

# **Awareness and Use of Electronic Books**

at Memorial University of  
Newfoundland

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# Introduction

- Books are available in either print or electronic format.
- Most libraries cannot afford to purchase multiple copies of a book
- Should the library buy books in print or electronic format?
  - Do our users have a preference?
  - If there is a preference, on what is it based?
- A recent study at Memorial's Health Sciences Library showed both growing use of electronic books and stable use of print books.
- Libraries need of evidence-based qualitative research that can be used to shape collections policy.

# Introduction

- Web-based survey of all Memorial faculty, staff, and students across the university
- Three aims: To discover
  - 1) if members of the university community are receptive to electronic books;
  - 2) if they know we already have electronic books; and
  - 3) how they actually use electronic books.

# About Memorial

- 100 degree programmes, 15,000 undergraduate students and 3000 graduate and post-graduate students
- Four libraries
- 1.8 million print monographs across all branches
- Wide range of electronic book products
- Experiments:
  - The Ferriss Hodgett Library - e-book readers
  - Queen Elizabeth II Library - ipads for course texts
  - Health Sciences Library - texts on PDA's

# Literature Review

- E-book usage and awareness in academic environments is a growing area of study
- Current research can be broadly categorized:
  - vendor and/or circulation data
  - user perspectives elicited through surveys, interviews, and/or focus groups
  - Combination of the two approaches

# Literature Review

- Studies that focus on circulation and/or vendor reports:
  - Identify subject areas used most in e-book collections:
    - Business, Economics and Management, Computers, Medicine
  - Comparing print and electronic usage:
    - subject areas heavily used in print were similarly used in electronic format.
    - differences in print and electronic book usage
    - acquisition of electronic texts has little impact on the use of the print version
- Studies that focus on user perspective:
  - Across a number of usage surveys, it has been found that:
    - surveyed users are aware of e-books
    - e-books are primarily used for research and academic study
    - E-books are not read in entirety

# Literature Review

- Advantages outlined by users:
  - Convenience: searchability and portability
  - Savings: time and money
  - Availability: multiple simultaneous users
- Disadvantages outlined by users:
  - Eyestrain and difficulties reading from a computer screen
- User Preference:
  - Majority of surveyed users expressed a preference for print.
    - Still want more electronic access
    - Students more receptive to electronic than faculty
    - Flexibility
  - Majority of distance users preferred electronic to print

# Methodology

- Survey developed by Michael Levine-Clark
  - Added demographic questions
  - Excluded NetLibrary questions
- Ethics approval from ICHER
- Sent to all Memorial Faculty, Students, Staff
  - 24,220 emails to students, faculty and staff
  - 2730 completed surveys (11% response rate)
  - Sent via email list generated by Computing & Communications. One reminder email was sent.
  - Issues sending to ALL

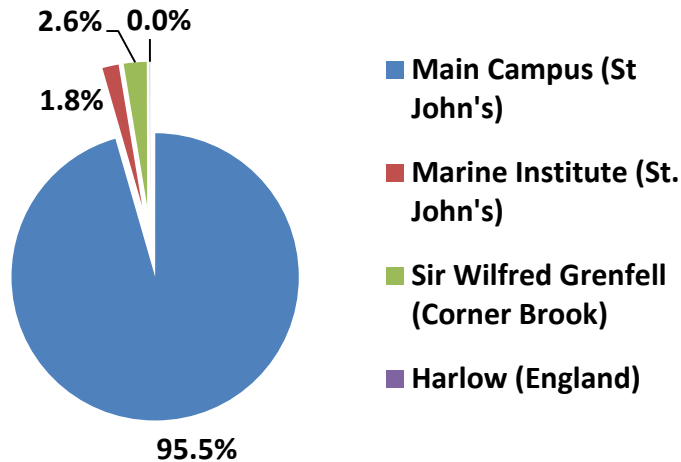


# Methodology

- Used Memorial University survey software tool
  - Did not redirect when participants answered “no”
  - Did not force ranking
  - Could not force individual answers if an explanation was required
- Offered incentive of two \$200 gift cards to the university bookstore

# Demographics

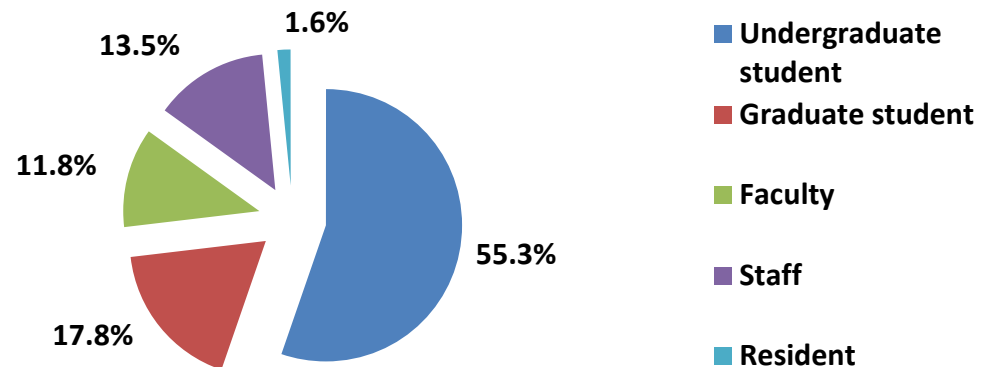
**Which is your main campus?**



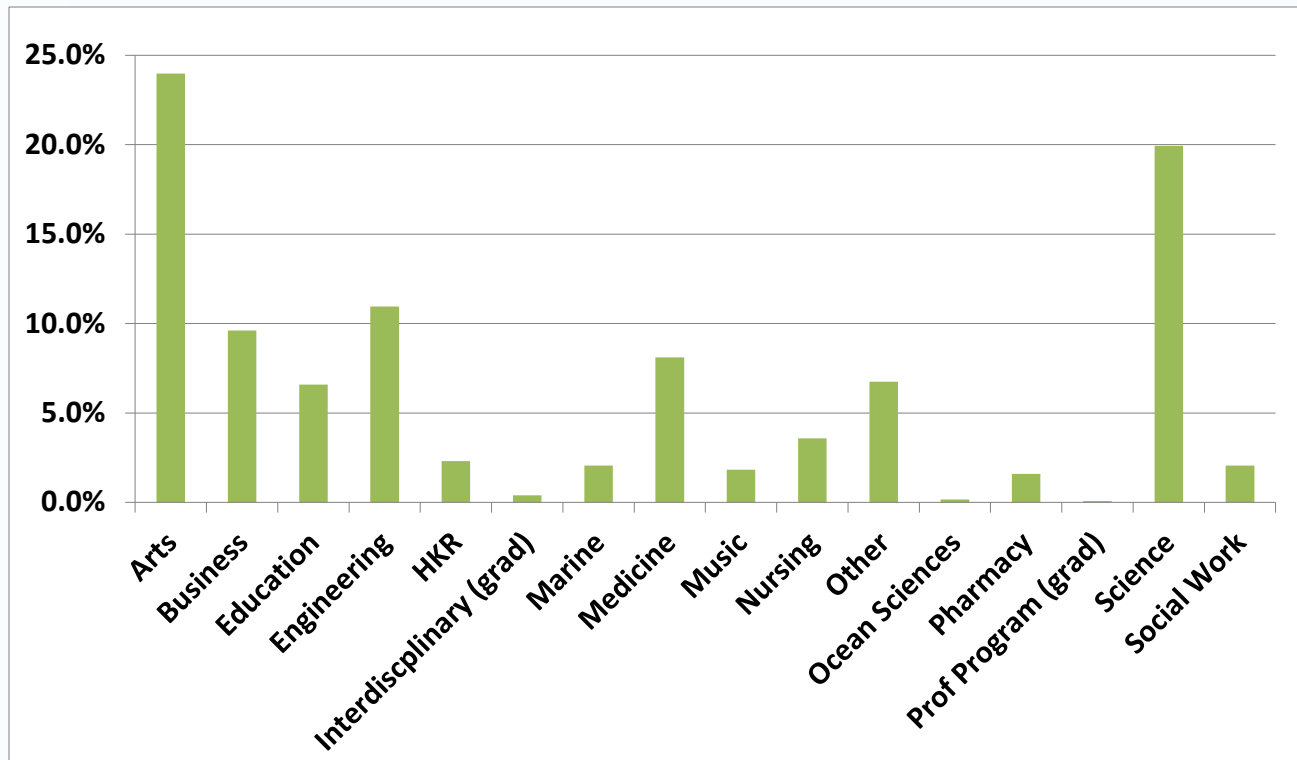
The Main Campus is clearly the most well represented. Not surprising, but results from other campuses were not significant enough to warrant separate analysis.

Undergraduates seem to be underrepresented in this survey, while faculty and staff are proportionately represented. Graduate students seem to be slightly over represented.

**What is your status?**



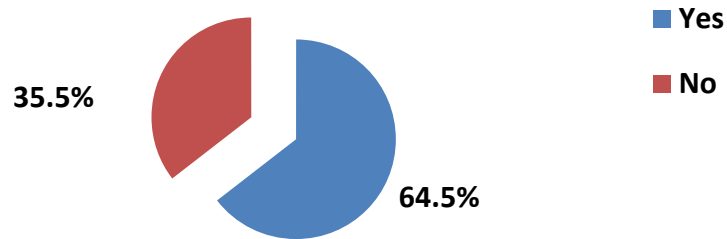
# Demographics



45% of respondents indicated  
faculty/school/department

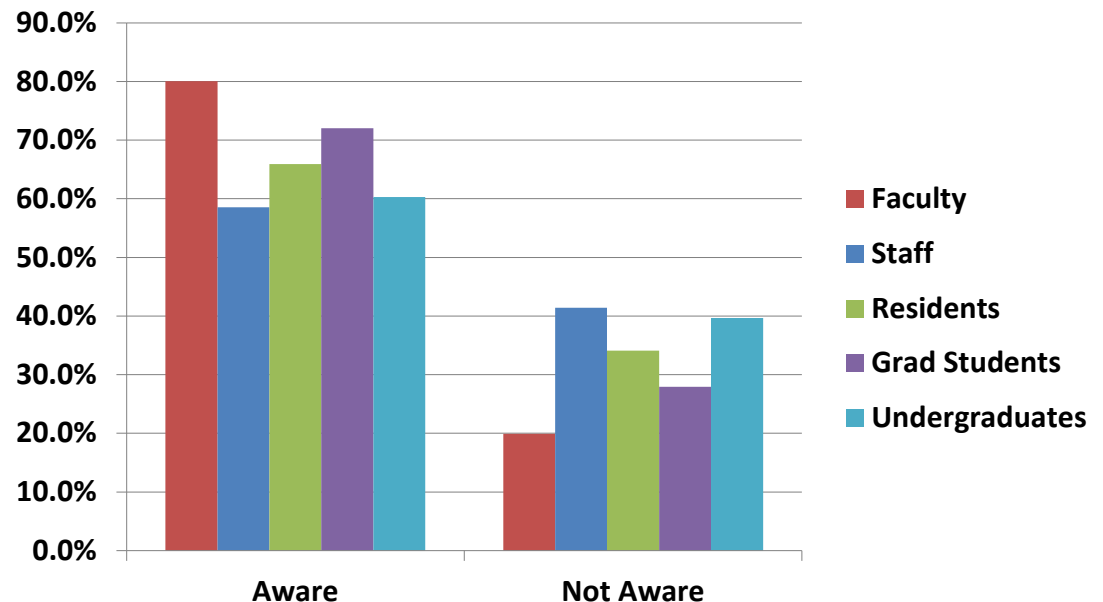
# Awareness

**Aware Memorial provides e-books?**



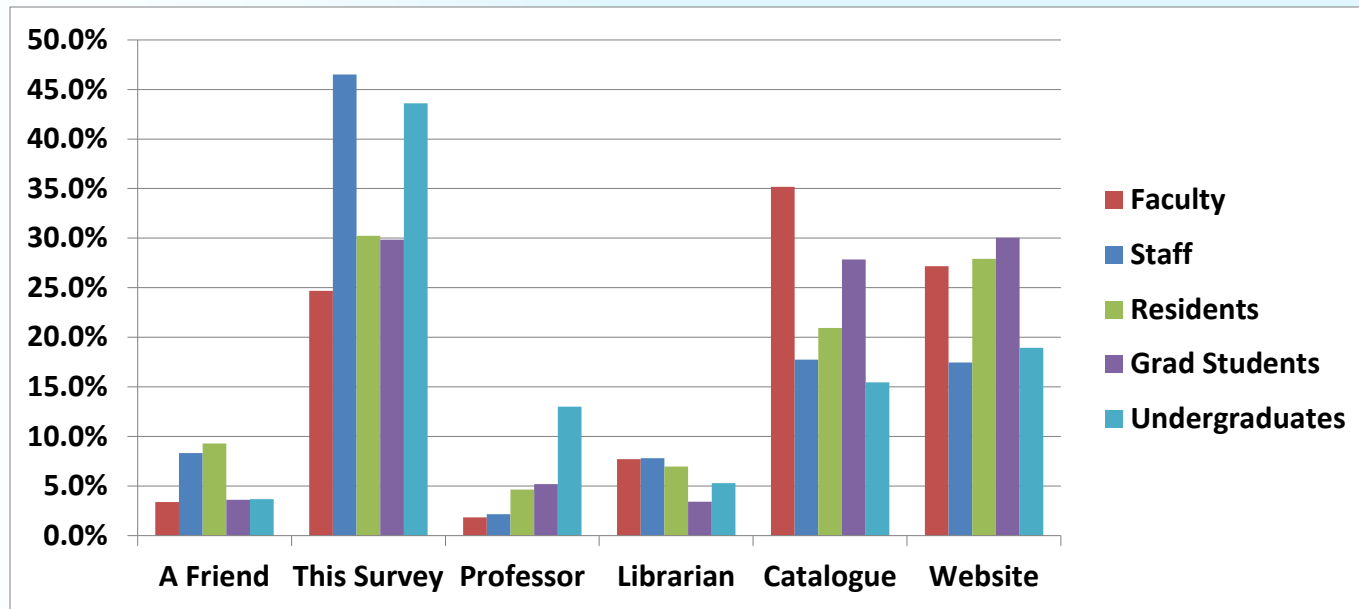
This shows a good awareness of ebooks in general

It is clear that more promotion needs to be done to inform our patrons, specifically our undergraduates, of our collection of ebooks.

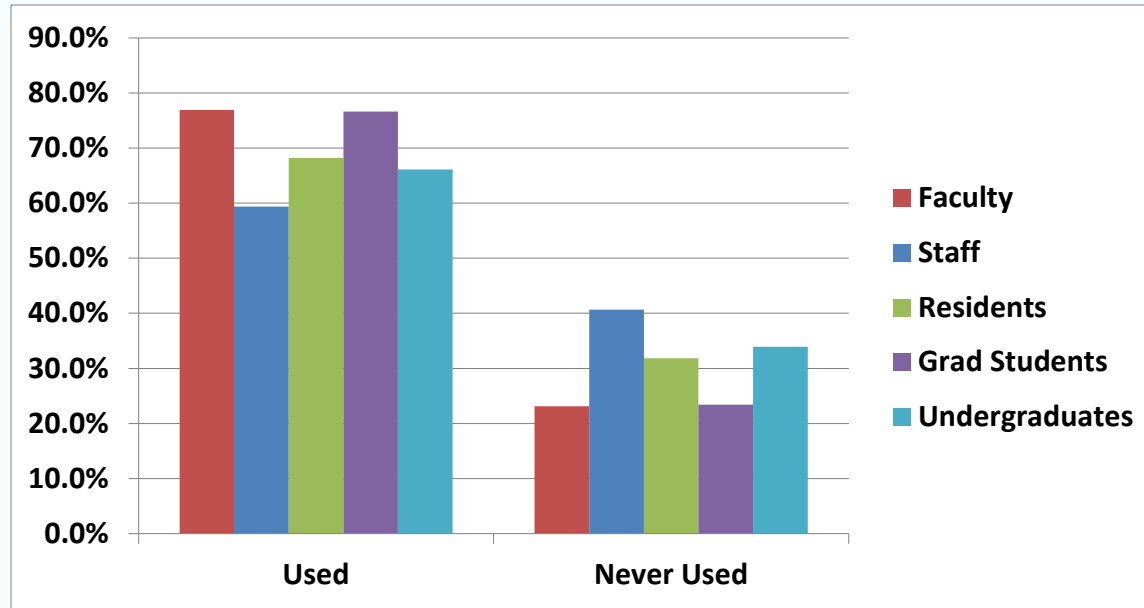


# How did you find out about Ebooks?

Librarians need to do more promotion regarding ebooks



# Have you ever used an ebook?

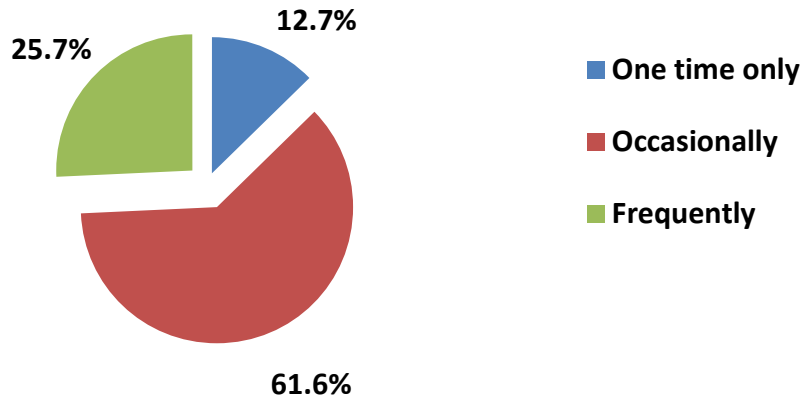


Although the majority of all respondents have used ebooks, faculty and graduate students are more likely to have used them than staff or undergraduates.

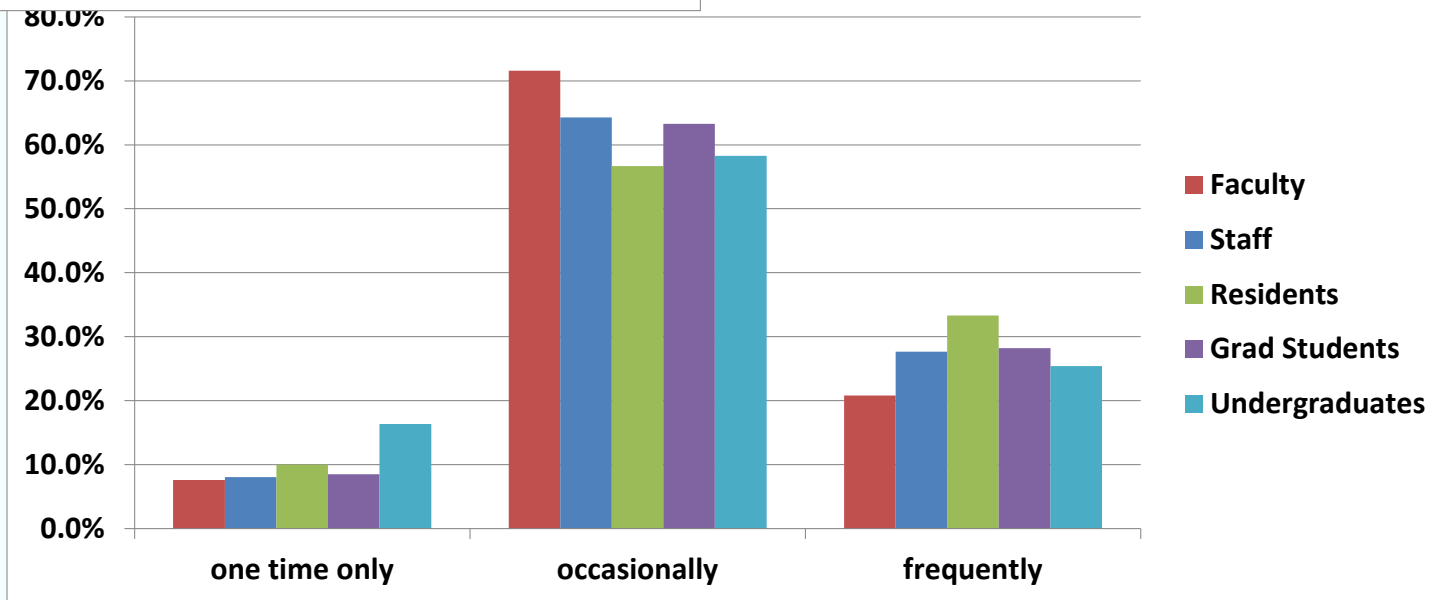
Those answering “no” to this question were redirected to Question 13, however, many proceeded to answer the subsequent questions.

# Frequency of Use

How often do you use e-books?

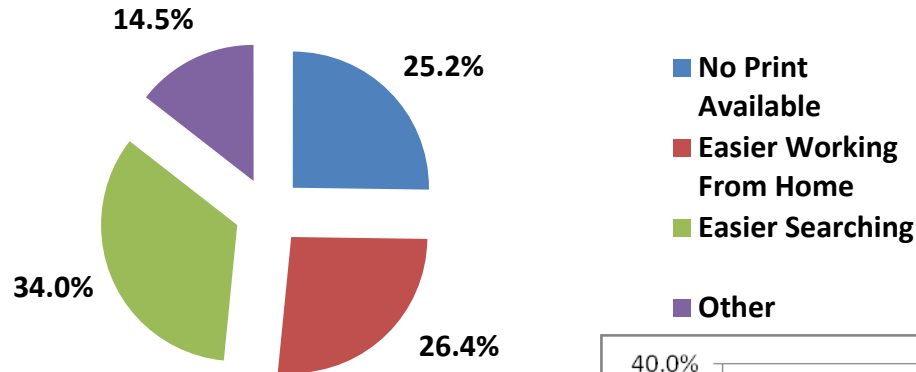


The majority of respondents consider themselves “occasional” e-book users. Just over one quarter answered that they are “frequent” users.



# Why e-books are used

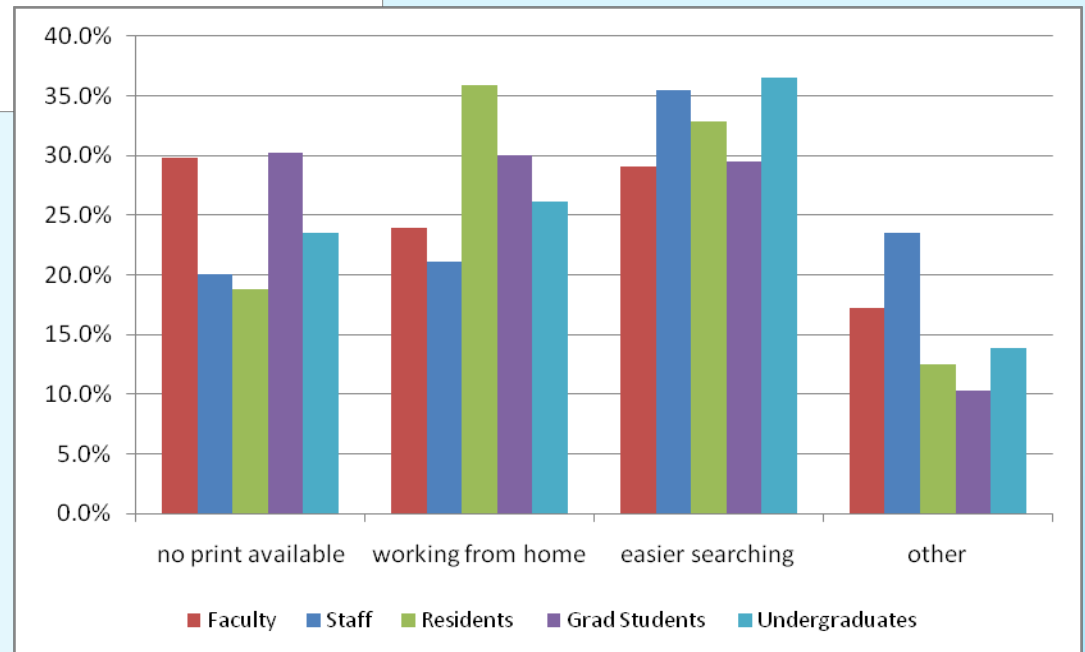
Why do you use e-books?



## Top Three "other" choices

- Convenience (36%)
- Cost (14%)
- Weight/Size (18%)

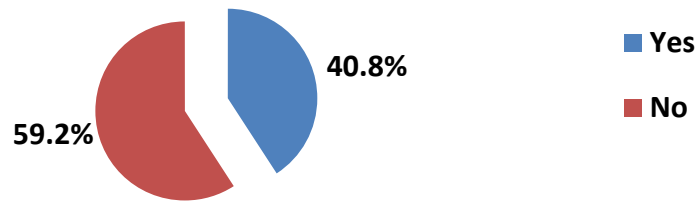
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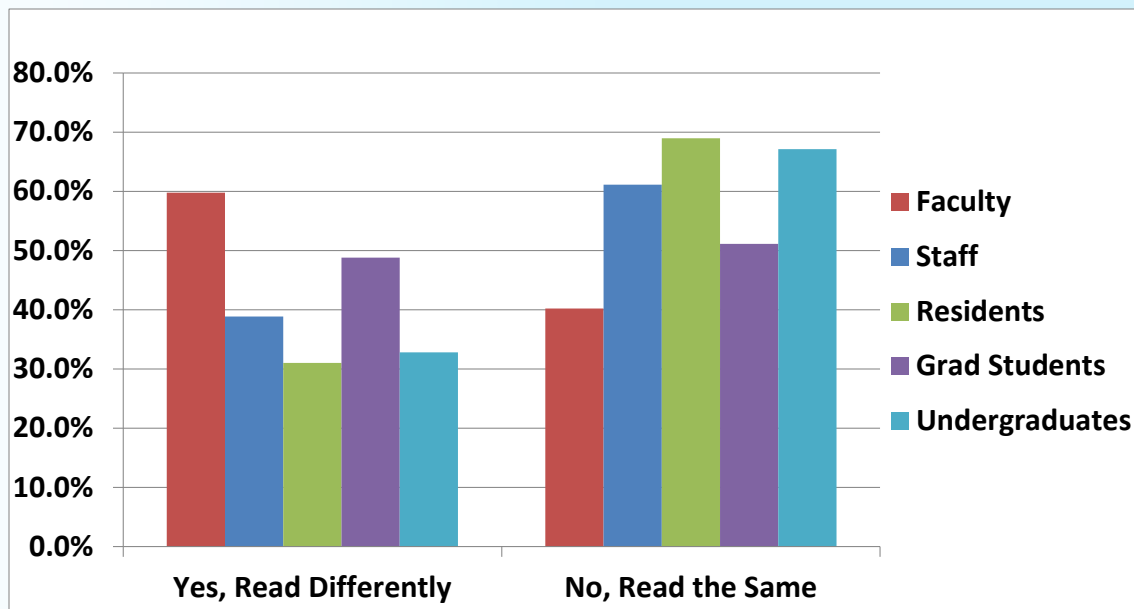


# Method of reading the same?

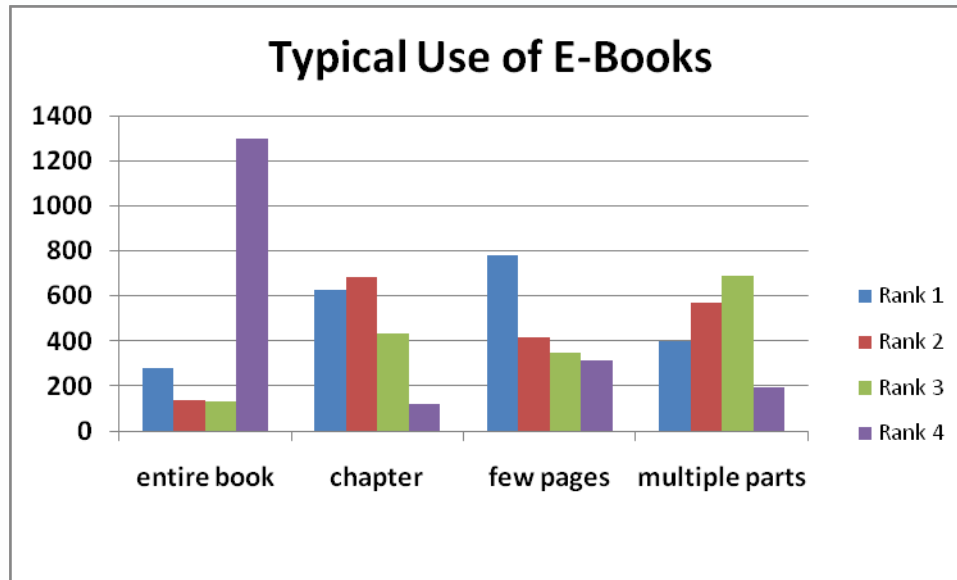
Do you read e-books and print books differently?



Search/Scan vs. Read  
(36%)  
n=879



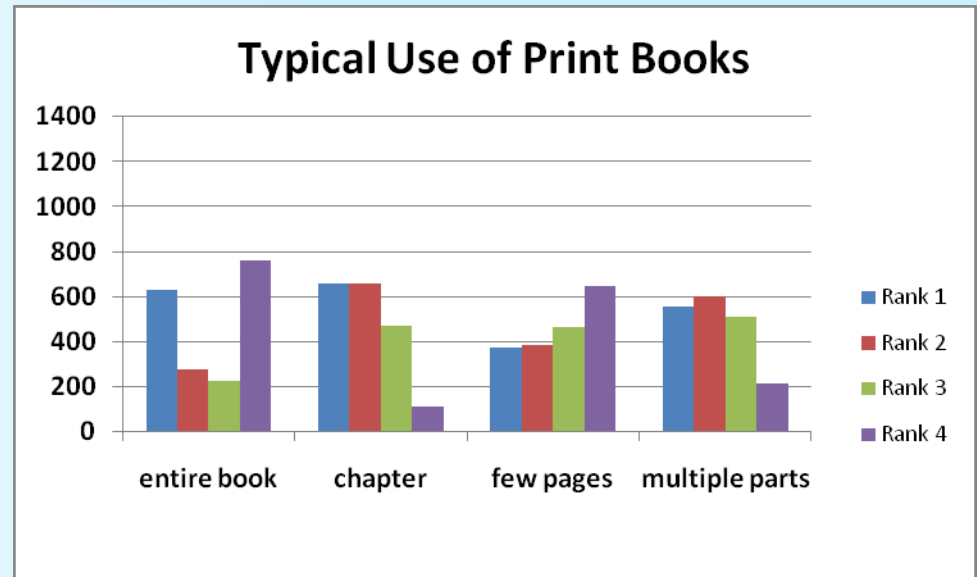
# Typical use by format



The preferred method of reading an e-book is a single page/few pages.

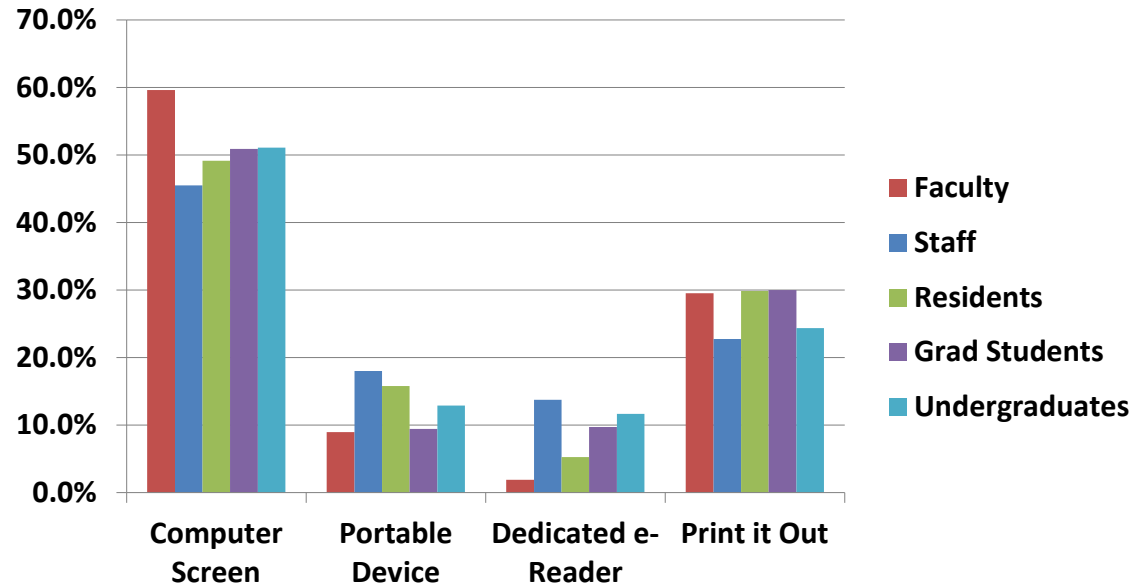
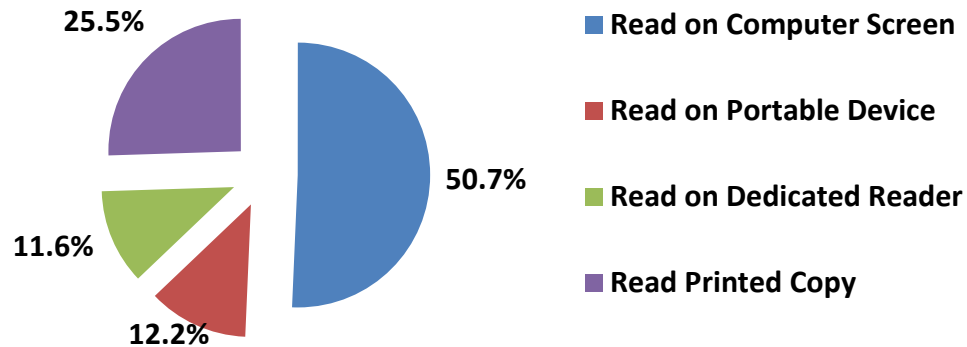
The numbers of people who said they read a chapter of a book are roughly the same for e-books and print books.

This data shows that many people do not read a book in its entirety regardless of format, but they are more likely to do so in print.

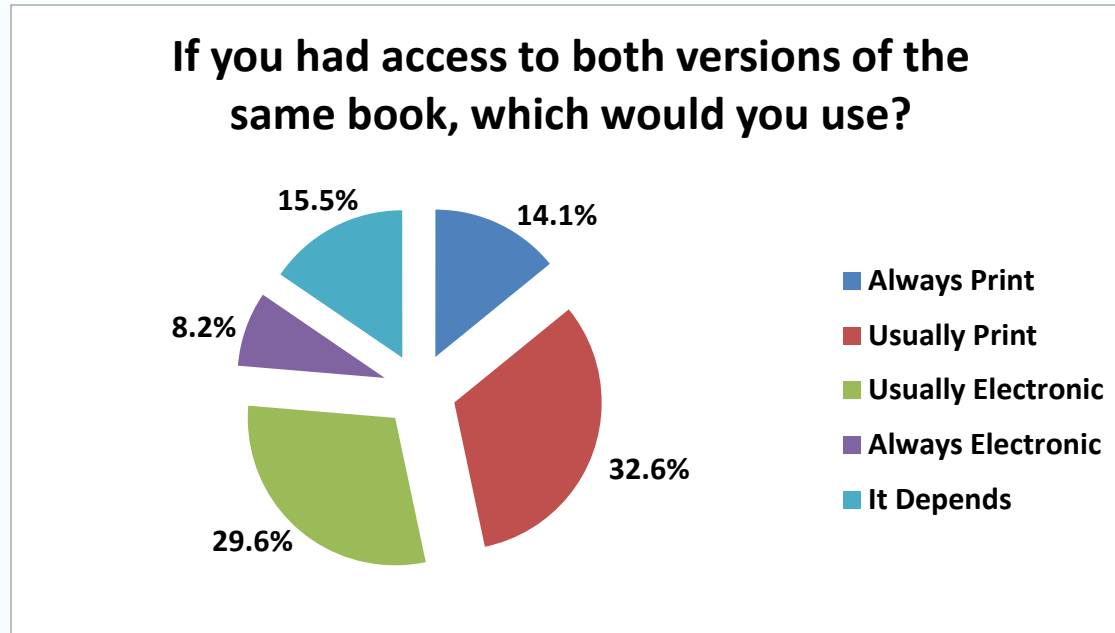


# Preference for reading e-books

Read e-books online or Print out



# General Preference

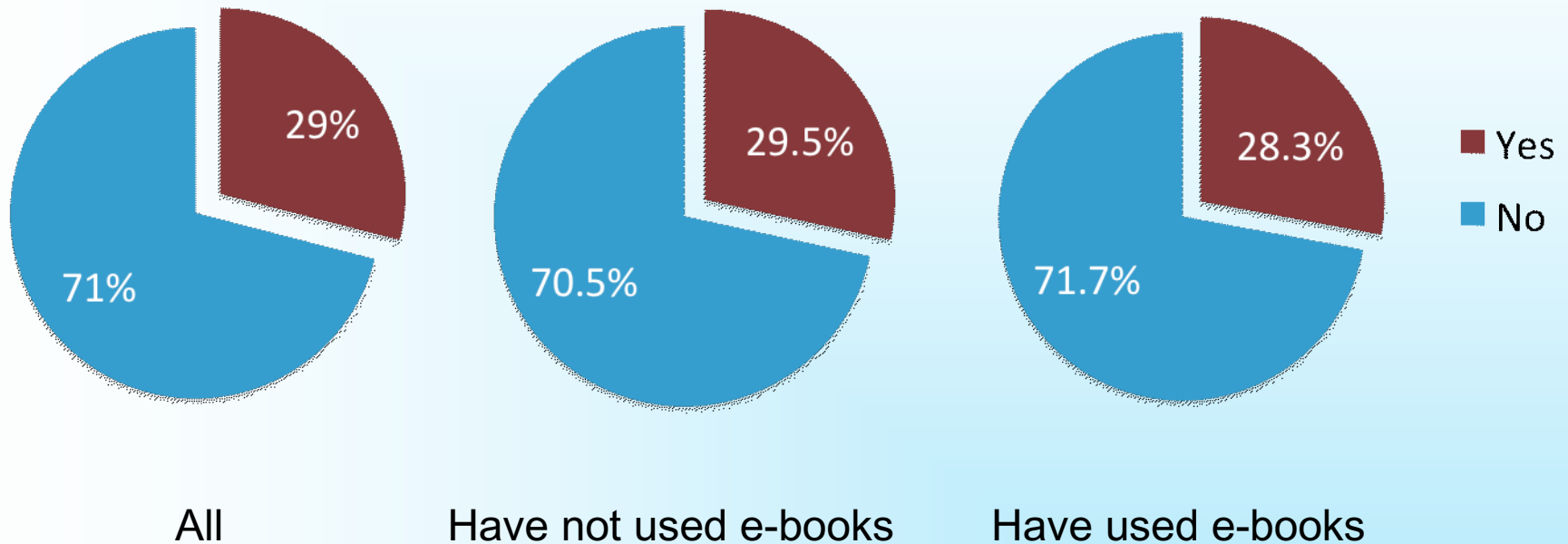


There were many answers in the “it depends” category, but the top three were:

- The reason for reading (19.8%)
- How much of the book was needed (19.8%)
- Location/portability of the book (12.7%)

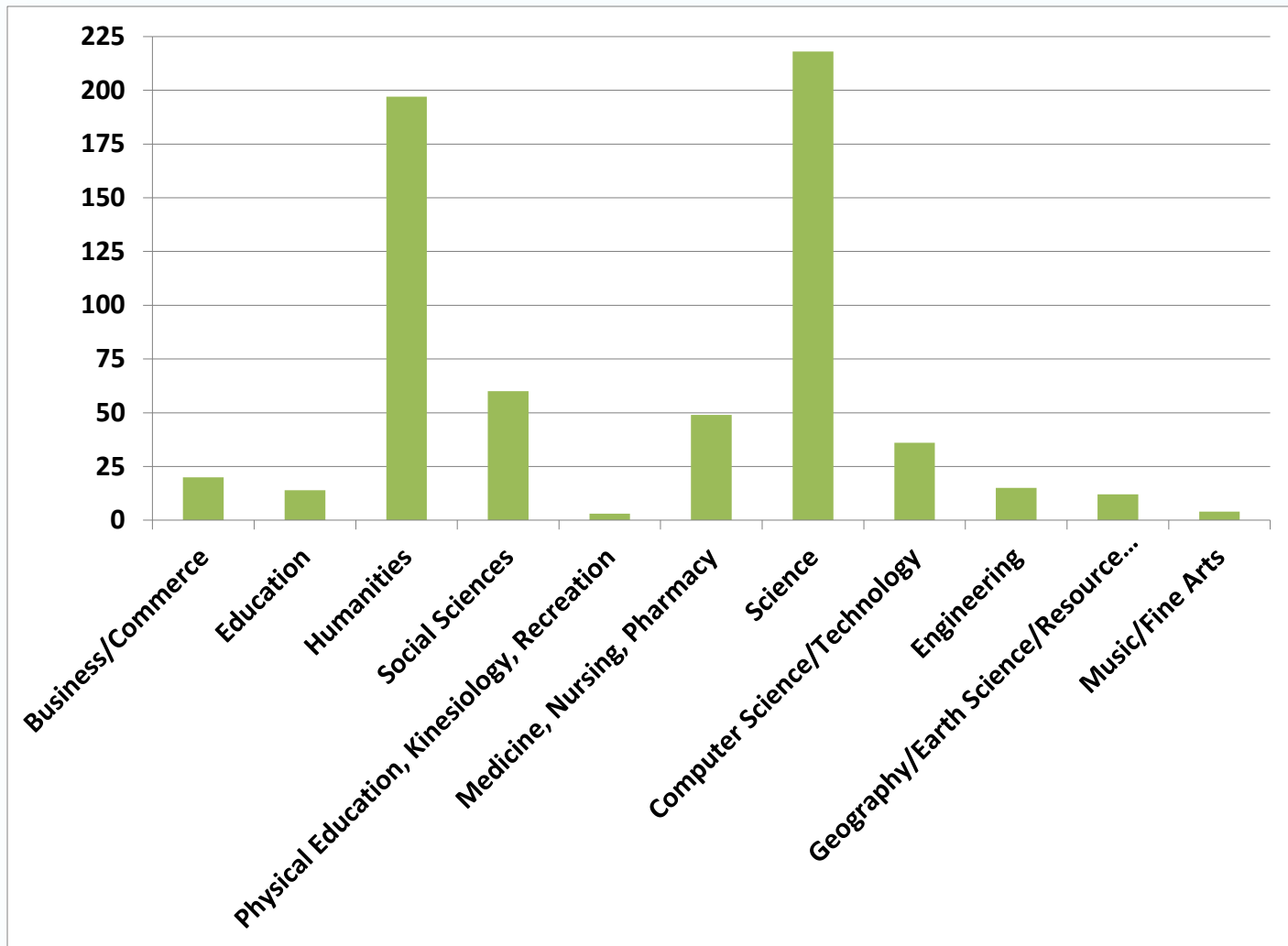
n= 323

# Does subject matter matter?



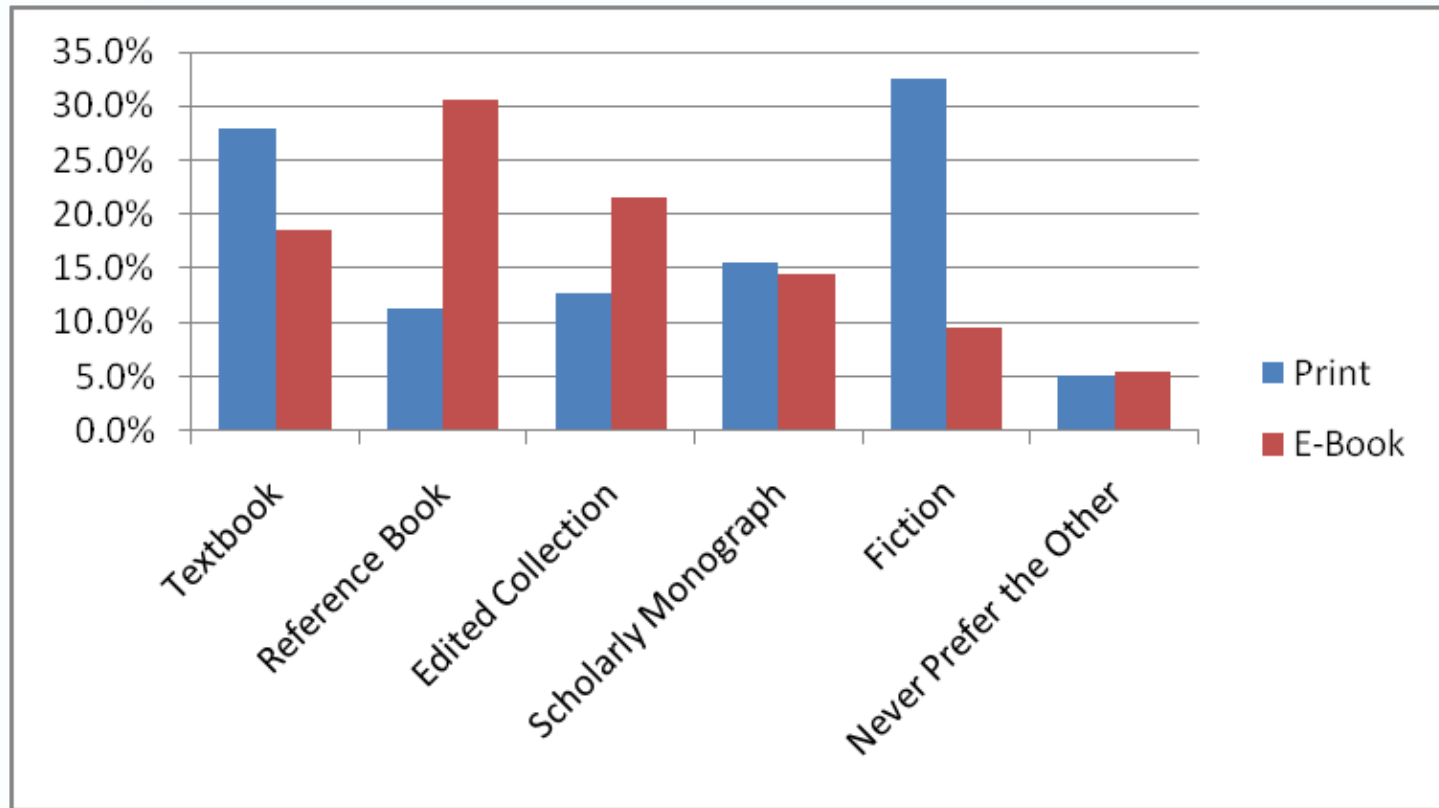
It is interesting to note there is virtually no difference between those who have used e-books and those who have not.

# Does subject matter matter?



n = 628

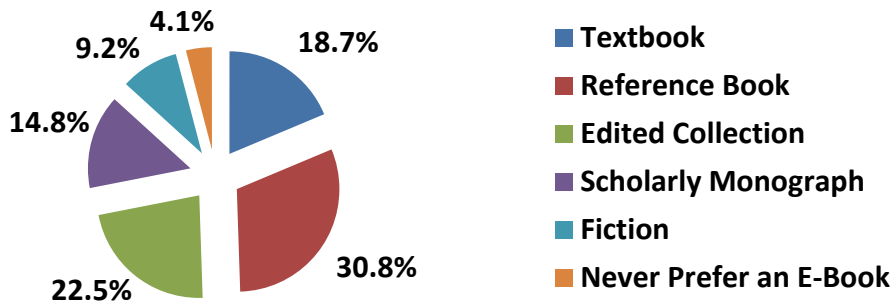
# Does type of book matter?



There are a few clear distinctions between which books are preferred in each format, with roughly 5% indicating they would always prefer to use one over the other.

# Does type of book matter?

**Which types of books would you prefer to use as an e-book (have used e-books)**

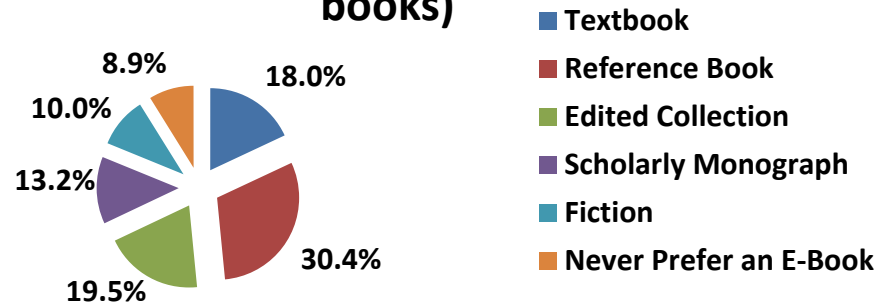


As with subject, there is little difference in the opinions of those who have used e-books and those who have not.

Interesting differences:

- Those who would never prefer an e-book
- Fiction

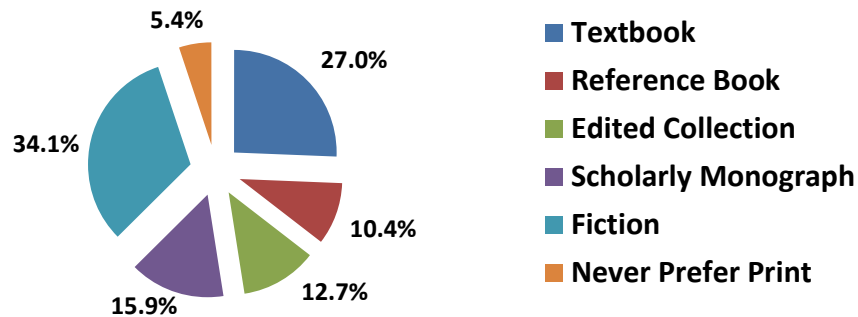
**Which types of books would you prefer to use as an e-book (have not used e-books)**





# Does type of book matter?

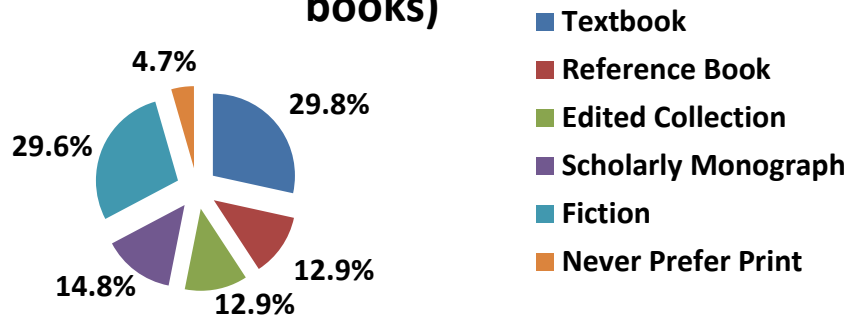
**Which types of books would you prefer to use as a print book (have used e-books)**



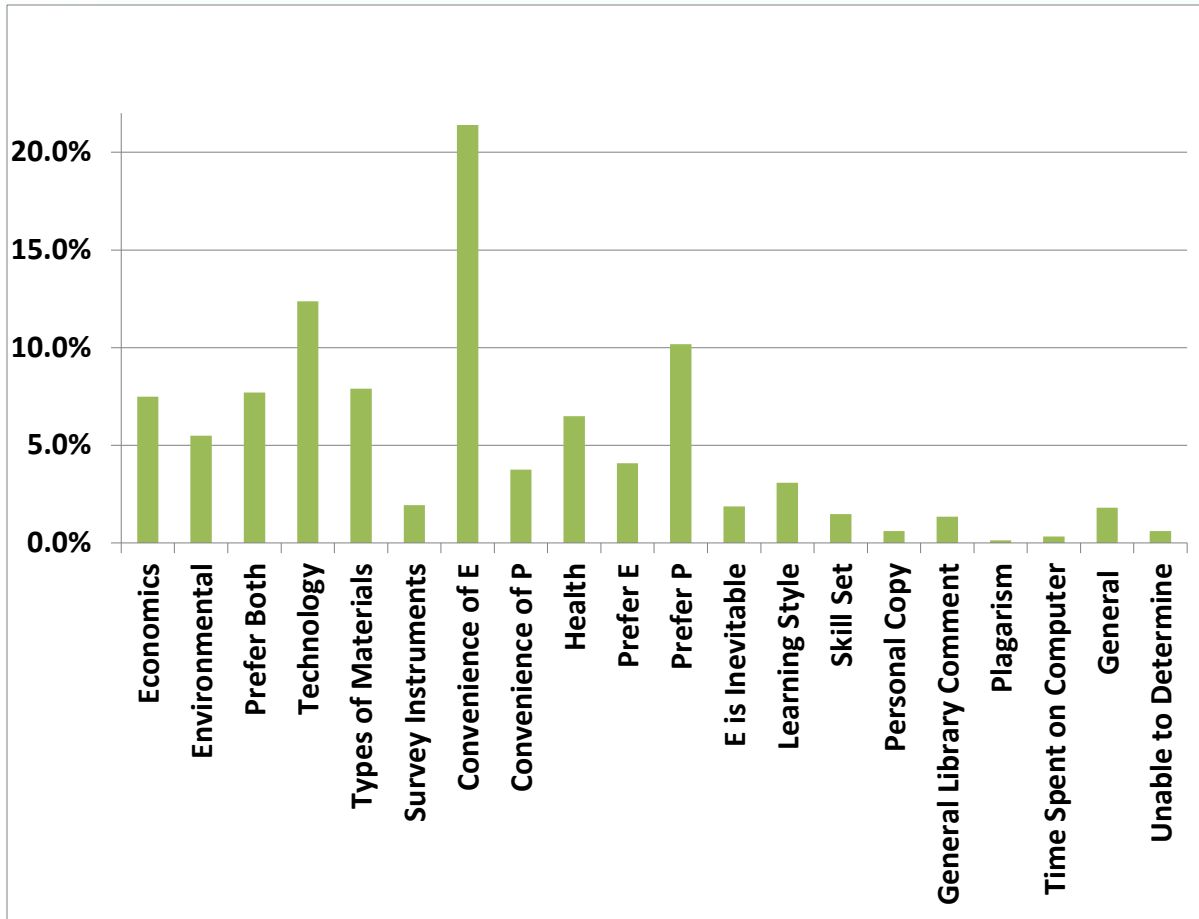
Of those who have never used e-books:

- almost 5% said they would never prefer print
- Fewer would prefer fiction in print

**Which types of books would you prefer to use as a print book (have not used e-books)**



# Any other comments?

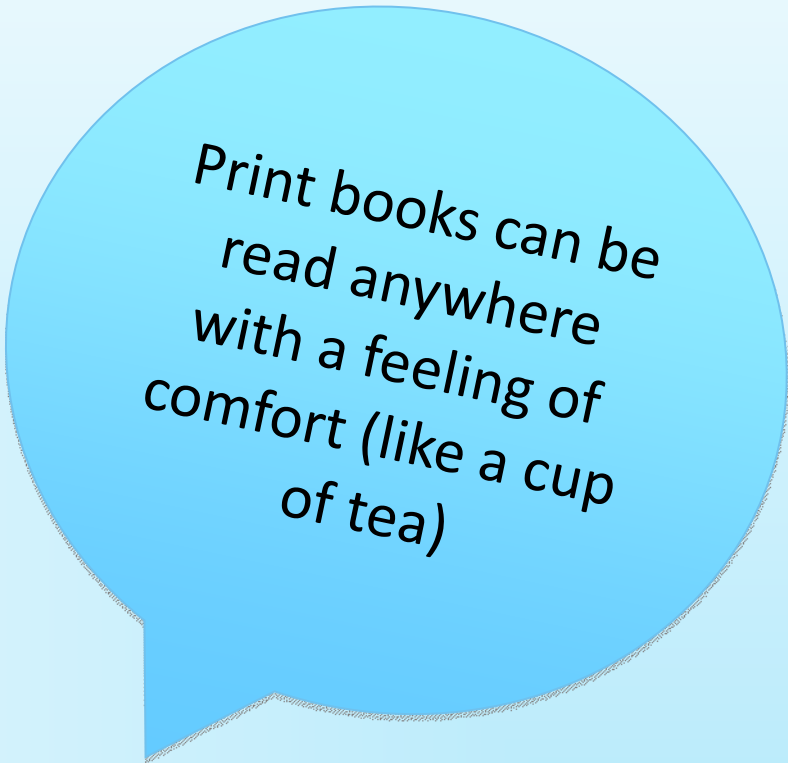


n=1495

When asked to provide any general comments, respondents were quite vocal. Most commonly, respondents commented on the convenience of electronic format, the technology (good or bad), and a preference for the printed word.

A green speech bubble with a white outline and a small tail pointing towards the bottom left.

I can get lost in my books

A light blue speech bubble with a white outline and a small tail pointing towards the bottom left.

Print books can be  
read anywhere  
with a feeling of  
comfort (like a cup  
of tea)

Why would a university library want to buy more e-books? Many e-books are available online now at no charge.

E-books are a great way to reduce our impact on the environment, and also is a good way for you guys to save some money!

I love e-books because you don't have to spend hours scouring the library for a book that may or may not be there.

I feel libraries need to have books in order to be libraries

It is also much harder to be distracted from reading a print book than it is to be reading an e-book because of various computer applications.

I don't like to have to rely on computers and their software in order to read books.

Use a real book, what's wrong with you?

I believe e-books and print books are complementary and shouldn't be a matter of either-or.

It's only a matter of time before e-books become the absolute norm and print becomes the text of the past.

# Limitations

- Survey software
- Campus ≠ Library
- Confusion
  - definition of e-book
  - personal vs. library e-books
- Only 45% of respondents indicated a Faculty/Department
- Some respondents thought we were asking them to choose one format over another
- Because we used an existing survey, we could not change some questions/answers that may have been better suited to our environment

# Summary

- This is a growing and important area and further studies on e-book usage are needed.
- No conclusion/consensus of opinion
- This study was done in the hopes of guiding collection development – still not clear
- The written word is in a state of transition
- E-books are a niche group that will work better for certain types of materials
- Respondents are willing to try using e-books and understand why libraries are looking into e-books
- People still prefer the printed word

# Thank you!

## Any questions?

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