

Government Library and Research Services

Stakeholder survey report – WA public sector

1.0 Introduction

The Government Library and Research Services stakeholder survey was created in Survey Monkey for the purpose of collecting feedback from stakeholders across the WA public sector, to inform a service model that would meet their needs and expectations. The survey was intended to collect information from:

- Public sector employees who have access to a library service and utilise the service;
- Public sector employees who have access to a library service and are either not aware of it or don't use it;
- Public sector employees who do not have access to a library service.

The survey was created by the project team and circulated via government library staff to their colleagues in their respective departments, and a link was provided on the Government Library and Research Services page on the State Library website. A total of 333 responses were collected between 11 February and 22 March 2019.

Responses to the survey demonstrate that greater online access to collections and databases is required, and that library users value the professional knowledge and specialisation of the library staff within their departments, to provide research and reference support within particular disciplines. For respondents who do not currently have access to or do not use library services for their work, Google and free internet resources were the main sources of information. This highlights a need for library services to be made available to all departments and agencies to ensure professional research practices across the public sector, and for the promotion of these valuable services.

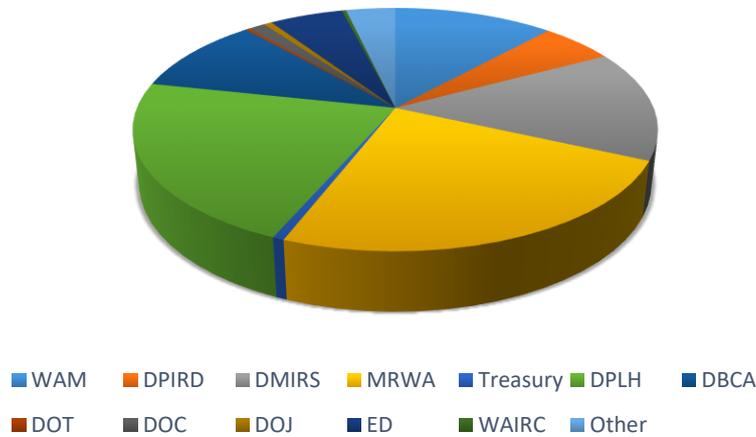
A new model for government library services will need to balance the equity of service for all public sector employees, and the need for greater online access to services and collections, with the strong support for specialist skills and collections embedded within departments and agencies.

2.0 Respondents

Respondents were asked which department or agency they represented, and what their job titles were. The 333 respondents represented 12 Government departments, with the greatest proportion of responses received from Main Roads WA and Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage. Job titles of respondents varied greatly, from administration support staff to Executive roles, and many respondents held technical positions relevant to their departments or agencies, including Geologists, Research Scientists and Engineers. The strong representation of these technical positions demonstrates demand for specialist skills for research support.

Responses by Department/Agency

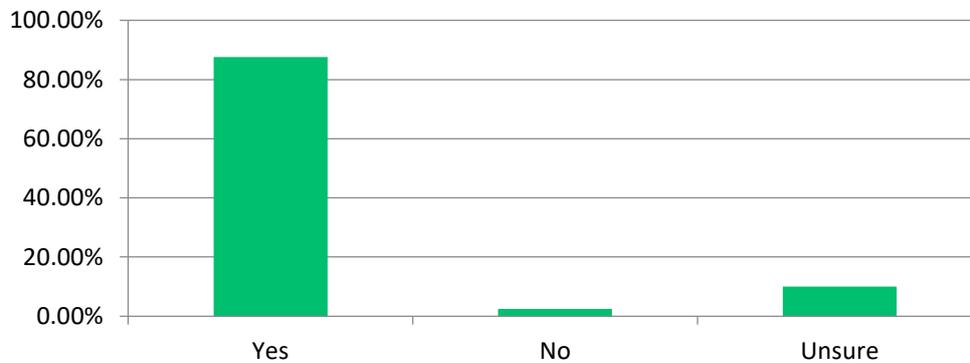
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The aim of the survey was to capture feedback from library users and non-library users; 88% of respondents had access to a library service within their department or agency. Only 2% responded that they did not have access, while 10% were unsure.

Access to library and research services

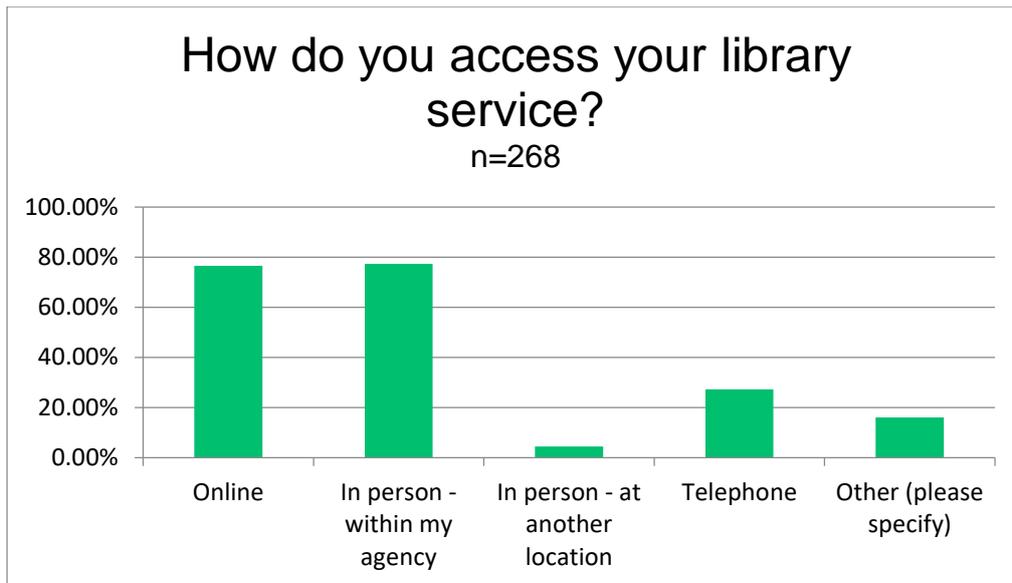
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3.0 Library use

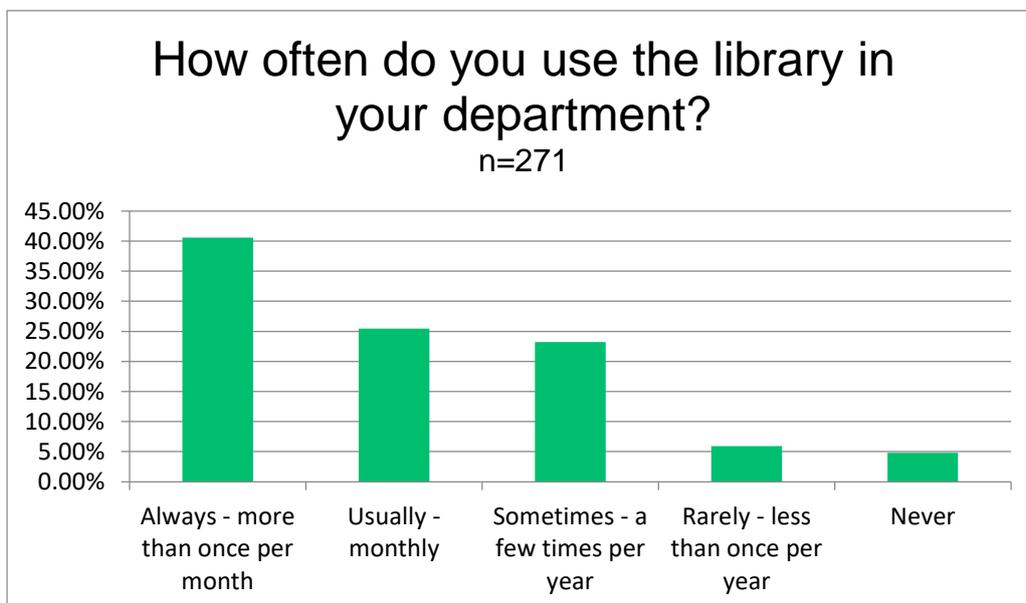
Respondents who answered 'Yes' to the above question regarding access to library services were asked how they accessed their library, how often and what services they used. On average, 83% responded that they either accessed the service online, or in person within their agency or department. For those who responded 'Other', 77% specified that they contacted their library by email.¹

¹ If the 'email' responses are included in the Other category, 88% of respondents access their library services online.



3.1 Frequency of use

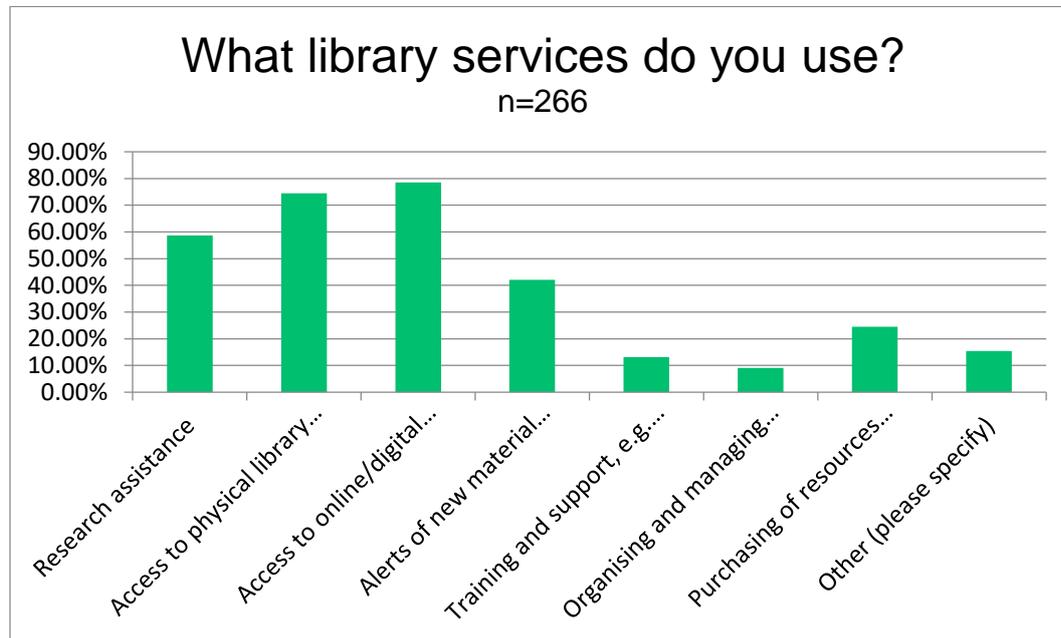
Respondents who have access to a library service use it regularly, with 66% reporting that they use the library at least once per month. Respondents were also asked for examples of what kind of work they used the library for, and this varied greatly depending on their roles and the specialities of their libraries. Examples included research to develop policy, to identify new species, for undertaking heritage assessments and for developing professional practice guidelines, and accessing specific resources such as Australian Standards for building in bushfire prone areas.



3.2 Services

79% of respondents used the library service to access online collections and resources, and 75% for accessing physical library materials. 59% used the library for research assistance. 42% receive alerts

of new material pertaining to their interests. Of the 15% of respondents who stated 'Other', the majority of comments related to the use of specific collection items, either online or physical, or to deposit reports or publications.



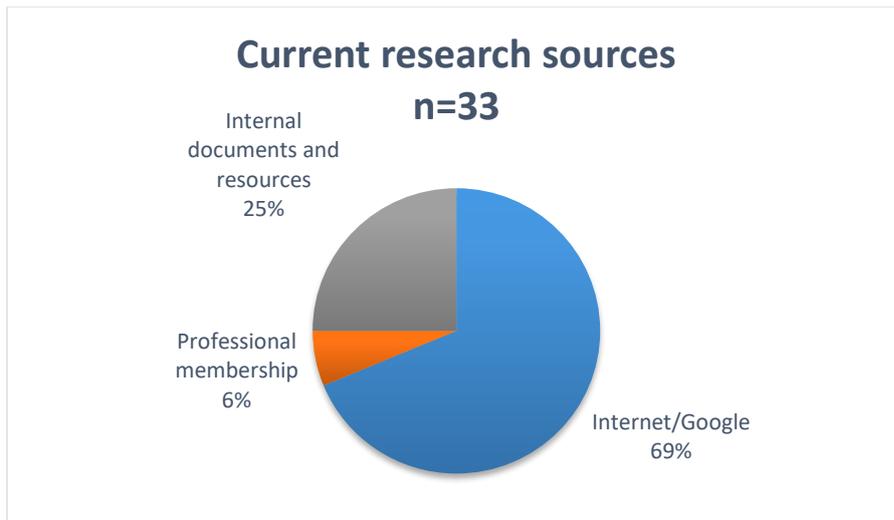
In general, the majority of respondents stated that they highly valued the resources and services provided by their libraries, with over 80% responding that the resources and services met their expectations and information needs. When asked for suggestions for improvement, responses related to the following needs:

- More online resources
- Better platforms for searching for resources
- Digitisation programs for material related to their roles
- Access to a wider range of journals and databases.

4.0 Non-library users

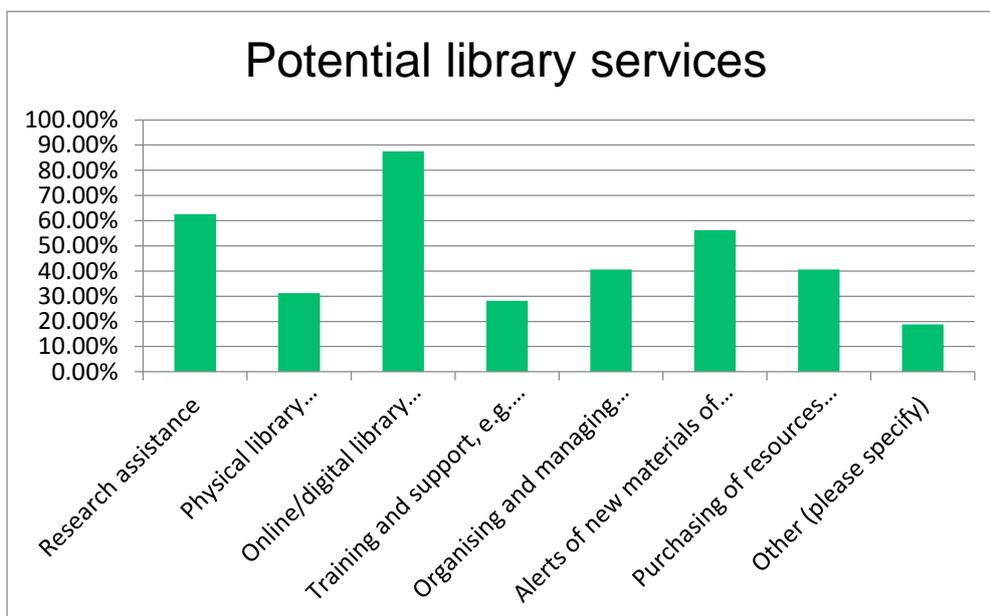
Respondents who answered 'No' or 'Unsure' when asked if they had access to a library service were asked how they currently undertake research and source information for their work. The majority of respondents (69%) use internet search engines such as Google to find information, while 25% use the resources available internally within their agency. A small number of respondents have individual professional memberships including CPA Australia which they use to access information and resources.

The sample size for this question is small (33), but points to a need to broaden library services and raise awareness of these services for the whole of the public sector, to ensure the work of employees is underpinned by authoritative and substantiated information, and the professional expertise of library staff.



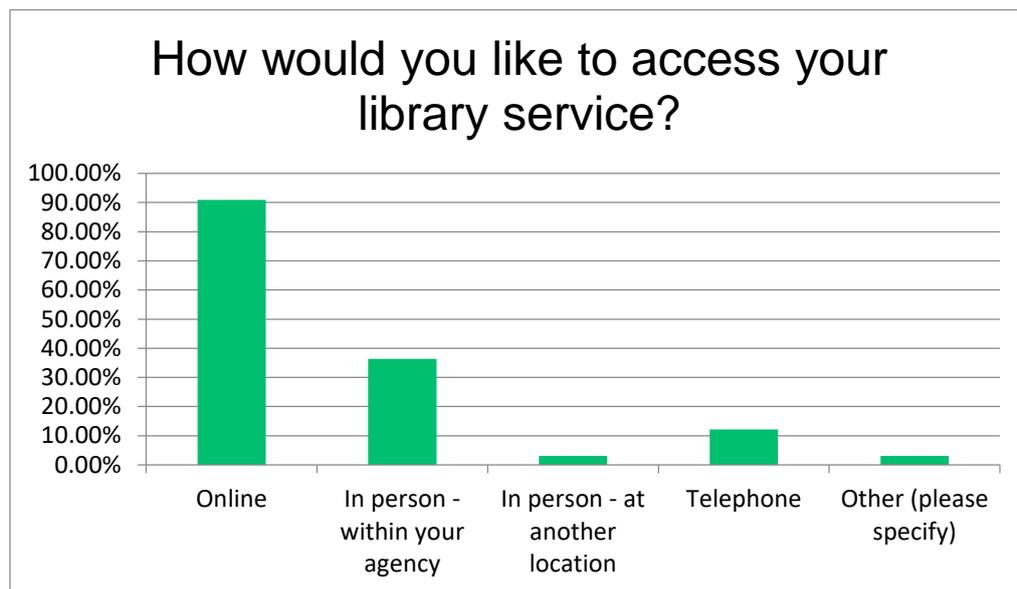
4.1 Desired access and use

Respondents who were not library users were asked what services they would find useful if a library were to be provided for them, with the same service options presented as currently offered by existing government libraries. The strongest response (88%) was for online library collections, as opposed to the need for physical collections which only 31% of respondents stated they would find useful. 63% responded that research assistance would be useful, and 56% responded that alerts of new material would be useful. The small number who selected 'Other' stated they would like subscriptions to relevant databases, and one response related to hard copy maps.



Respondents were also asked how they would like to access their library and were strongly in favour of online access (91%). 36% would like to access the library in person, but within their agency rather than another location. These responses support the argument for the digital transformation of

library services and better online access, as reflected in the suggestions for improvement made by library users.



5.0 Conclusion

This report has focused predominantly on the quantitative data provided in the survey, to establish a snapshot of current needs and expectations of government library services. However, through some open-ended questions, many of the nuances and specific needs have been captured, which can be analysed in more detail in the development of a new service model.

The responses to the survey by both users and non-users indicate a strong need for online services and resources, that can be accessed immediately and easily from anywhere in the State, and the need for more journals and databases, and the ability to search across collections of other departments. The responses from library users also demonstrate their support for the specialist knowledge, expertise and collections provided by the library that relate to their work, and the value of having these resources close at hand.

The target number of responses for the survey was a minimum of 60; the strong response rate from across the sector is reflective of the strong support for library services and staff by their users and colleagues, and this information will be used to inform a new model which meets the needs of all current and prospective library users.