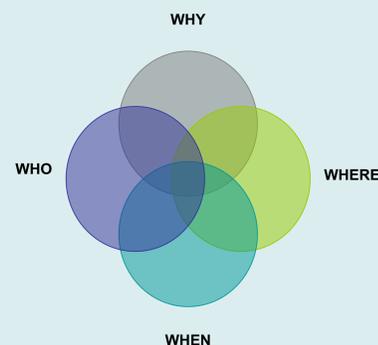
The survey results, combined with print circulation data, shows that both print and online collections are used by all the major patron groups. Surprisingly, graduate students are the largest users of the library's collection, accounting for more online sessions and more print circulation than faculty and undergraduate students combined.

PURPOSE

It is vital for a library to understand how its collection is being used. Given the ever increasing costs associated with creating and maintaining a collection, this knowledge can inform decisions on how the library should allocate its resources to best serve the needs of its patrons.

Traditionally, an academic library's "collection" was the set of published materials, such as printed books, journals, maps, scores, and the like, made available for the use of its patrons. Such a collection was relatively easy to count, and the use of such a collection could be measured by its "circulation": how many items are checked out in a given time period.

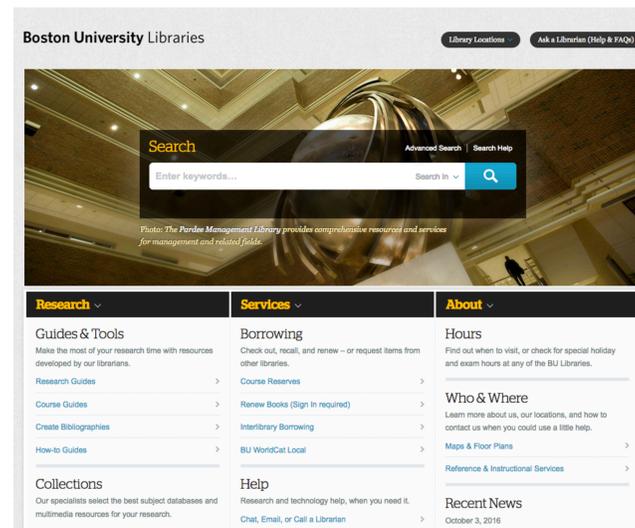
More recently, an increasing part of the library's collection has moved online. Online material now includes indexes such as PubMed and Web of Science; the full text of journals, newspapers, and other periodicals, either accessed individually or in databases such as JSTOR and LexisNexis; and ebooks. With the advent of such an online collection, the question of how to count and measure the use of library materials is less straightforward.



METHOD

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF NETWORKED ELECTRONIC SERVICES (MINES)

- ▶ Very short pop-up survey on every 100th EZproxy online session.
- ▶ Using dropdown lists and radio buttons, the survey asked patrons for their primary affiliation (school or college), their status (faculty, graduate student, etc.), their purpose in using the online material (course work, thesis or dissertation, etc.), and their location (off campus, on campus, etc.). The survey is anonymous; no additional data about the patron is captured.
- ▶ The completion rate for the survey was 94%.
- ▶ MINES can't distinguish between brief sessions used to access a single item, and lengthy sessions in which many different materials could be accessed. Therefore it doesn't give a complete picture of what is being used.

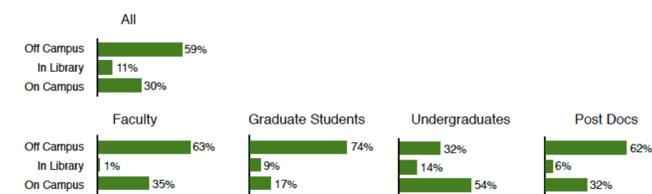


RESULTS

WHERE

WHERE ARE PATRONS WHEN THEY USE THE ONLINE LIBRARY COLLECTION

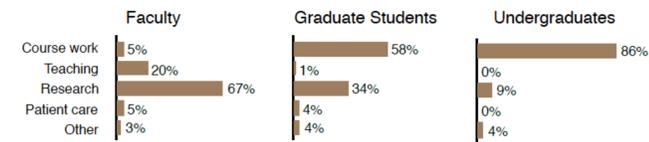
This figure shows the percent of online sessions from March 2014 through February 2015 from each location, first for all online sessions and then broken down by major patron groups.



- ▶ Most online sessions are initiated while the patrons are off campus (59%).
- ▶ Graduate students are more likely to be off campus (74%), while undergraduates are less likely to be off campus (32%).

RESULTS

WHY

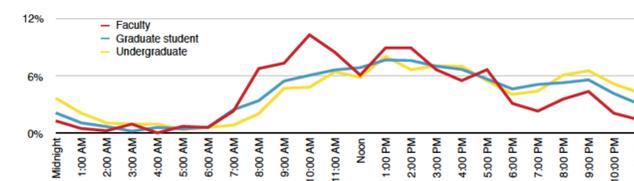


- ▶ Research is the primary reason for faculty use, and a significant reason for graduate student use.
- ▶ Of the faculty use devoted to research, 39% is devoted to sponsored (or funded) research.
- ▶ Coursework is by far the most common reason for undergraduate use of the online collection.
- ▶ Coursework is the main reason for graduate student use.
- ▶ Teaching also makes up a significant (20%) fraction of faculty use.

WHEN

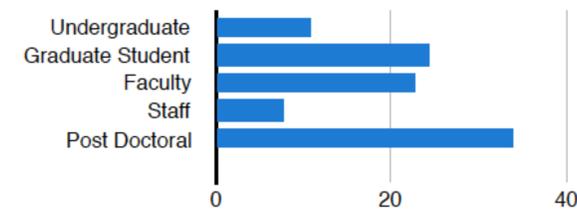
HOURLY VARIATION IN USE OF THE ONLINE LIBRARY COLLECTION

This figure shows what percent of online sessions (March 2014 through February 2015) occur in each hour, broken down by major patron groups.



- ▶ Faculty prefer to use the online collections in the morning.
- ▶ Undergraduate students and graduate students show a slight preference for using the online collections in the afternoon.

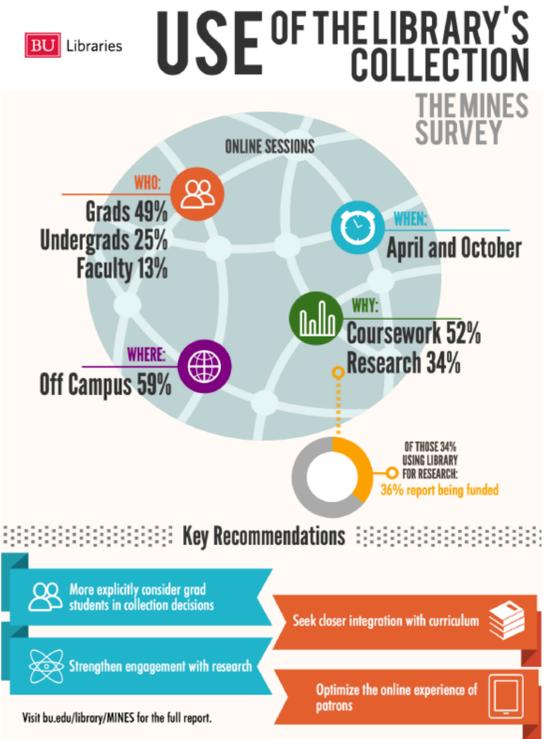
WHO



Average number of online sessions initiated in a year per person

- ▶ Graduate students use the collections the most, accounting for more online sessions and more print circulation than faculty and undergraduate students combined. When adjusted per person, however, faculty use is also very high.
- ▶ Post doctoral researchers are very heavy users of the libraries' online collections.

RESULTS



CONCLUSIONS

Based on the survey results, supplemented by data on collection usage and results from previous patron surveys, it is recommended the library should:

- Continue its e-preferred approach to collection development, supplemented by print as needed.
- More explicitly consider graduate students in its collection development and services decisions.
- Seek closer integration with the curriculum, and with course management systems.
- Strengthen its engagement with research at BU.
- Optimize the online experience of patrons.
- Conduct brief surveys of physical library visitors to learn about their use of the library and its services.
- Periodically rerun the MINES survey to track changes and answer new questions.
- For full results see <https://www.bu.edu/library/files/2015/11/2015-Use-of-Library-Collection.pdf>

For additional information please contact:
Dan Benedetti
Head, Pickering Educational Resources Library
Boston University
benededa@bu.edu