FAST FACTS

RECENT STATISTICS FROM THE LIBRARY RESEARCH SERVICE

By Don Dickenson

As computers and digital technologies continue to play a greater role in the lives of college students and faculty, the ways in which these two groups utilize their academic libraries will certainly continue to change. In order to provide insight into the nature of academic library usage, the 2005 Colorado Academic Library Impact Study asked undergraduate students and faculty from nine Colorado colleges and universities about their experiences and attitudes relating to their institutions' libraries. Students and faculty members were asked to estimate what proportion of their time using library resources was spent at their college or university libraries, and what proportion was spent accessing library resources remotely from other locations.

Undergraduate Students

Among responding undergraduates, usage was nearly evenly divided between onsite visits and remote access. Students estimated that 53 percent of their time was spent using resources and services at their college or university libraries, while 47 percent of the time they opted for remote library access (Chart 1).

Chart 1: Of the time spent using college or university library resources: (total must equal 100%)

Percentage of time spent at the library: 53%

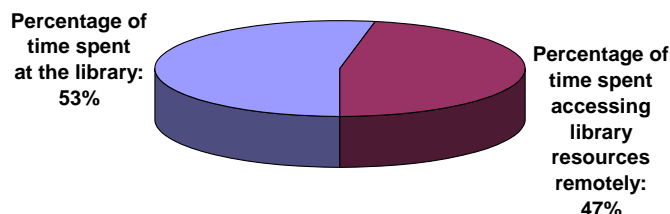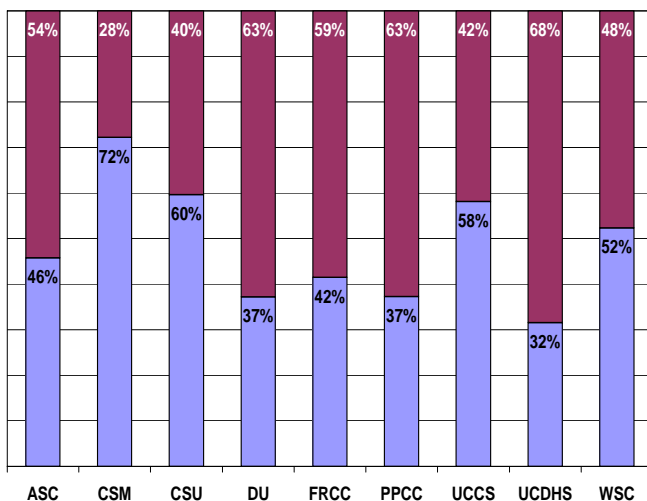Percentage of time spent accessing library resources remotely: 47%

Chart 2: Of the time spent using college or university library resources: (total must equal 100%)

■ Percentage of time spent accessing library resources remotely:
■ Percentage of time spent at the library:

	ASC	CSM	CSU	DU	FRCC	PPCC	UCCS	UCDHS	WSC
Remote	54%	28%	40%	63%	59%	63%	42%	68%	48%
Library	46%	72%	60%	37%	42%	37%	58%	32%	52%

Undergraduates from the Colorado School of Mines estimated that when using library resources, they spent nearly three-quarters (72%) of their time at the library, the highest percentage of estimated onsite usage among the participating institutions. Other schools with higher than average percentages for onsite student usage included Colorado State University (60%), and the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (58%) (See Chart 2).

When asked to identify the most important reasons for using their school's library, the two top factors – quiet space for study and the availability of computers – related directly to onsite library use. Additionally, three of every four students surveyed (75%) indicated that they had used print resources from their library during the past year.

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Students from the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center reported the highest proportion of remote library access (68%), followed by the University of Denver (63%) and Pikes Peak Community College (63%). When asked about how they had used their library's website, two services far outpaced all others: searching the library's home catalog (cited by 79% of all respondents) and searching electronically for journal articles using online databases (67%).

Faculty

It appears that faculty members take greater advantage of remote library access than their undergraduate students. When asked to estimate the proportion of time spent accessing library resources remotely and onsite (at the library), instructors reported accessing library resources remotely 71 percent of the time (Chart 3) – compared with 47 percent for undergraduates.

Chart 3: Of the time spent utilizing college or university library's resources: (total must equal 100%)
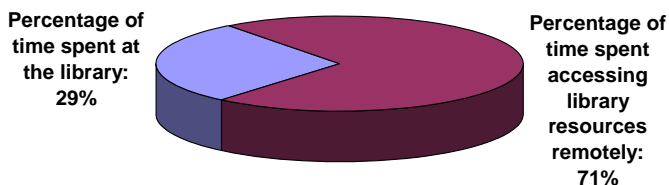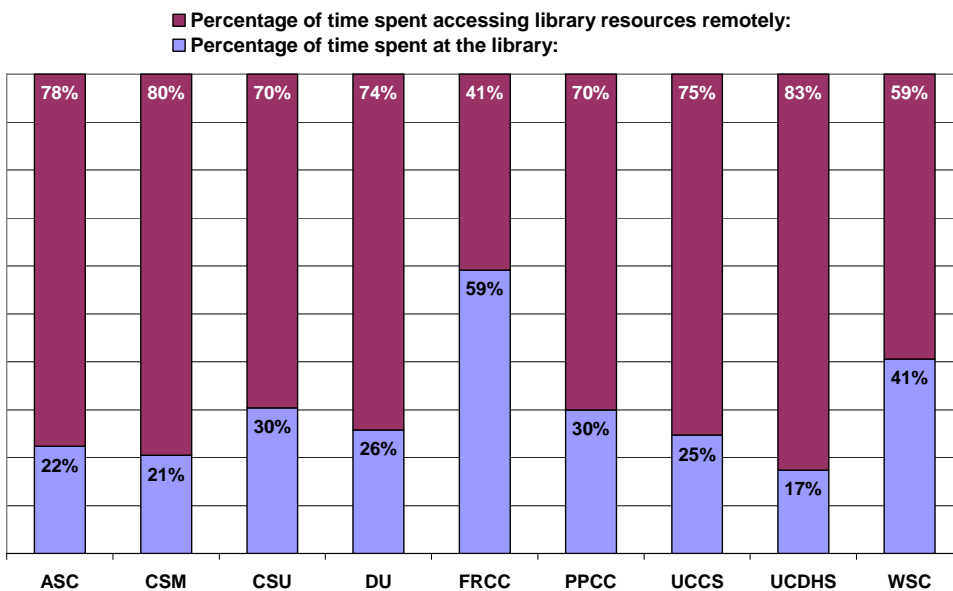
Percentage of time spent at the library: 29%

Percentage of time spent accessing library resources remotely: 71%

Chart 4: Of the time spent utilizing college or university library's resources: (total must equal 100%)

■ Percentage of time spent accessing library resources remotely:
■ Percentage of time spent at the library:

School	Remote	At library
ASC	78%	22%
CSM	80%	21%
CSU	70%	30%
DU	74%	26%
FRCC	41%	59%
PPCC	70%	30%
UCCS	75%	25%
UCDHS	83%	17%
WSC	59%	41%

Faculty from eight of the nine participating schools estimated that when they used library resources, they spent the majority of their time accessing these resources from somewhere other than the library. Instructors from the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center reported that 83 percent of their library time was in the form of remote access, while faculty members from the Colorado School of Mines had the second highest proportion of remote usage at 80 percent. Front Range Community College was the only participating school from which faculty reported that spending more time at the library than accessing resources from other locations. (See Chart 4.)

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While the relatively even split between remote and onsite library use for undergraduates is consistent with other student usage patterns observed in the study, faculty usage patterns may be more complex. While a greater percentage of surveyed instructors indicated that they use print materials than electronic resources, they also report spending a much greater proportion of their time accessing library resources remotely than at the library. This suggests that faculty utilize remote access in support of their research activities – regardless of format – to a much greater degree than undergraduates.

This study's survey results suggest that while electronic resources – including remote access – have become integral to academic intellectual pursuits, services and facilities available only at the library – including access to print materials and study areas – are still regarded as being vital for successful scholarship.

Source: Don Dickenson, *How Academic Libraries Help Faculty Teach and Students Learn: the Colorado Academic Library Impact Study*, a CLOSER LOOK report, February 2006. Available online at: http://www.lrs.org/documents/academic/ALIS_final.pdf.

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