Bowling Green State University
Faculty Survey:
Analytical Memo

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# Table of Contents

Overview ........................................................................................................................................ 2  
Key Insights .................................................................................................................................... 3 
Core National Questionnaire ........................................................................................................ 4 
Material Types and Formats ........................................................................................................ 7 
Undergraduate Instruction ........................................................................................................... 11 
Market Research .......................................................................................................................... 15 
Future Directions ....................................................................................................................... 17
Overview

The following memo provides an analytical narrative of the results of the Ithaka S+R Local Faculty Survey, which was administered at Bowling Green State University. The survey instrument covers many scholarly research and teaching-related topics, overlapping with the 2015 Ithaka S+R U.S. Faculty Survey, and in part overlapping with other previous iterations of the Ithaka S+R U.S. Faculty Survey. ¹

During Fall 2015, 795 Bowling Green State University faculty members received an email invitation to participate in a survey about faculty research habits. Twenty $10 gift cards to Starbucks or Pinkberry were offered as incentives for participation and three email reminders were sent before the close of the survey.

In total, 279 respondents clicked the survey link (about 35% of those who received the email invitation), with 264 respondents starting the survey (about 33%), and 211 of those respondents completing the survey, for an overall response rate of about 27%. Due to the survey flow and skip patterns, not all Bowling Green State University faculty respondents received every question in the survey. ²

BGSU developed three macro disciplinary groupings based on department affiliations to allow for stratified analysis: social sciences (117 respondents), sciences (31 respondents), and humanities (55 respondents).³ In addition, BGSU identified stratification by faculty status to be of interest for analysis; 38 respondents were Assistant Professors (NTK), 124 were Associate Professors and Professors (TEN), and 49 were non-tenure track faculty (FNT).

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² Furthermore, two out of the three additional modules (Material Types and Formats, Undergraduate Instruction, and Market Research) were displayed to each faculty member respondent; the Core National Questionnaire was displayed to all respondents.
³ Eight respondents were not included in these macro disciplinary groupings, based on their department affiliation.
Key Insights

Bowling Green State University asked Ithaka S+R to focus this analytical memo on macro disciplinary and faculty status stratifications. Ithaka S+R was also asked to review the survey results in light of topics of interest to the University Libraries, including traditional vs. non-traditional scholarly outputs, electronic vs. print resources, teaching methodologies and the use of learning management systems, and general attitudes towards the library. The analysis provided draws on survey findings from the Core National Questionnaire and the three additional modules (Material Types and Formats, Undergraduate Instruction, and Market Research). The results from the survey revealed the following strategically relevant high-level findings:

- Science faculty substantially differ from their peers in the way that they conduct research, share findings, and instruct undergraduate students.
- In addition, faculty status affects the way in which respondents view the role of the library and utilize its services and resources.
- Overall, faculty from differing disciplines and with differing statuses consistently indicate a high level of dependence on the library for conducting research, despite differences in behavior and attitudes towards their research.

Ithaka S+R believes these topics are among those that are valuable to track for change over time.
Core National Questionnaire

Faculty members were first asked a series of questions on discovery and access, scholarly communications, research practices, student research skills, and the role of the library; these questions were those asked in the 2015 Ithaka S+R U.S. Faculty Survey.

In analyzing how faculty members at BGSU utilize scholarly monographs in print format and digital format, distinct differences emerge by discipline. As displayed in Figure 1, science faculty have a lower affinity for monographs in print format than their colleagues across all activities. Overall, faculty members indicated that searching for a particular topic and exploring references are activities that are easier to perform with a scholarly monograph in digital format.

Figure 1: Please think about doing each of these things with a scholarly monograph in print format or in digital format, and use the scales below to indicate how much easier or harder is it to perform each activity in print or digital format.*

*Percent of respondents selecting “much” or “somewhat” easier in print format than digital
Faculty members were also queried on the frequency with which they shared their scholarly research in various formats, as Figure 2 below illustrates. Science faculty much less frequently shared their findings via magazines and trade journals that are not peer reviewed than their colleagues (8% vs. 26-42%) and much more frequently online under a Creative Commons or Open Source license (40% vs. 19-21%). Humanities faculty differ substantially from their colleagues in the frequency with which they share findings in scholarly monographs or edited volumes published by an academic publisher (87% vs.64-67%).

Figure 2: Please use the scales below to indicate how often you have shared the findings of your scholarly research in each of the following ways in the past five years. *

*Percent of respondents selecting “often” or “occasionally”

These two questions demonstrate distinct differences by discipline in the ways in which faculty conduct research and share their findings. These findings may suggest an opportunity for the library to target resources and services to faculty in specific disciplines, based on their current behavior and attitudes.
Faculty members were also asked generally about how much they depend on the university library for conducting research on a 10-1 scale, where 10 equaled “completely dependent” and 1 “not at all dependent.” Interestingly, faculty members from the three macro disciplines responded nearly identically, with 57-59% selecting 8-10 on this ten point scale, indicating a high level of dependence. While faculty behavior and attitudes on research differ by discipline, their dependence on the library for conducting their research generally does not.

It is also worth noting that faculty members with differing statuses did not vary substantially in indicating their dependence on the library for conducting research, with 51-61% of Associate Professor / Professor, Assistant Professor, and non-tenure track faculty selecting 8-10, as indicated in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: How dependent would you say you are on your college or university library for research you conduct?*

*Percent of respondents selecting 8-10, where 10 equals “completely dependent” and 1 equals “not at all dependent”
Material Types and Formats

Faculty members were then asked a set of questions on the role and value of various types of materials, including formal publications and primary source materials, for research and teaching and the role of print and digital versions of scholarly journals and monographs.

When asked about the importance of various types of materials for conducting research, similar findings emerge to an earlier question on the format in which faculty share their research.

**Figure 4:** How important to your research is each of the following types of materials?*

*Percent of respondents selecting 8-10, where 10 equals “extremely important” and 1 equals “not at all important”*
As illustrated in Figure 4 above, science faculty differ most substantially from their colleagues in the importance they place on various types of materials, in many cases rating the importance lower than their colleagues.

When viewing the responses to this question by faculty status, interesting differences appear as demonstrated in Figure 5 below. Non-tenure track faculty responses differ most substantially from their colleagues, finding magazines and trade journals that are not peer reviewed to be of much higher importance (45% vs. 9-24%), and scholarly monographs or edited volumes, published by an academic publisher of much lower importance (58% vs. 77-79%).

**Figure 5**: How important to your research is each of the following types of materials?*

*Percent of respondents selecting 8-10, where 10 equals “extremely important” and 1 equals “not at all important”*
Faculty were also queried on the value of potential changes and improvements to reading scholarly monographs in electronic format. As illustrated in Figure 6, science faculty found nearly all of the changes less valuable than their colleagues, with the exception of certified preservation of digital scholarly monographs. Humanities and social sciences faculty responded similarly to each other, with humanities faculty most valuing an improved ability to highlight, annotate, and print materials as needed (71%) and social sciences faculty most valuing an improved ability to navigate through and among monographs (69%).

**Figure 6**: Use the scales below to rate how much more valuable each of the following would make digital versions of scholarly monographs to you than they are today.*

*Percent of respondents selecting 8-10, where 10 equals “much more valuable than they are today” and 1 equals “not at all more valuable than they are today”*
In addition, responses differed by faculty status. Non-tenure track faculty rated certified preservation of digital scholarly monographs and more effective integration of images, multimedia, and graphs linked to the text more valuable than their colleagues (45% vs. 33-35% and 60% vs. 45-53%, respectively) and the other changes all less valuable than their colleagues. Assistant Professors and Associate Professors / Professors responded very similarly to the potential changes, with the most significant difference in value noted for an ability to perform computational analysis (text mining) over a corpus of electronic monographs (38% for Assistant Professors vs. 23% for Associate Professors / Professors).
Undergraduate Instruction

Faculty were then given a series of questions on their undergraduate instruction, including classroom formats, assignment types, integration of pedagogical and communications mechanisms, and valued support services including the library.

Faculty members were first asked about the types of materials they assign their upper and lower division undergraduate students. While there are some differences in materials assigned to lower division versus upper division students, the more noteworthy differences are those based on faculty discipline, as displayed in Figures 7 and 8 below. In both lower and upper division classes, science faculty differ most greatly from other faculty, often assigning the listed materials less frequently.

The frequency of assigning these materials is fairly consistent by faculty status, with one noteworthy distinction; non-tenure track faculty were more likely than their colleagues to assign non-scholarly books to upper division students (70% vs. 29-46%)

*Percent of respondents selecting “often” or “occasionally”
Science faculty less frequently make use of email lists and discussion boards on course management systems than those in the humanities and social sciences (50% vs. 66-67%), as displayed in Figure 9 below. When viewing the responses to this question by faculty status, there is not much variation across the statuses (60-69%).
Faculty members were also presented with a series of statements on instructional approaches and resources. As Figure 10 below illustrates, science faculty are less interested than their colleagues in adopting new pedagogies that take advantage of opportunities offered by digital technology (52% vs. 65-75%) and are less likely to agree that their institution offers excellent training and support to help them adopt new pedagogies that take advantage of these opportunities (33% vs. 52-55%), while they are more likely to agree that open access, open source, or freely available instructional resources play a very important role in their teaching (48% vs. 35-36%).
It is noteworthy that responses to this question did not differ substantially based on faculty status, with the exception of responses to the final statement, “I find it difficult to locate open access, open source, or freely available instructional resources.” Non-tenure track faculty were much less likely to agree with this statement than their colleagues (19% vs. 31-47%), indicating a greater ease with locating these resources.
Market Research

Finally, faculty were asked a series of questions on their overall impressions and usage of library support services, to understand the library’s comparative position in a changing usage environment.

Non-tenure track faculty tend to view the library as more of a partner for research and/or teaching than their colleagues (54% vs. 32%), as opposed to a service provider to be utilized as needed (46% vs. 68%), as is illustrated in Figure 11 below. Additionally, science faculty are more likely to view the library as a service provider (78% vs. 50%-64%) than a partner. These findings may have implications for the manner in which the library is promoted to faculty members, depending on their existing perceptions of the role of the library.

**Figure 11:** Do you view your college or university library as a partner for your research and/or teaching or as a service provider that you utilize as needed?

Finally, faculty were asked to rate research- and teaching-related library services and resources. As Figure 12 displays, non-tenure track faculty generally described the services most positively as compared to their colleagues, with faculty generally finding research-related materials or content and research-related services more useful than teaching-related materials and services.
Humanities and social sciences faculty tended to rate the resources and services more positively than science faculty (45-72% vs. 33-43%).

Figure 12: Overall, how would you rate your college or university library’s:

*Percent of respondents selecting “good” or “extremely good”
Future Directions

Bowling Green State University’s implementation of the Ithaka S+R Faculty Survey suggests these key opportunities for future strategic direction:

- Although science faculty indicate a high level of dependence on the library consistency with that of their colleagues, their behavior and attitudes towards their research, teaching, and the role and value of the library differs substantially. This may suggest an opportunity for providing and/or promoting library resources and services to science faculty in a more tailored, targeted manner.

- The ways in which non-tenure track faculty differ from their colleagues in answering many of the survey questions may warrant investigation. It may be of interest for the library to explore the ways in which non-tenure track faculty view the library as a partner for conducting research and/or teaching, rather than a service provider to be utilized as needed, to promote the library as a partner to tenure-track faculty.