

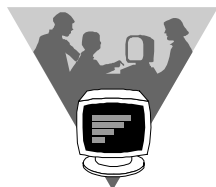
FAST FACTS

Recent Statistics from The Library Research Service

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LIBRARIAN INTERNET USE SURVEY RESULTS



In 1995, the High Plains Regional Library Service System administered an Internet Training and Use Grant for Colorado librarians. The goal of the project was to provide librarians without previous Internet experience with a cost-free, short-term account on Colorado SuperNet. Two years later, the Library Research Service conducted a survey of the grant participants to assess their present Internet usage, effectiveness of their initial and ongoing training, and the overall impact on their professional relationships with their patrons.

Surveys were sent to 184 grant recipients in early May 1997; seventy percent returned a completed survey. Eighty-six percent of the respondents continue to use the Internet. Of the 14 percent who no longer subscribe to the Internet, the main reasons given for not continuing the accounts were high Internet costs and not having enough time or help to become proficient in its use after initial training.

When asked what type of initial Internet training was most helpful to them --

- ◆ 53 percent said one to one tutoring helped them the most
- ◆ 43 percent liked classroom training.

For primary sources of continued training, the majority of librarians rely on informal help from other users, surfing/trial and error, and books and magazines.

Four out of ten grant recipients presently access the Internet two or three times a week; three out of 10 use it for one or two hours per day and one out of 10 spends more than two hours per day online. When asked how they spend their time on the 'Net, Colorado librarians use the World Wide Web (graphic-based), e-mail and ACLIN (PAC and databases) most often. Major concerns about the Internet include accuracy of information, access to objectionable material, and online traffic (slow response).

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Survey results show that librarians found the following factors very important regarding their current level of Internet use:

- ◆ 72 percent found availability of sufficient hardware and software to be very important.
- ◆ 61 percent said having the staff time to work on the Internet and become proficient is highly valued.
- ◆ 52 percent find supervisor support of their Internet use very important.
- ◆ 48 percent valued in-house computer technical expertise.

The most telling statistics retrieved from this survey are the responses to questions about the impact of librarian Internet use on service to clients (students). On average, 3 out of 10 reference questions are answered using the Internet. Four out of five feel they now have access to information sources that were not otherwise available. Three out of four respondents say access to more current information is a positive impact for clients. Also highly rated were having the ability to communicate with colleagues (e-mail, listservs), and obtaining information free or at reduced cost. Consequently, librarians feel their clients' perceptions of their professional role have improved since they began to use the Internet as a public service tool.

We asked respondents to provide one Internet success story. Out of the

many wonderful stories received, here are three of our favorites:

“Our first grade students were very excited about a newly discovered frog that was thought to be the world’s smallest. They had read about it in their weekly science magazine. We searched on the Internet and found additional information as well as color pictures (which they could enlarge for details) of the frog. They noticed that the basic information online was identical to their original information. This was an ideal introductory experience for them - they went on to learn more about frogs and have been back many times to utilize the Internet.”

“The World Flight 1997 with Linda Finch has been a great success in the lower grades 2-6th. Because of the daily updates they kept up with this world flight and they got to see how the Internet works. There is a large bulletin board in the front of our main entry way where her flight was recorded on the parts of the world she was flying. A great help with geography.”

“A teacher’s daughter who was expecting twins found out that one of the twins was having heart trouble and would either need open heart surgery or a heart transplant. This teacher was able to tap into all sorts of different sources - doctors, parents who’d gone through it - and help her daughter determine which method to go with. The baby was put on the transplant list while still in the womb.”