

University of South Australia Library

Materials Availability Survey

27 August – 3 September 2007

Definition

Materials availability is the proportion of the material sought by the user which is available in the Library or online for use at the time it is sought. In short, if the user can find what they require when they first look for it, then it is available.

Purpose

The materials availability survey provides data that can assist in determining:

- the extent to which the Library provides users with the items they are looking for (materials availability);
- the proportion of sought items not in the collection or accessible through free or licensed online services available to the University;
- reasons for non-availability
- the adequacy of multiple copies at a campus and between campuses;
- the appropriateness of loan periods
- the accuracy of shelving and users ability to find items on the shelves;
- the ease of use of the catalogues, databases and other discovery tools to find items, to identify locations and to determine the loan status of items
- the adequacy of cataloguing/processing turn around times.

Origin

The original CAUL Performance Indicator survey instrument [C. Proportion of sought material obtained at time of visit](#) was developed by Colin Taylor and Jane Hiscock of the University of South Australia Library in 1995. It was developed at a time when most resources available to clients were physical items located in physical libraries and discoverable through the catalogue. This instrument is now of limited use in an environment in which staff and students seek information online and in which university libraries allocate a large part of their budgets and staffing to providing access to online resources.

The 2007 survey instrument used at UniSA drew upon content suggested by UTS and upon the online survey developed at La Trobe University.

Relationship to LibQual+

The 2005 LibQual+ survey indicated that material availability was an area for which UniSA perceived performance is less than the minimum required by clients.

| Question | Minimum Mean | Desired Mean | Perceived Mean | Adequacy Mean | Superiority Mean |
|---|--------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| Printed materials I need for my work [IC-3] | 6.58 | 7.83 | 6.53 | -0.05 | -1.30 |
| The e-resources I need [IC-4] | 6.84 | 8.11 | 6.75 | -0.09 | -1.36 |
| The journals I require [IC-8] | 7.01 | 8.22 | 6.71 | -0.30 | -1.51 |

Both undergraduates and postgraduates have high desired standards for:

- Making electronic resources accessible from home or office
- Print and/or electronic journal collections required for work
- A Library web site enabling me to locate information on my own
- The electronic information resources I need

These are ranked in order of importance and are in the same order for both groups.

Differences between 2004 and 2007 surveys at UniSA

| CAUL 2004 | UniSA 2007 |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print only • Standard CAUL instrument • Focus on catalogue • 5 metropolitan campuses • Respondents physically in Library • Details of items required whether found or not • Standard Response rate • Single sided form (4 questions) • Single colour | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print and online • Modified survey instrument • Inclusion of databases, GoogleScholar and internet • 4 metropolitan campuses • Consolidation of resources in certain areas, viz Art and Health Sciences • Respondents online and in person • Offshore respondents identified • Only details of items not found required • Customised response rate • Double sided to cater for additional 2 questions and 11 answer options • Colour coded by campus to track any differences between pickup and return |

The standard instrument provides for institutions to record and upload to the CAUL site data related to response rates. This is achieved by recording the number of forms handed out and comparing those returned against this figure. This measure is

unreliable in the online environment. While response rate data is captured in the hybrid survey conducted at UniSA in 2007 this cannot reliably be compared with response rates from earlier surveys.

| Location | Forms Distributed / viewed | Responses | Response rate % |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| CE | 500 | 382 | 76 |
| CW | 500 | 158 | 32 |
| Mg | 500 | 335 | 67 |
| MI | 500 | 254 | 51 |
| Online | 3275 | 961 | 29 |
| Total | 5275 | 2090 | 39% |

A key difference between the two surveys is that in the 2007 version respondents only needed to include items details if they were unsuccessful in finding the item they were looking for. This reduced the time taken to complete the survey for most respondents but meant that it is not possible to correlate success against failure in locating items on the basis of call number or URL.

Unlike earlier material availability surveys, AV as a material type was excluded from the 2007 survey. Responses suggest that there is no need to reinstate this however it may be useful to include “high demand collection / eReserve” as a format in future surveys.

The decision to only require item identification for items not found reduced the data available on which subject areas were sought after – for books and journals. As a result, analysis of call numbers for items is no longer of value. Unless survey design encourages higher response rates to this field and overall the number of responses does not lend itself to meaningful analysis. The value of this analysis in an increasingly online environment is limited.

Comparison between La Trobe and UniSA online surveys 2007

| | La Trobe | UniSA |
|-----|---|--|
| Q1. | Where are you? – 2 choices, online or in Library | Respondent demographics (7 choices) |
| Q2. | Respondent demographics (8 choices including TAFE) | Where are you? (4 choices – library, computer pool, home / office and offshore) |
| Q3. | Looking for (4 choices, incl. AV) | Looking for (3 choices) |
| Q4. | Did you find or access item? Y/N | Where did you look? (choices: catalogue, GoogleScholar, other internet, database) |
| Q5. | Reason for failure 10 choices – 4 related to online | Did you find or access item? Y/ N |
| Q6. | | Reason for failure 12 choices – 4 related to online |

Promotion and methodology

Survey ran for 7 days August 27 to September 3

Two versions, print and online

Promoted in Staff and student portals one week prior to survey

Graphic used to promote via web page – four \$200 incentive prizes offered

- Survey also promoted within Library catalogue
 - Search screen
 - Results list Item record

The title and reason for failure were mandatory fields for the online survey

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------|---------------------|
| /survey/catsurvey.aspx | 3,126 | Aug. 31, 2007 13:08 |
| /survey/viewsurvey.aspx | 149 | Aug. 30, 2007 07:43 |

Posters placed at Service desk and OPACs

Staff used to hand out printed surveys.

- At entrance on first two days.
- By shelving staff to clients looking for items among book stacks

Survey forms were colour coded by campus. A handful of forms were returned at a different campus to that at which they were distributed.

Prize winners

- 3 undergraduates, one masters
- All female
- 2 from CE, 1 ML, 1 CW
- 2 online, 2 print

Coding and interpretation issues

- Less coding because of decision only to record details for unsuccessful searches
- More complex searching required by staff (databases / internet plus catalogue)
- Printed survey form needs further modification. UniSA 2007 version still too reliant on 1995 terminology and bias towards catalogue / printed resources
- Need to modify prompt to online for reasons for No response to reflect full online options eg. *I found the item online (internet , database, catalogue or GoogleScholar) but could not get to the copy because:*
- Need to correlate Q3 and Q4 for appropriateness of finding aid
- Ambiguity in Q2 (printed form) Those who say they are looking online but indicate they checked catalogue for book.

Materials Availability Survey Results 2007

| Location | Completed | | Total | Online Y | Online N | Failure rate online | Print Y | Print N | Failure rate print | Failure rate total |
|---------------------|-----------|--------|-------------|----------|----------|---------------------|------------|------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | Print | Online | | | | | | | | |
| CE | 382 | 43 | 425 | 36 | 7 | 14% | 340 | 42 | 11% | 12% |
| CW | 158 | 67 | 225 | 58 | 9 | 13% | 120 | 38 | 23% | 21% |
| MG | 335 | 62 | 397 | 50 | 12 | 20% | 278 | 57 | 17% | 17% |
| ML* | 254 | 35 | 290 | 32 | 3 | 8% | 210 | 45 | 18% | 17% |
| Total campus | 1129 | 207 | 1336 | 176 | 31 | 15% | 948 | 182 | 16% | 16% |
| Home | | 600 | 600 | 534 | 66 | 11% | | | | |
| Barn | | 129 | 129 | 116 | 13 | 10% | | | | |
| Offshore | | 25 | 25 | 21 | 4 | 6% | | | | |
| Total Online | | 961 | 961 | 847 | 114 | 12% | | | | |
| Total all | 1129 | 961 | 2090 | | | | | | | 14% |

*Online and print returns for Mawson Lakes includes small number of requests completed by Flexible Information Service for Offcampus students and responses from students giving their home campus as Whyalla. Print forms were not distributed at Whyalla

There were 3275 views of the catalogue and web survey page for 956 responses

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------|---------------------|
| /survey/catsurvey.aspx | 3,126 | Aug. 31, 2007 13:08 |
| /survey/viewsurvey.aspx | 149 | Aug. 30, 2007 07:43 |

RESULTS

Validity

Success rate for users of the UniSA library and online resources in 2007 was 84% for the printed survey and 88% for online, remarkably consistent results between the two formats. The overall rate of 86% was greater than the 78% success rate reported for the 2004 printed form only survey.

It has been suggested that the simplification of the form meant that a Yes response required only seconds to submit for the chance to win a prize and that this might bias results towards a higher success rate than was actually the case. La Trobe University has raised similar concerns with their success rate moving from 81% in 2005 to 91% in 2007 with an online form that also requires less time to complete for a Yes outcome than a no outcome.

Who responded

| | CE | CW | MG | ML | Online | Total |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Academic/research staff | 1 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 40 | 49 |
| From another University | 7 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 12 | 28 |
| Other | 8 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 16 | 37 |
| Postgraduate CW | 35 | 30 | 36 | 42 | 148 | 291 |
| Postgraduate RS | 10 | 4 | 9 | 4 | 68 | 95 |
| Professional Staff | 4 | | 2 | 0 | 14 | 20 |
| Undergraduate | 317 | 114 | 279 | 198 | 663 | 1571 |
| Totals | 382 | 158 | 335 | 255 | 961 | 2091 |

Q3. What was looked for

- “other” included UniSA website, UniSA course pages and high demand / course reserve
- AV category removed from 2007 survey

| Type of Item / Type of Survey | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|--------|
| | Paper | Online |
| A book | 765 | 517 |
| journal article | 229 | 285 |
| Other | 166 | 45 |

Q4. Where did they look?

| | GoogleScholar | Library catalogue | Library database | Other Internet site |
|--------|---------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Online | 48 | 771 | 122 | 20 |
| Paper | 49 | 846 | 135 | 90 |

| Success by Search Type: | | GoogleScholar | Library catalogue | Library database | Other Internet site |
|-------------------------|------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Online | No | 9 | 85 | 20 | |
| Paper | No | 12 | 133 | 25 | 7 |
| Online | Yes | 39 | 686 | 102 | 20 |
| Paper | Yes | 37 | 723 | 110 | 83 |

Failure rate for catalogue as source = 14%

Failure rate for other sources = 16%

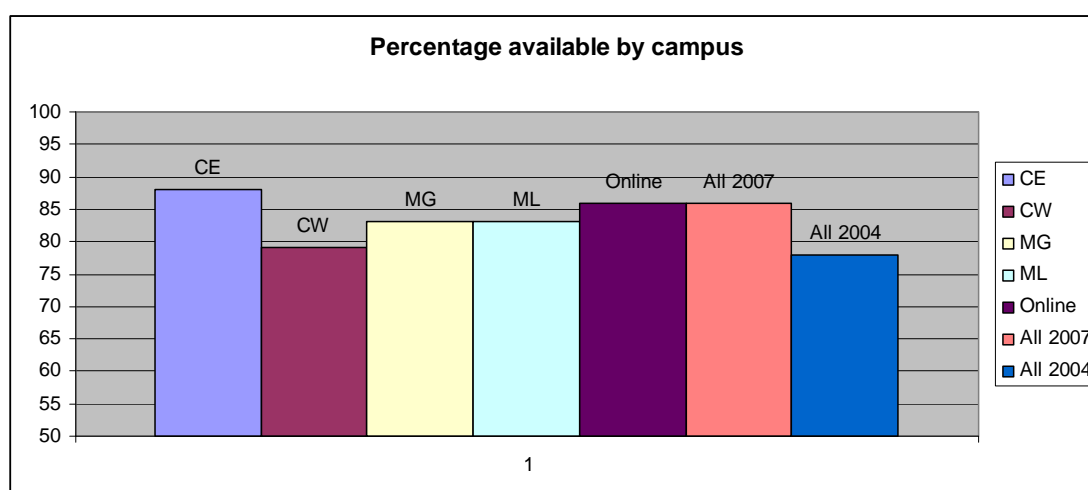
- Over-representation of Library catalogue as a response – why?
- Despite space to name database used, most did not
- Most frequently named databases were: EbscoHost (42), Academic Search Elite (23), Business Source Premier (21), ERIC (15) PsychInfo / PsychArticles (13) and ScienceDirect (12)

INTERPRETATION

Materials availability

The survey provides data that indicates the proportion of materials available to respondents at the time they looked for them and reasons for non-availability.

All campuses showed an increase in materials availability and the average of 86% exceeded the 78% recorded in the 2004 survey. This may reflect on consolidation of collections following the closure of Underdale Campus, the inclusion of non-catalogue sources, a significant increase in expenditure on resources since 2004 or a combination of these and other yet to be determined factors.



Reasons given for failure by source searched

| Failure Reason | Google Scholar | Library Catalogue | Library Database | Other |
|--|----------------|-------------------|------------------|----------|
| Had to pay for full-text | 2 | 1 | | |
| Could not find any reference to the item in the Library at all | 6 | 37 | 11 | 2 |
| The item is listed as a physical item at the Campus Library where I am today but it is on loan | 2 | 14 | | |
| The item is held at another campus or can only be accessed at another campus | 0 | 11 | | |
| The item is held at the Campus Library where I am today but I could not find it on the shelf | 0 | 29 | | |
| Link to the electronic book or journal article does not work (eg dead link, page not found) | 0 | 3 | | |
| None of the Above | 3 | 14 | | |
| Totals | 13 | 109 | 11 | 2 |

One of the important aspects of the Material Availability Survey is to distinguish between the different reasons why users are unsuccessful in obtaining the material they want at the time they first look for it. There are a number of possible reasons:

Collection failure - physical materials searched for but not owned by the University of South Australia Library or online resources not subscribed to.

For physical items that form part of the Library's collection additional factors may determine availability:

- **Location failure** - material owned by the Library but not available at the location where the survey participant requires it.
- **Duplication failure** - material sought is unavailable because it is on loan or insufficient copies are available to meet demand
- **Collection maintenance** – items held but incorrectly shelved. Survey participants were unable to find the material they were seeking on the shelf.
- **Missing items**

Throughout the period of the survey there was an average of 38,000 items on loan – down from 54,000 during the 2004 survey

User search failure – user selects inappropriate source to search, is unable to locate or recognise required item in finding aid / source, is unable to determine location on shelves for physical item or fails to locate item correctly shelved. User failure may be a direct result of Library policies, poor library practice or inadequate finding aids including the catalogue.

| Summary of failures (post checking) | |
|--|-----|
| Collection failure (eg, not in collection or available online (15), had to pay to get the full text (3) or required format not held (3)) | 21 |
| Source/ User search failure | 37 |
| Failure due to - item location /not enough copies / loan period | 53 |
| User shelf search / collection order / signage failure | 23 |
| Link failure | 10 |
| Conflicting reason given | 26 |
| No reason given | 112 |

The total error which can be attributed to the users own failure to use the library correctly is 2 % overall.

Suggested actions

- Reconsider terminology to move away from catalogue / print centric emphasis
- Remove classification / location item if form only requires completion of this field for Not found
- Remove options not selected in 2007 survey
- Consider definition of failure / not found
- How is the subject search to be captured. Should it? Is this consistent with materials availability
- Determine how many online responses originated from within catalogue
- Analyse 2 survey sets separately before combining

- Reduce likelihood of multiple answers. For the online survey this can be achieved by permitting only a single radio button to be selected
- Utilise focus groups to discover if users know what is in high demand / e-Reserve collection or apply Squires methodology.
- Consider alternative to overcome lack of exact correlation between two survey formats for Q3 and Q4 - "where are you". Current survey design fault

Key questions for the future

- What value is there in conducting print as well as online survey?
- How should results be coded if search was in one resource (and failed) and it is known that there are alternatives available through other sources?
- Strategy for dealing with multiple responses to single question if print survey is retained
- How has the inclusion of individual journal articles and book chapters in the catalogue as part of eReserve influenced results?

Contact for further information

Stephen Parnell
Deputy Director, Library Services
University of South Australia
Mawson Lakes Boulevard
Mawson Lakes
South Australia 5095

Telephone: +61 883026634
Facsimile: +61 883023746
Email: stephen.parnell@unisa.edu.au
www.library.unisa.edu.au
CRICOS Provider Number: 00121B

References

Council of Australian University Librarians (1995) [Performance indicator kit C. Proportion of sought material obtained at time of visit](#). Colin Taylor and Jan Hiscock, University of South Australia Library

Moncrieff, J. Macauley, P and Epps, J. (2007) My universe is here: Implications for the future of academic libraries from the results of a survey of researchers. *Australian Academic & Research libraries* 38, 2 pp71-83. Overwhelming preference for online

Ronald R Powell (2006). Evaluation Research: An Overview. *Library Trends*, 55(1), 102-120. Retrieved August 16, 2007, from Academic Research Library database.

Squires, S. Moore, M. and Keese, S. Electronic journals availability study <http://www.eblip4.unc.edu/papers/Squires.pdf>