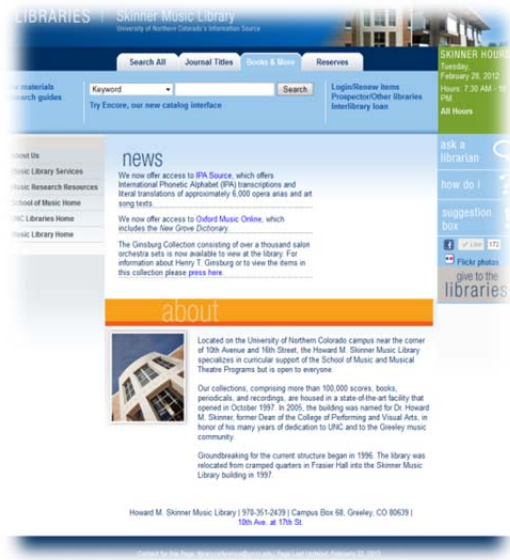
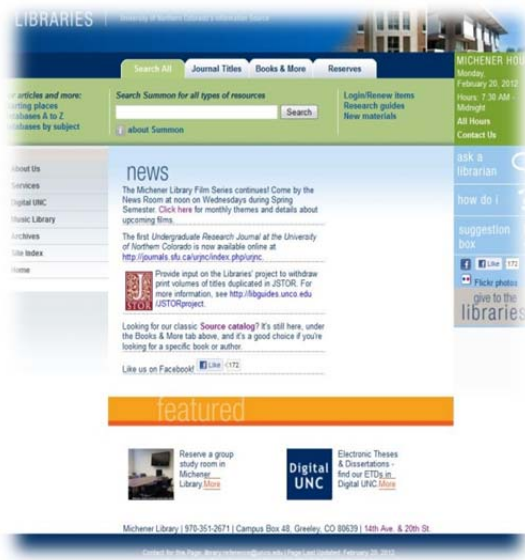


University Libraries Homepage Usage Study: 2012 Library User Survey

University Libraries Assessment Committee

2011/12 Report



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Introduction

At the beginning of the 2011-12 academic year, the University Libraries (UL) launched two new tools, Encore and Summon, which prompted changes to the Libraries' homepages.

After six months of use, the University Libraries Assessment Committee sought to examine patron use of the new tools along with use of the Libraries' homepages in general. The purpose of the **University Libraries Homepage Usage Study: 2012 Library User Survey** was to determine which features UL patrons, including students, faculty, staff, and community members, found most useful on the UL and Skinner homepages and to gather their comments regarding overall usability, labeling, and how they perceived those links.

Method

The committee distributed a two-sided paper survey instrument to patrons of the two campus libraries. The instrument included a screenshot image of the respective library homepage. On Side A, the respondent was invited to "circle the three things you use most and tell us why". On Side B, the respondent was invited to circle and provide commentary on three links that were never used. Customized surveys were distributed at both Michener and Skinner over a five-day period in late March and early April 2012 (Figure 1, 2). The survey distributed at Michener

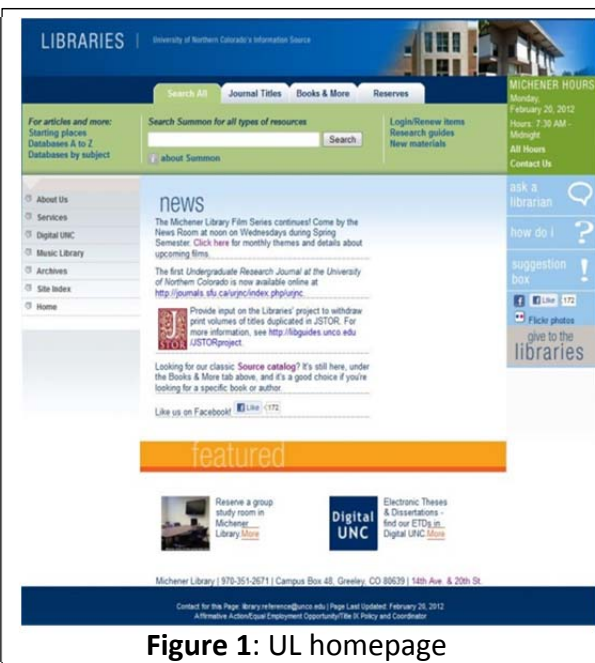


Figure 1: UL homepage

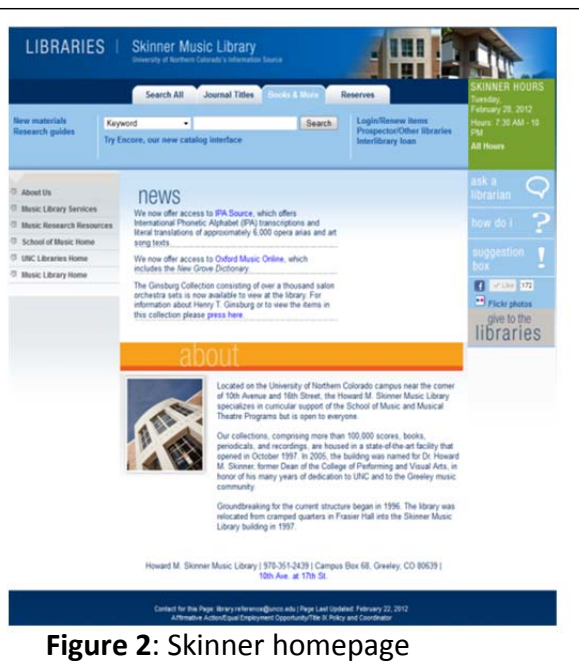


Figure 2: Skinner homepage

displayed the default UL homepage which may be found at library.unco.edu and is also the image seen when patrons link to the UL from UNC's website, including the student portal. Surveys distributed in Skinner used the image of that library's default homepage, which is designed to meet the needs of Music students who comprise the majority of patrons at Skinner. The homepage for both libraries provides four tabs along the top of the page: *Search All* (Summon), *Journal Titles* (Journal A–Z list), *Books & More* (Millennium catalog), and *Reserves*. However, each features a different default search box: UL provides *Search All*, the *Summon* single-search box, while Skinner's page features the *Books & More* online catalog search box,

including a pull-down menu. The majority of links presented on the pages are the same. Table 1 lists key links including those unique to each homepage.

| UL Links | Skinner Links |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Archives | Books & More [<i>Default tab</i>] |
| Books & More | Encore |
| Databases A to Z | Interlibrary loan |
| Databases by subject | Music Library Home |
| Home | Music Library Services |
| Music Library | Music Research Resources |
| Digital UNC | Prospector/Other libraries |
| Prospector | School of Music Home |
| Search All (Summon) [<i>Default tab</i>] | Search All (Summon) |
| Services | UNC Libraries Home |
| Site Index | |
| Starting places | |

Table 1: List of key links on UL and Skinner homepages

Both pages include a customized *News* section highlighting selected resources. *News* is a dynamic section of the homepage for both libraries, so the news appearing on the survey instrument was not necessarily the same news respondents see when visiting the live homepages.

Two strategies were used to improve the participation rate: (i) student employees were recruited to assist in the distribution of surveys, and (ii) the choice of candy or a healthy treat was offered to participants. Student employees assisted with entering data from completed surveys into MS Excel spreadsheets, and cross-tabulations were conducted with MS Access.

The two survey instruments are reproduced in Appendix A of this report.

Results & Analysis

Demographics

Minimal demographic information was requested. Respondents were asked to indicate their "*Major or Field of study*" on a single line on the survey (Appendix A). The responses to this question were interpreted and translated into the standardized language for program descriptions used in the *UNC Catalog*. The college that administers a program was entered as another data item. For example, a response reporting a major of "math ed" became a mathematics major with a "teaching" emphasis and was assigned to the College of Natural and Health Sciences. Respondents were also asked to indicate academic status from a checklist: freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate student, faculty, staff and other.

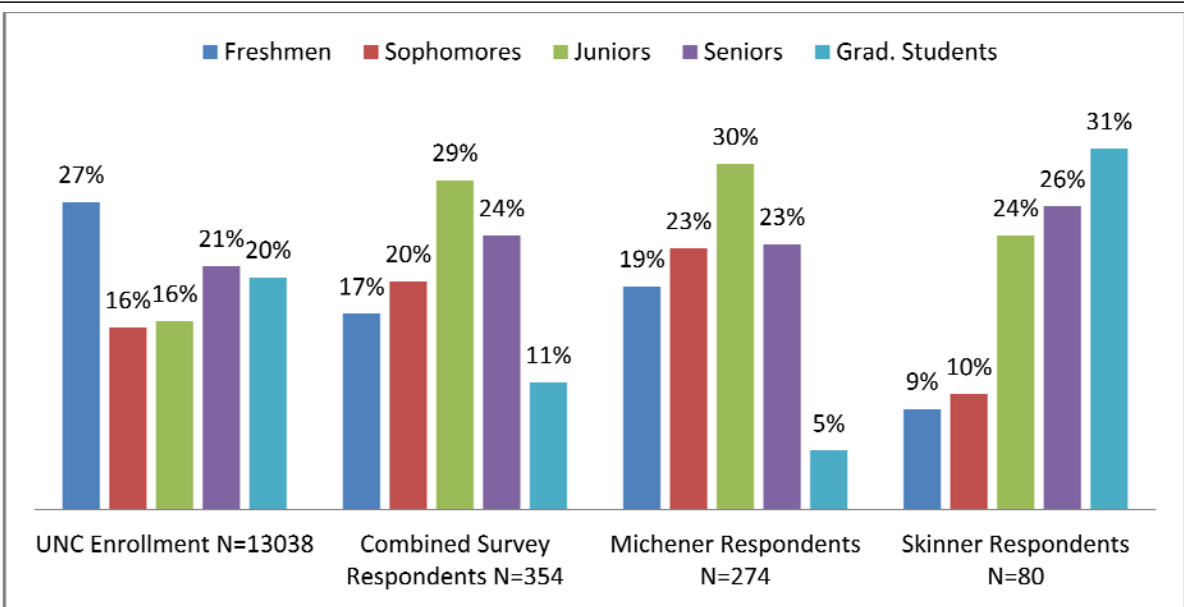


Figure 3: Survey Demographics by Percent of Status (student respondents)

During the five-day survey period Michener patrons completed 289 surveys, and Skinner patrons completed 90. Non-students (faculty, staff, community users, others, and those who did not indicate status) made up less than 8% of respondents; therefore, this demographic analysis focuses on the student population: undergraduate and graduate students. Figure 3 compares the demographics of student participants to the demographics of the UNC student body generally. First year students were underrepresented in the total dataset, while sophomores and juniors were overrepresented. The Skinner dataset overrepresented upper-division and graduate students. The 379 total respondents represented 43 areas of study, with Music majors overrepresented because of the separate survey distributed in Skinner. For that reason, PVA is overrepresented was the total dataset by college (Figure 4).

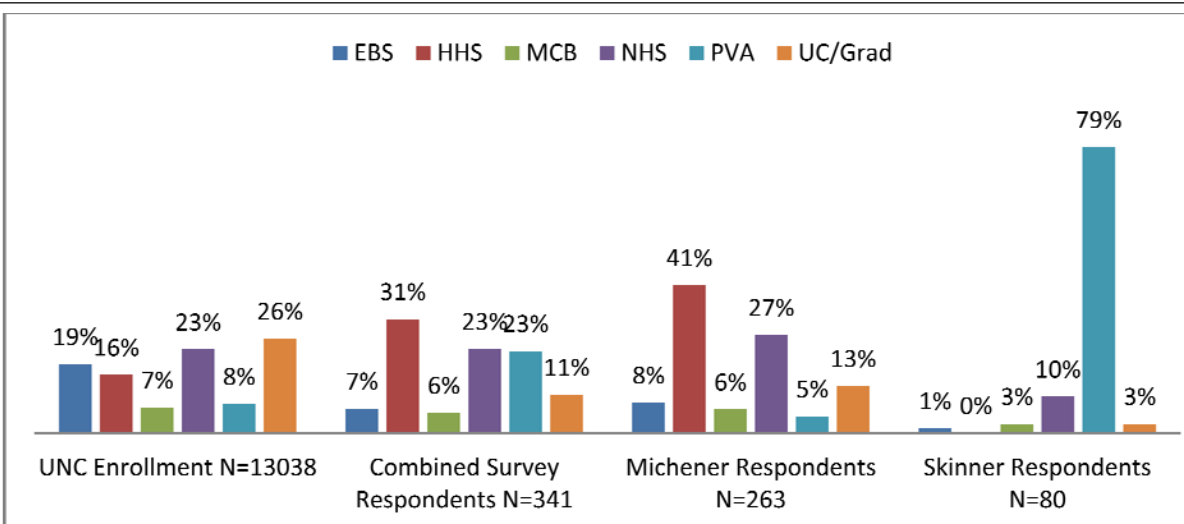


Figure 4: Survey Demographics by Percent of College (student respondents)

Links Selected by Respondents

The nature of the instrument itself presented an additional challenge for data entry: circling/selection variations and handwritten rationales necessitated diligent adherence to protocol, including the indication when a particular item was left blank. A total of 379 surveys were completed. Each asked for three links used and three links not used. This resulted in a total of 1137 possible responses for each side of the survey. When all possible responses are discussed in the following sections, the term “Merged” is used.

When respondents were asked to indicate three links used and three links not used, they were not specifically asked to prioritize or indicate order of preference. A Multiple Response Analysis conducted on the data set by Professor M. Lacy of Colorado State University, suggested that the placement of a given item into the “First Position” (i.e., the very first item listed on the survey response form) was not random; a respondent had a reason for putting a given link in the “First Position”. Therefore, two separate analyses were conducted: one examining the link that was entered in the “First Position” box; and another examining all three “Links Used” responses merged into one data item, labeled “Merged”. For example, Figure 5 illustrates how the “Merged” charts should be read: 49% of all 379 respondents chose *Books & More* as one of the three links they use. Detailed analysis of links “Merged” and those selected for the “First Position” follows. A graph showing all links selected is included in Appendix B.

Not all surveys included responses for all three items on each side. On some survey forms, Side B was left entirely blank. In fact, *Left Blank* was the single most frequent response to the “First Position” and “Merged” links not used. The charts below do not include graphics for the *Left Blank* responses, even when they comprised a significant percentage of the total responses. The charts depicting “First Position” data do not include the respondents who left the “First Position” blank. For that reason, the numbers (N=) of respondents on the “First Position” charts vary slightly from corresponding numbers on the “Merged” charts.

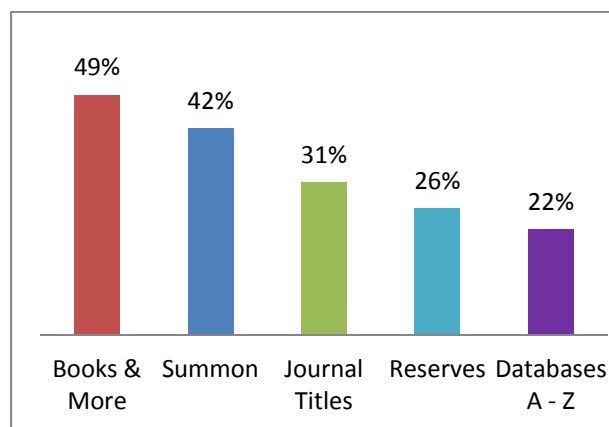


Figure 5: Most frequently used “Merged” links, all respondents, both libraries. N=379.

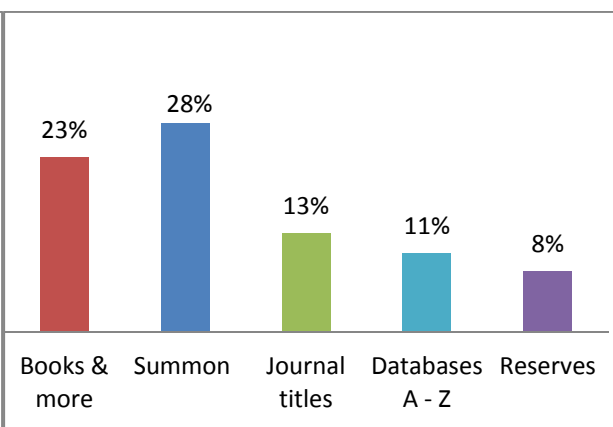


Figure 6: Most frequently used “First Position” links, all respondents, both libraries. N=371.

Simple cross-tabulation of all the responses from both libraries combined reveals the same five links appear most frequently as one of the three that respondents found most useful (Figure 5). For example, 49% of all respondents included *Books & More* as one of the three most useful links on the survey form. 42% selected *Summon*. Unsurprisingly, the same five links were also the most frequently selected (by all respondents, both libraries combined) as “First Position” links, though the rank order of *Books & More* and *Summon* was reversed (Figure 6). “First Position” and “Merged” links are analyzed in more detail below in the section “Impact of Status”.

The prominence of *Books & More* as the most frequently selected “Merged” link overall reflects the overrepresentation of upper-division and graduate Music students in the survey population who used the Skinner homepage where *Books & More* is the default (Figure 8).

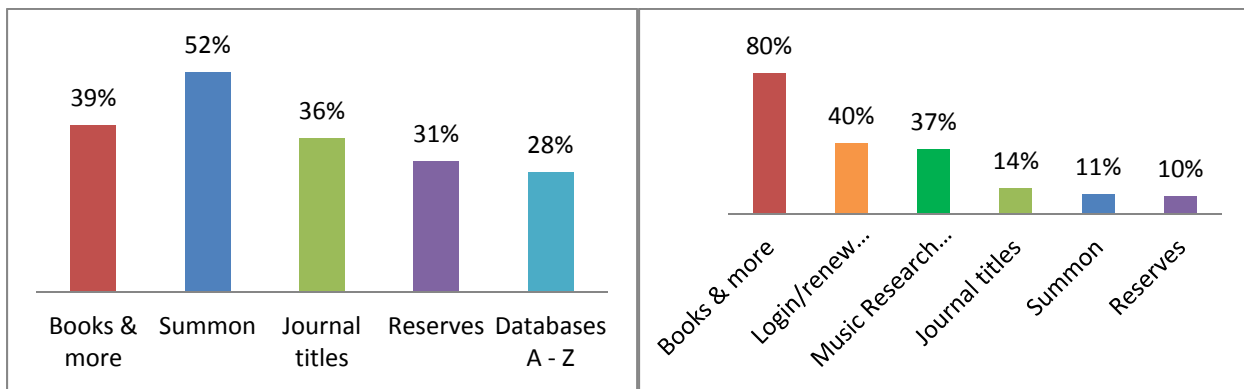


Figure 7: Most frequently selected “Merged” links, Michener respondents (N = 289)

Figure 8: Most frequently selected “Merged” links, Skinner (N =90)

Since the respective homepages of the two libraries have different defaults and different options, it is not surprising that the default search boxes from the two library homepages were the items most frequently selected, indicating that respondents take advantage of a search box placed in a central, easily-accessed point on the page. Respondents in Skinner made use of some of the unique links presented on that branch library’s homepage. For example, *Databases A – Z*, which was in the top five most used links on the Michener homepage but not available on the Skinner homepage, was, perhaps, replaced for Skinner users by *Music Research Resources*.

Impact of Status

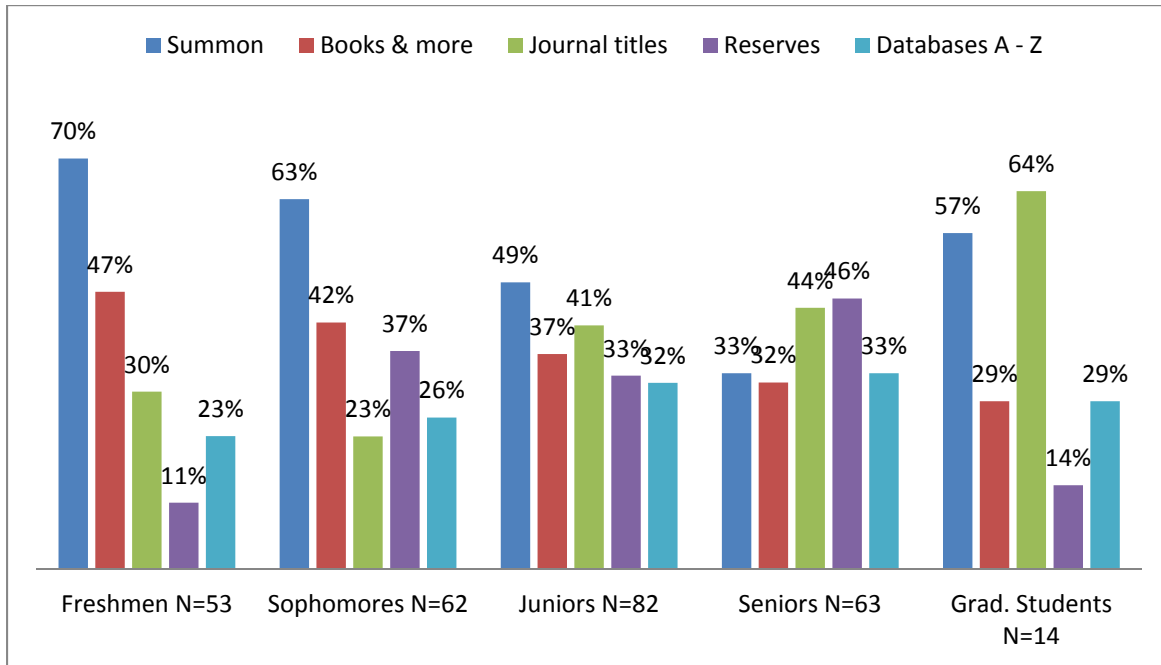


Figure 9: Effect of status on “Merged” link selection, Michener student respondents

Overall, Michener respondents selected the default search box *Summon* as the single most frequently cited “Merged” link (52%). *Summon* was especially popular among freshmen, sophomores and juniors, though its selection percentage decreased with advancing academic status (Figure 9). Among seniors, *Summon* was selected as often as *Databases A – Z*, behind *Journal Titles* and *Reserves*. *Summon* has only been the default UL search for one academic year, and it is probable that seniors and graduate students simply continued using the tools that were familiar to them.

Among Michener respondents *Summon* was also the most popular choice (52%) as the “First Position” link. The pattern for *Summon* as a “First Position” link parallels its pattern as a “Merged” link (Figure 10). It was the most frequent selection among freshmen, sophomores, and juniors but second to *Journal Titles* among seniors and graduate students. As academic status advanced, the percentage of respondents citing *Summon* as the “First Position” link decreased.

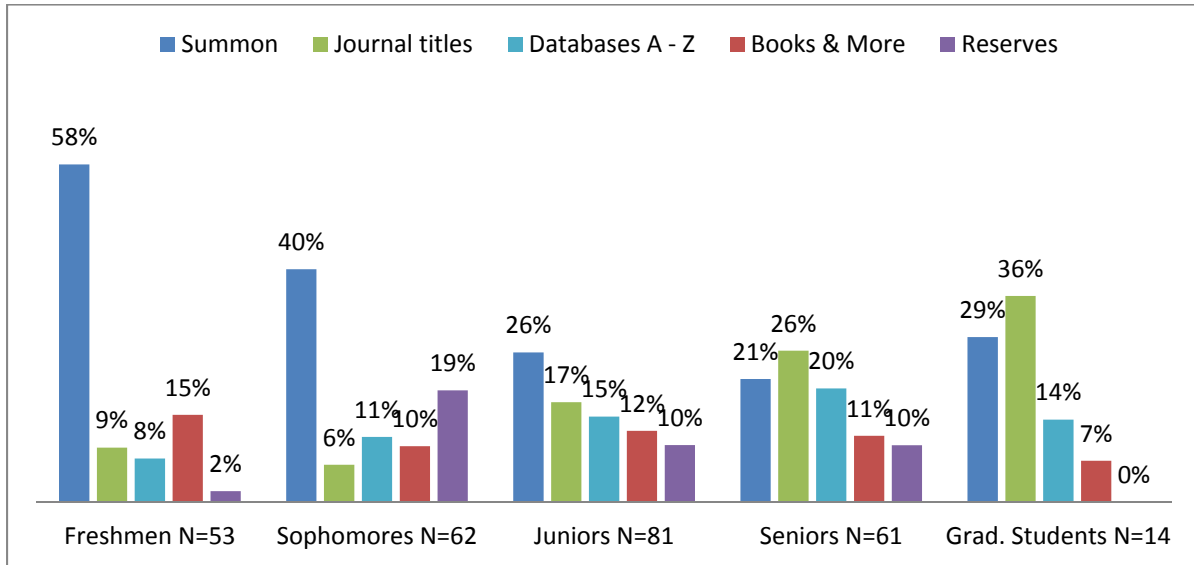


Figure 10: Effect of status on selection for “First Position,” Michener student respondents

Books & More, the default search on the Skinner homepage, was the most popular selection as a “Merged” link among all Skinner respondents at 80%, and it was the most popular selection for all status groups, including juniors, seniors and graduate students, who were overrepresented in the survey population (Figure 11).

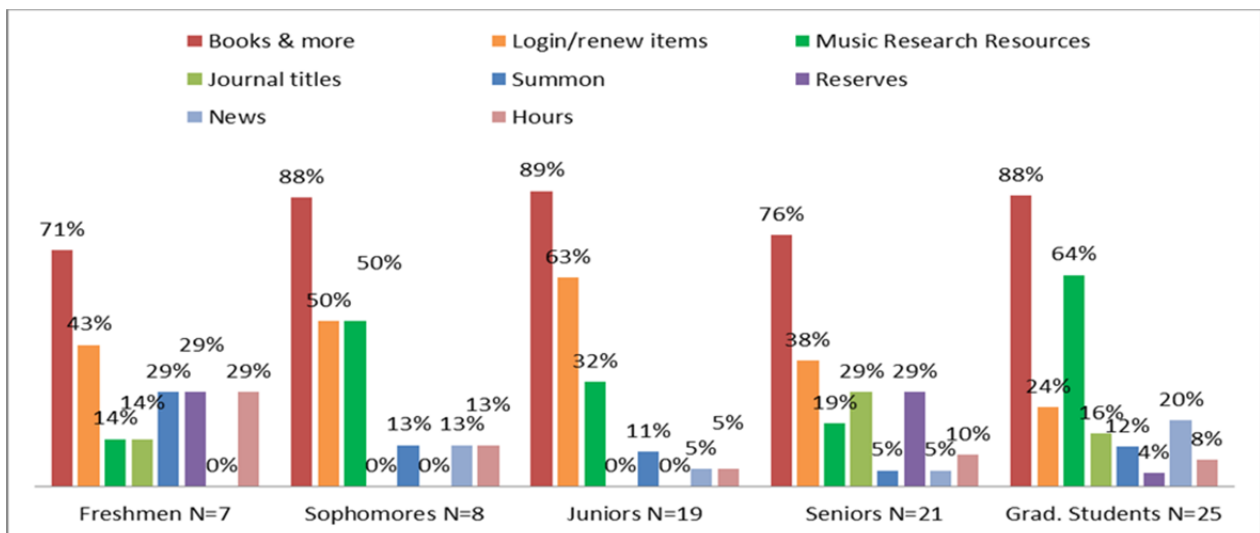


Figure 11: Effect of status on “Merged” links selected, Skinner student respondents

Figure 11 includes items beyond the five most frequently selected links overall to illustrate use of the Skinner homepage-specific link *Music Research Resources* and the significant use of *Login/renew items* and *Reserves* at this library.

Among Skinner respondents, the most frequently selected links for the “First Position” were also the same as the “Merged” links. *Books & More* was selected most frequently by Skinner respondents as a “First Position” link as well as a “Merged” link by all status groups except freshmen (Figure 12). It is interesting that the freshmen respondents in Skinner more frequently selected *Summon* for the “First Position” although the default search in Skinner is *Books & More*.

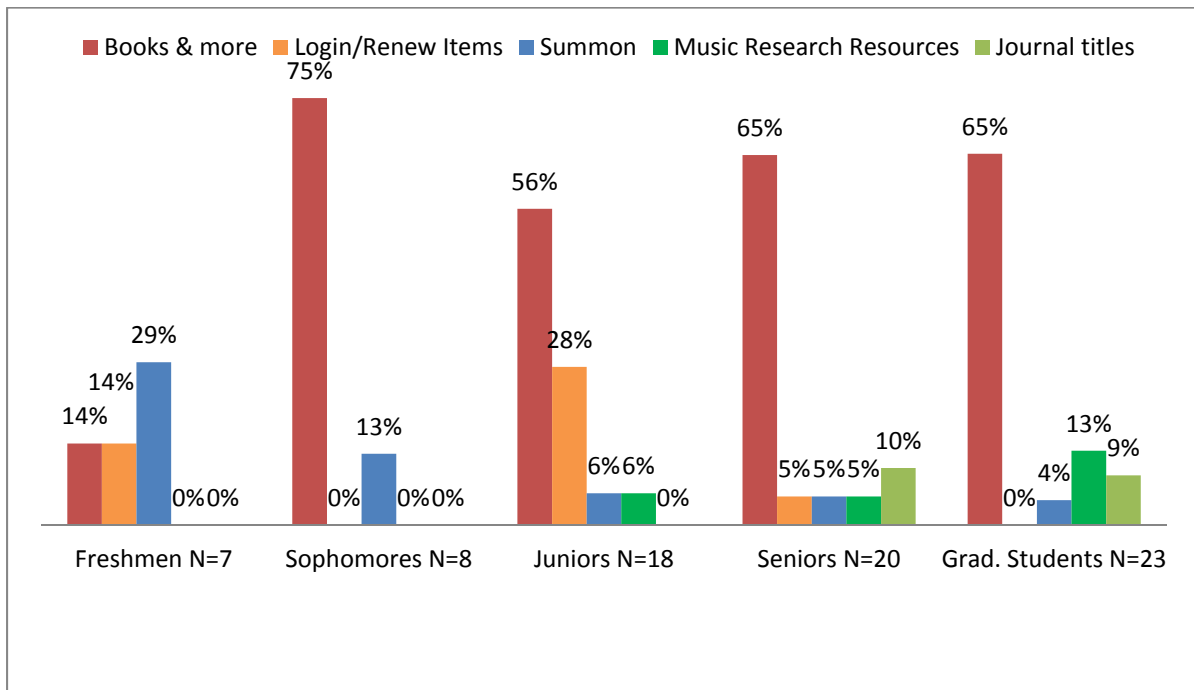
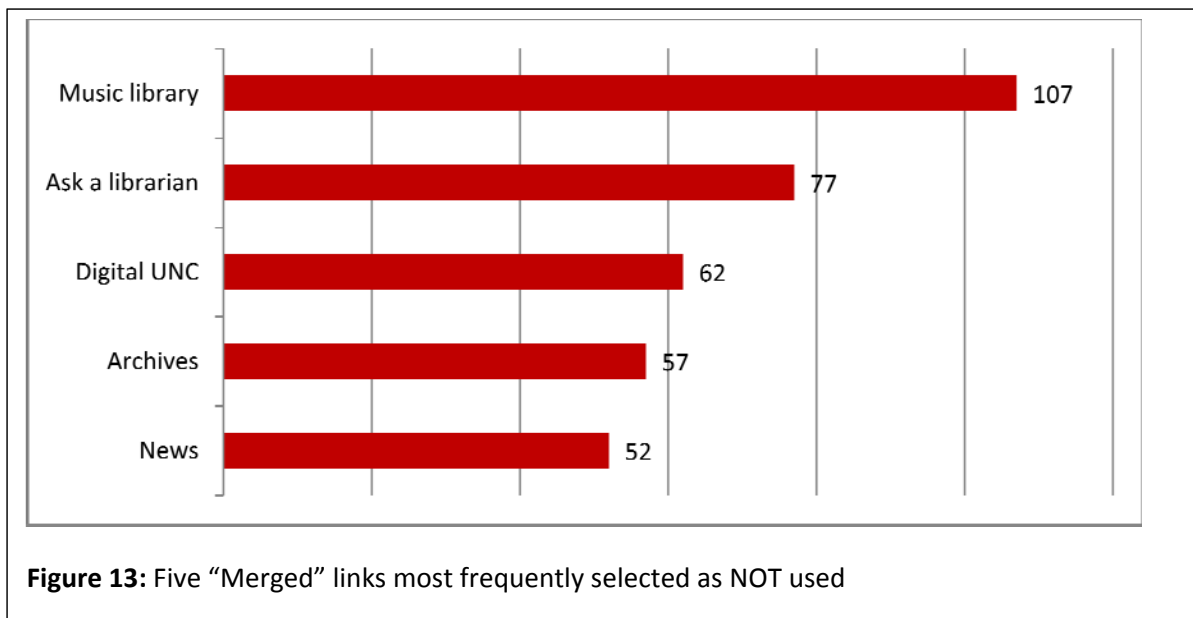


Figure 12: Effect of status on “First position” preferences, Skinner student respondents (N = 90)

Links Not Used

The links selected as NOT used in both Michener and Skinner indicate again the differences between the populations using the two libraries, the different default search boxes, and the impact of nearly 75% of respondents completing the survey in Michener. Figure 13 shows the



five (5) links most frequently selected as NOT used. This subset of results represents only a portion of those selected by respondents; a chart illustrating all the “Merged” links NOT used can be seen in Appendix B. *Left Blank*, with 240 out of 1137 possible responses (for the “Merged” result set of Side B), was the most frequent response. Again, in many cases Side B was not completed at all. *Blank* responses were omitted from analysis. The frequency with which *Music library* was selected reflects the preponderance of respondents completing the survey in Michener Library. Respondents who provided insight into the links NOT used simply wrote that they did not know what that link was. The lack of enthusiasm for Side B is understandable. From a respondent’s perspective, it is easy to indicate and prioritize the links with which we are familiar and use most frequently. The ones we don’t use, we don’t use equally. The qualitative section of this report reproduces some written comments about links NOT used.

Analysis of the comments

Qualitative analysis of “Links Used” and “Links Not Used” examined the comments associated with most frequent responses from each category, in which respondents answered the question “Tell us why you use (or don’t use) the link circled.” The comments analyzed sometimes included multiple parts or topics, so the total number of coded items is larger than the simple number of comments overall. Therefore, when discussion below indicates a percentage, that is the percent of responses **for that link**, or in some cases, regarding a reason for using a given link. Coding of items included only explicit references.

Links Used: Books & More/Summon/Journal Titles/Databases A—Z/Reserves

These most frequently selected responses included 618 comments, which breaks out into 638 coded items. 97 pertained to *Reserves*. Comments about *Reserves* were not analyzed extensively because use of Reserves is beyond the control of the Libraries; teaching faculty assign readings and other course materials that are placed on Reserves. Those respondents commenting on Reserves appear to have a good grasp of what is available and how to access those items.

There were 149 coded items about *Books & More*. Of these comments, 30 (20%) indicated that this link is useful for research; even more, 31 (21%), sought tangible items through the use of this link. One respondent stated “I usually need items in the physical library” while another commented “I like to find books, they're my friends.”

Summon had a total of 192 coded items. Of those, there were 51 (26%) indicating use for research. The breadth of materials returned by a search in Summon was commented on 44 times (23%), while ease of use was mentioned 34 times (18%). Comments came from those patrons interested in efficiency: “This is the easiest way to search the many databases all at once, it's a real time saver,” and those seeking books: “It's easiest. Usually I'm looking for books, but this gets [sic] without clicking the books tab.”

The *Journal Titles* tab had 124 coded items, 57 (46%) of which indicated use for research projects; 41 comments (33%) mentioned finding or accessing articles here. Comments were revealing in this set of results, indicating some confusion about the use of this tab. Some comments suggest that the respondent may have confused this tab with *Databases A—Z*. At the same time, some comments demonstrate a clear understanding of what can be accomplished by its selection. One respondent commented that “I rarely use because I don't have much success with it. It is pretty much a last resort” while another stated “When a teacher gives me some specific titles this helps the best.” Comments in this set affirmed one of the UL teaching library goals, with one respondent saying that this tab is “. . . Better than using Google, more reliable.”

The link to *Databases A—Z* had 76 coded items, 37 (49%) of which discussed using it for research. 14 (18%) expressed appreciation for the ease of access to resources, one commenting “I use multiple databases for the articles. I like that there are so many databases.”

Brief Analysis of Links Not Used: Digital UNC/Archives/News

83.8% of the comments about *Digital UNC* indicated that respondents did not know what the link was for or have any need for it. Respondents frequently mentioned that they had no idea what Digital UNC was. Similarly, 82.4% of respondents did not understand *Archives* or need the link for Archives. Respondents were clearly confused as to the meaning of *Archives* as one mentioned he/she “never needed to use older resources.” Another respondent asked “are these the gov't pubs in the basement?”

Comments regarding the *News* section of the homepage were varied as some respondents commented on the section as a whole and others pointed to specific news items or resources featured in the *News* section. Overall, 53.8% of respondents indicated that they did not use or need the *News* section. Interestingly, respondents had questions about the featured items suggesting that the news stories do not provide a clear context or description. For example, respondents asked “what is the source catalog?” and “where is the news room?” Some respondents thought that news items were shortcuts to resources and wondered why there was duplication on the site while others commented on the section being outdated.

It is important to note that an analysis of responses to the negative – the absence of use – is particularly challenging, therefore the lack of substantive responses to this part of the survey is not surprising.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited by having only been delivered on paper, in the two library locations, over a course of five days. Those library users who access resources online from home were not surveyed, nor were those who use the library during the hours that the survey teams were not seeking participants.

Structural limitations to the study have already been addressed in regards to clarity and data entry, but other limitations inherent to the instrument do exist: reliance on self-reported use, not observed use, is perhaps the most important. The comments that reveal misunderstanding of what is provided at a given link, even in the “Links Used” responses, suggest that an observational study would have provided much different data.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The survey results affirm the notion that default search boxes are the single most used resource for library users. Responses from both libraries indicate that the majority of users begin with the default search option available on the relevant homepage. Other links are used, but to a lesser degree. The impact of the default option must be taken into consideration when evaluating the survey results.

The tabs across the top of the two homepages are the most frequently selected links, indicating that the current homepage designs are functional for the majority of undergraduate and graduate students in the respective libraries. *Databases A – Z* on the Michener homepage also gets a considerable amount of use, though there is some evidence that some users might be unclear about what is accessed there.

Upper-division students use a wider selection of links on the homepages than lower division students, although all students show some evidence of confusion over the meanings of text chosen to represent links. Therefore, it may be useful to consider additional ways to communicate what is accessed via a given link.

Patrons do not consistently use the *News* section to acquire information about library initiatives, and as a result, the *News* items could include more context and easily discernible graphics focusing on the target audience.

Survey data on the most used links indicate that students use the homepages to access research resources. However, the lesser used links, such as *Digital UNC* and *Archives* also access research resources. It may be useful to consider ways to promote these underused research tools.

The purpose of this survey was to study usage of the UL homepages. The results revealed that students use expected research tools when visiting the homepages, often choosing the default option presented. Future projects might examine use of Summon and Encore by upper-division students or the impact of a website redesign.

Respectfully submitted
August 2012

Appendix A: Survey Instruments

Michener Survey Instrument/Side A

THINGS I USE OFTEN

Please circle and number the three things you use most and tell us why you do in the space below. For example, if you click on the Summon Search box frequently, circle and number it #1. Then, in the space labeled #1 below, tell us why you click there.

1.

2.

3.

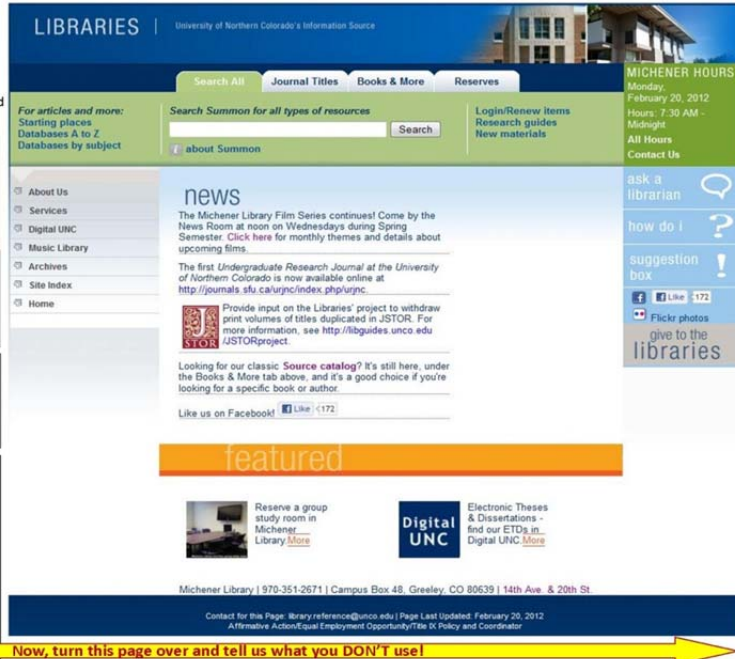
Demographics (to assess how well our survey sample represents UNC as a whole)

Major or field of study _____

Academic status:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freshman | <input type="checkbox"/> I am: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sophomore | <input type="checkbox"/> Under 18 years old |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Junior | <input type="checkbox"/> 18 years or older |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate student | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staff | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Thanks!



Now, turn this page over and tell us what you DON'T use!

Michener Survey Instrument/Side B

THINGS I DON'T USE

Please circle and number three things on the libraries homepage that you never click on, and in the spaces below indicate why you don't. For example, you might be confused by the words labeling the link . . .

1.

2.

3.

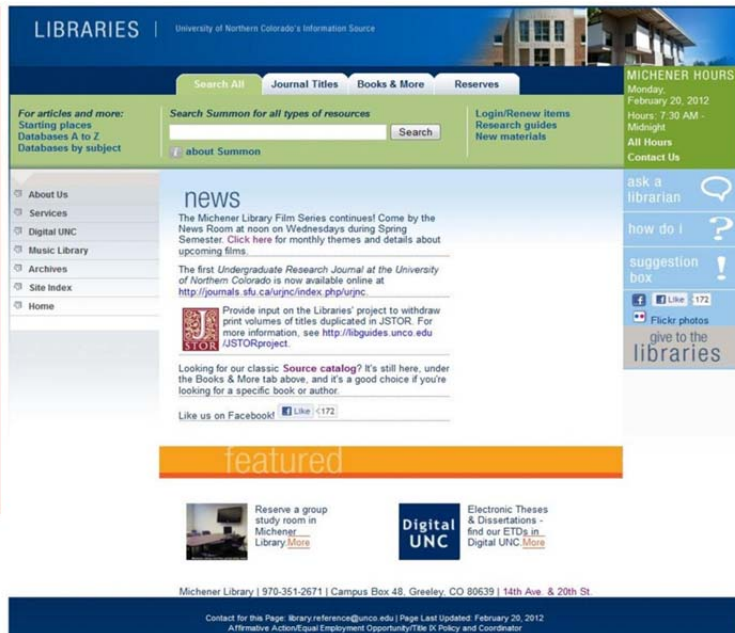
Is there anything else you'd like to see on the homepage?

THANK YOU!

When we revise the website your input will be taken into consideration, making the site better for everyone!

Now that you've completed the survey, please deposit it in the collection box nearby. Help yourself to a treat as our thanks to you.

REMEMBER: Keep the attached Consent Form in case you have any questions or concerns in the future.



Skinner Survey Instrument/Side A

THINGS I USE OFTEN

Please circle and number the three things you use most and tell us why you do in the space below. For example, if you click on the Summon Search box frequently, circle and number it #1. Then, in the space labeled #1 below, tell us why you click there.

1.
2.
3.

Demographics (to assess how well our survey sample represents UNC as a whole)

Major or field of study _____

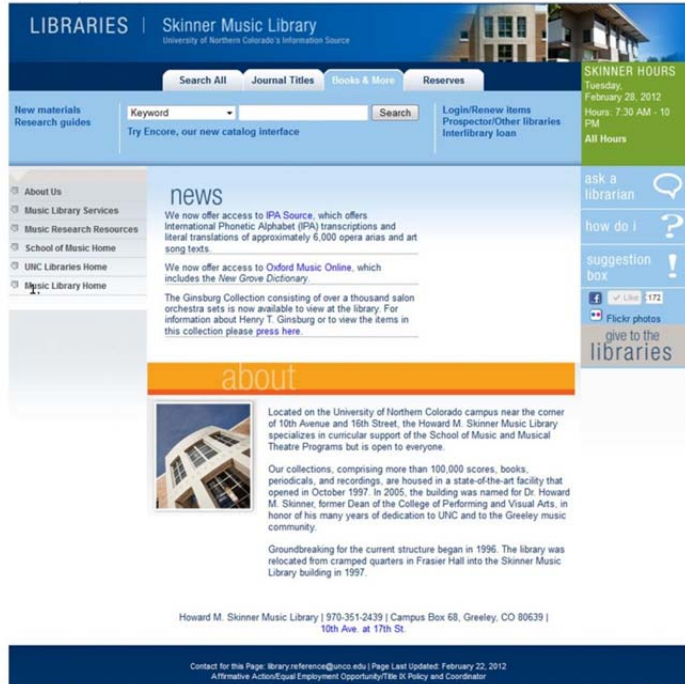
Academic status:

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate student
- Faculty
- Staff
- Other

I am:

- Under 18 years old
- 18 years or older

Thanks! Now, turn this page over and tell us what you DON'T use!



Skinner Survey Instrument/Side B

THINGS I DON'T USE

Please circle and number three things on the libraries homepage that you **never** click on, and in the spaces below indicate why you don't. For example, you might be confused by the words labeling the link . . .

1.
2.
3.

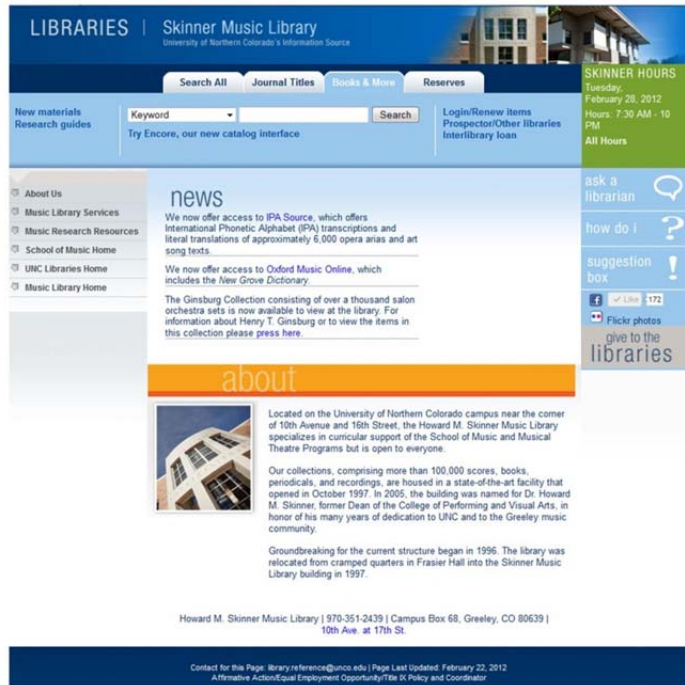
Is there anything else you'd like to see on the homepage?

THANK YOU!

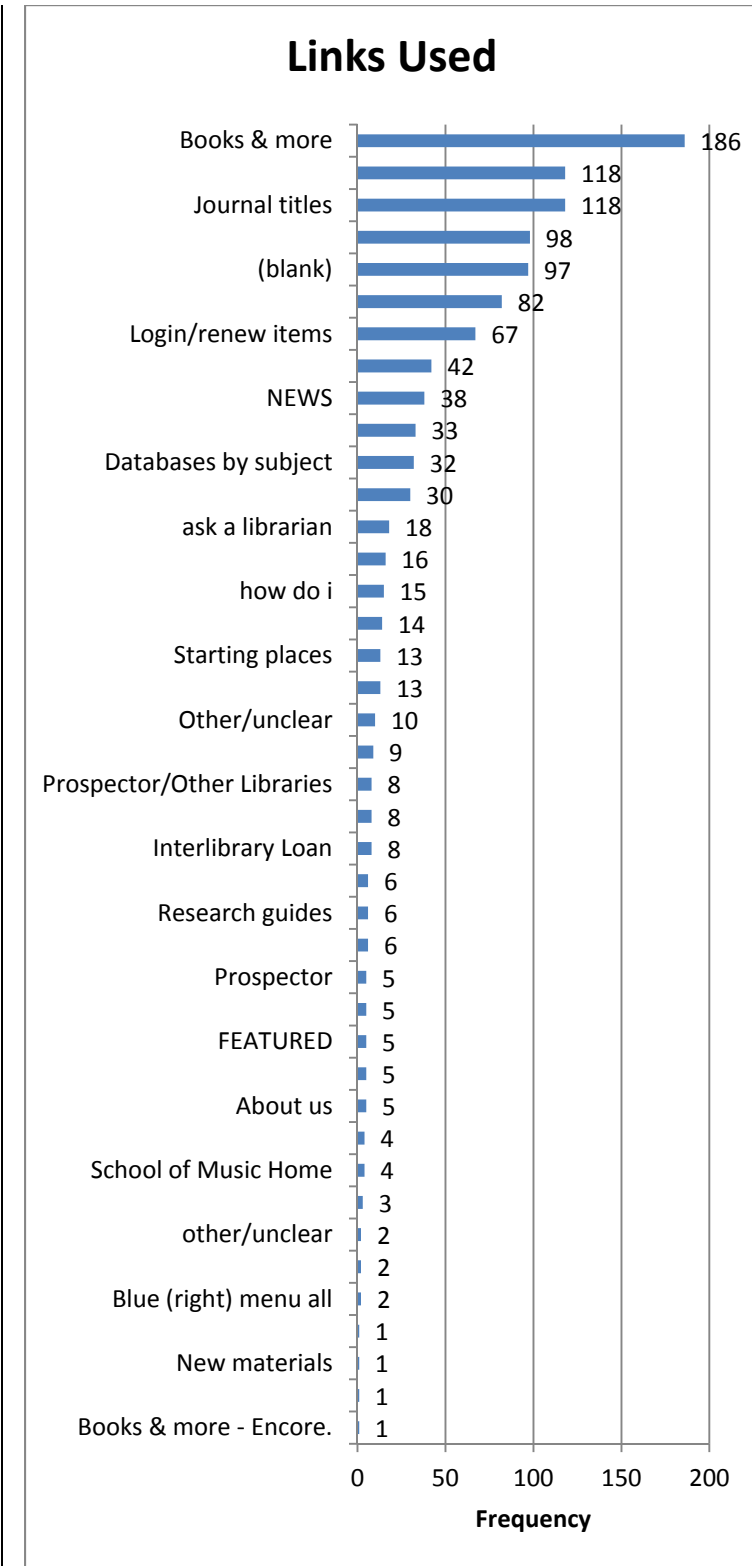
When we revise the website your input will be taken into consideration, making the site better for everyone!

Now that you've completed the survey, please deposit it in the collection box nearby. Help yourself to a treat as our thanks to you.

REMEMBER: Keep the attached Consent Form in case you have any questions or concerns in the future.



Appendix B: Frequency Charts



Links NOT Used (Frequency)

