

LKS Library and Knowledge Services

‘Making the Most of Information’ survey report 2013

Summary

The survey aimed to find out about Trust staff’s information seeking habits and preferences and to gather library user opinion on Trust library services. Print and online versions of the survey were opened for responses for three weeks in March 2013. 209 responses were received, all from the online survey. 159 respondents described themselves as library users.

67% of respondents were from South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare (SSSFT) and 28% from Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Partnership (SSOTP). Two-thirds were based in South Staffordshire, with 21% in Shropshire and 4% in Telford and Wrekin. The largest occupational group was nursing and health visiting staff (34%).

In terms of types of information used for work and/or learning, the most common source was guidelines. Traditional information sources that the library holds and signposts people to (books and journal articles) are still very widely used. However, staff are making extensive use of a much wider range of material. Many are using mobile devices (particularly Smartphones) to access information online as well as desktop or laptop computers. Respondents report preferring to use websites that have a very simple search interface, give immediate access to full text and provide a one-stop shop to a range of information. The most common ways in which respondents kept up to date was through going in search of information themselves, rather than signing up to sources that came to them regularly (e.g. e-mail updates). The results suggest that the library has a continuing role to play in signposting to quality sources of information beyond the traditional books and journal articles. It should also seek to raise awareness amongst staff about when they can afford to do a quick search and use the most easily available information and when it is worth taking the time to do (or request) a more detailed search and then wait for any information not immediately available.

Respondents who used the library service were generally satisfied with the availability of books and journals. There were very high levels of satisfaction with the library’s current standards of service for providing articles, answering enquiries and supplying search results. Over 80 respondents expressed an interest in communicating with the library by text (which was much more popular than social media routes). Most respondents preferred to receive search skills training through a one to one session, with a group of colleagues or via e-learning rather than through a timetabled course. Overall, 99% of respondents who expressed an opinion agreed (39%) or strongly agreed (60%) that they were satisfied with library services.

Most respondents used information from the library to support professional development, followed by patient care, study/course work, research and information for service users or carers. The main barrier to library use was lack of time.

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1 Aims

The aims of the 2013 'Making the Most of Information' survey were to:

- Find out what library users thought of the library services currently on offer with a view to improving future services and ensuring they remained relevant to user needs
- Gain an understanding of the way in which SSSFT and SSOTP staff use information, particularly that found online, including obstacles to their use.
- Provide evidence on some specific aspects of library services to comply with criteria within the Library Quality Assurance Framework

The main outcome was to be this report and action points identifying ways of improving existing services and increasing the use of quality health information in local practice.

2 Methodology and population

A draft survey was drawn up in collaboration with a neighbouring library service. This was then tailored for local use and a non-library perspective sought from the Trust Clinical Education Lead. Advice on the best tool to use to collect and analyse the data was obtained from the SSSFT Research and Development team. The survey was then discussed in depth by the librarians and piloted with all the library staff and the Information Team. Slight changes were made based on feedback received from the pilot.

The finalised survey was opened for responses in mid March 2013, using the free version of the Qualtrics survey software. It was publicised predominantly as an online survey, though paper surveys were available on request (also generated from the Qualtrics software). There were initial teething problems with the link to the survey, due to network issues. However, once these were resolved, the survey remained open for two to three weeks. It was publicised through a variety of methods including:

- News item on Trust intranet
- 'Signature' on library staff e-mails and forwarded bulletins
- E-mail sent out to all registered library users and all ATHENS account holders within SSSFT and SSOTP South Division
- Posters in the site libraries

The survey was aimed at all staff in both SSSFT and SSOTP South, not specifically at library users. It was structured so that only library users would be asked the questions about the quality of current services.

As an incentive, entrants were offered the opportunity to be entered in to a prize draw to win one of two £25 vouchers (bought from the library's charitable funds).

Although a deadline was set for the return of the questionnaire, all responses received before the survey was shut down online were included. Altogether 209 responses were received. All of these were received through the online survey. 159 of these respondents stated that they used Trust library services. The library had 1353 registered users in April 2013 so this suggests a response rate of 11% of registered library users¹. The number of

¹ This assumes that all respondents who stated they used library services were registered library users, and that none of the respondents who said they did not use Trust library services were registered library users

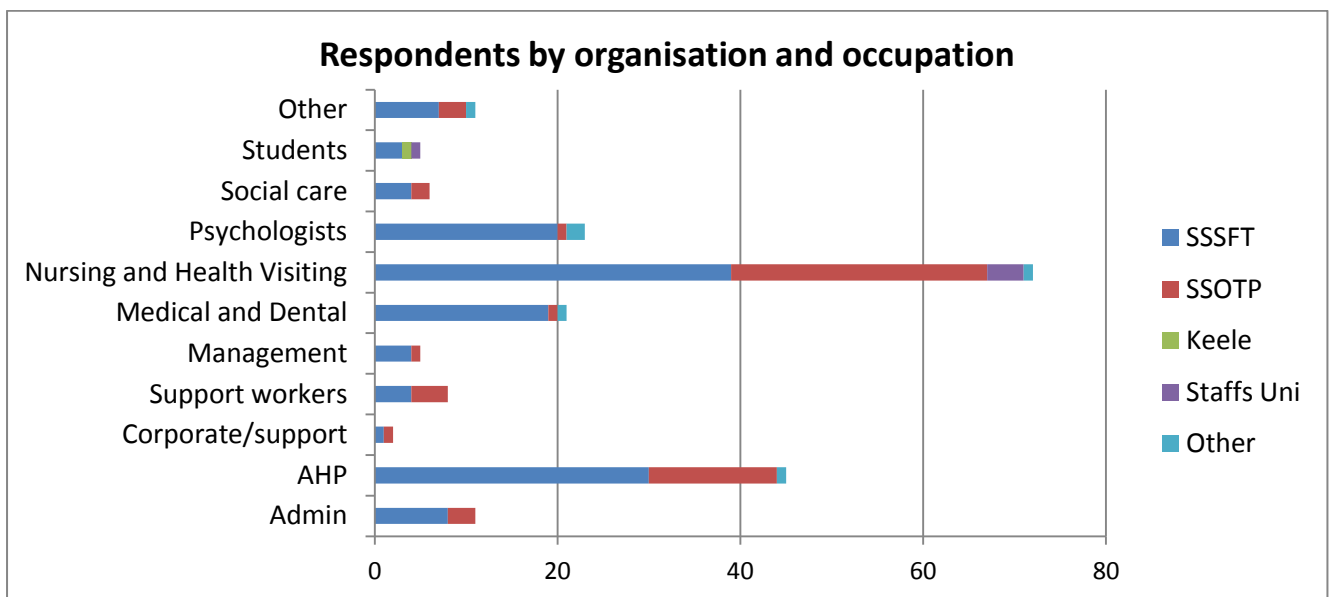
responses was a substantial improvement from the 115 responses received to the 2009 library survey, when no incentives were offered to respondents.

The Qualtrics software provided a basic report of all findings and also allowed cross tabulation. This meant that no manual data entry was required.

The report below highlights key findings from the questionnaire results, and shows overall responses to questions. Full details of responses are given in Appendix 3 and references to tables within the report refer to this Appendix. Due to the relatively low numbers involved, little cross-tabulation of responses was carried out. Where further analysis was carried out, more detailed breakdowns of data are available in Appendix 4.

3 Characteristics of respondents

67% of respondents were from South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare (SSSFT) and 28% from Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Partnership NHS Trust (SSOTP). These correspond closely to a snapshot of registered users of the service from April 2013 that showed that 65% were from SSSFT and 26% from SSOTP.



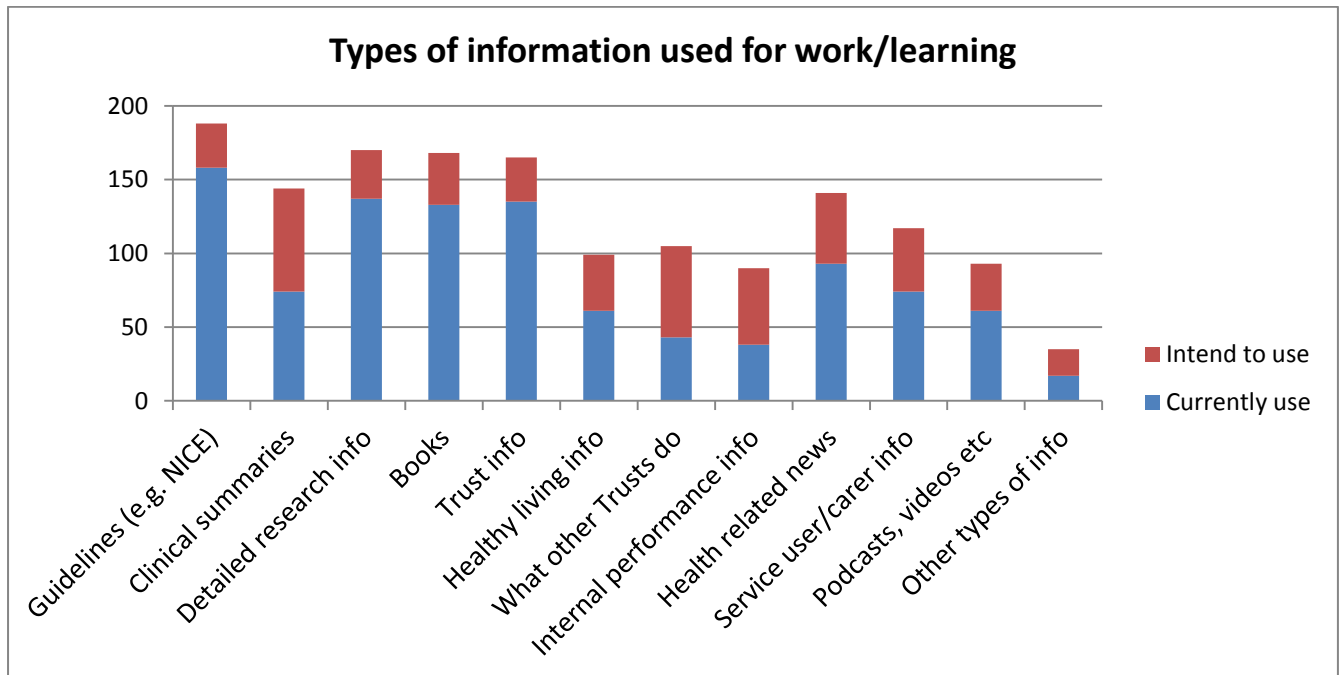
34% of responses were received from nursing and health visiting staff, followed by 22% from AHPs, 11% from psychologists and 10% from Medical and Dental staff. As would be expected from the differing nature of the two Trusts served, the chart above shows that the majority of Medical and Dental and Psychologist respondents were from SSSFT.

Two-thirds of respondents were based in South Staffordshire (138 responses), with 21% in Shropshire and 4% in Telford and Wrekin. Of the 'other' responses, nine were from North Staffordshire and two each from Birmingham and Liverpool.

4 Information Seeking habits

This section of the questionnaire aimed to investigate the sorts of information and information sources staff are using to inform their practice and CPD and, from a library perspective, lead to an improved awareness of what forms of information we should be supplying to our users beyond the traditional resources of books and journal articles.

4.1 Types of information used for work or learning in last three months



The chart above shows that the most common information sources currently used were guidelines, detailed research information such as journal articles, Trust information, such as local policies and procedures, and books (print or e-books).

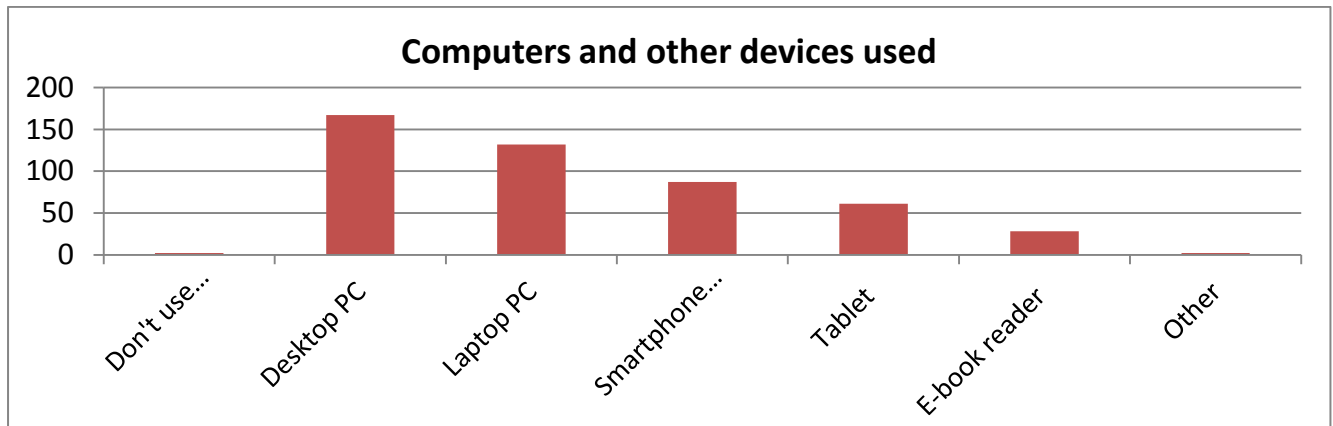
Respondents were then asked to select types of information that they were not currently using but expected to use in the next six months (table 5). The most common responses were brief clinical information (70 responses) and information about what other organisations and Trusts are doing (62). Respondents also expected to make greater use of internal performance information and reports, health related news and service user and carer information leaflets.

The responses to this question showed that whilst the traditional information sources that the library tends to refer users to (journal articles and books) are still very important, staff are making extensive use of a much wider range of material. The implications for the library are that it needs to broaden the range of material it draws on when answering queries and carrying out literature searches. This means increasing awareness of a wider range of information sources and improving library staff skills in incorporating it into searches. The move over the last year to a template that incorporates a greater range of information, including guidelines, will help as a prompt to this.

The responses also showed some demand for clinical knowledge summary type information, something that the library currently does not supply.

4.2 Computers and devices used to access information

A growing range of IT devices are being used to access information, and some of these have implications for the information sources being used. Therefore respondents were asked which they currently used to find or read information online (see table 6 for full results).

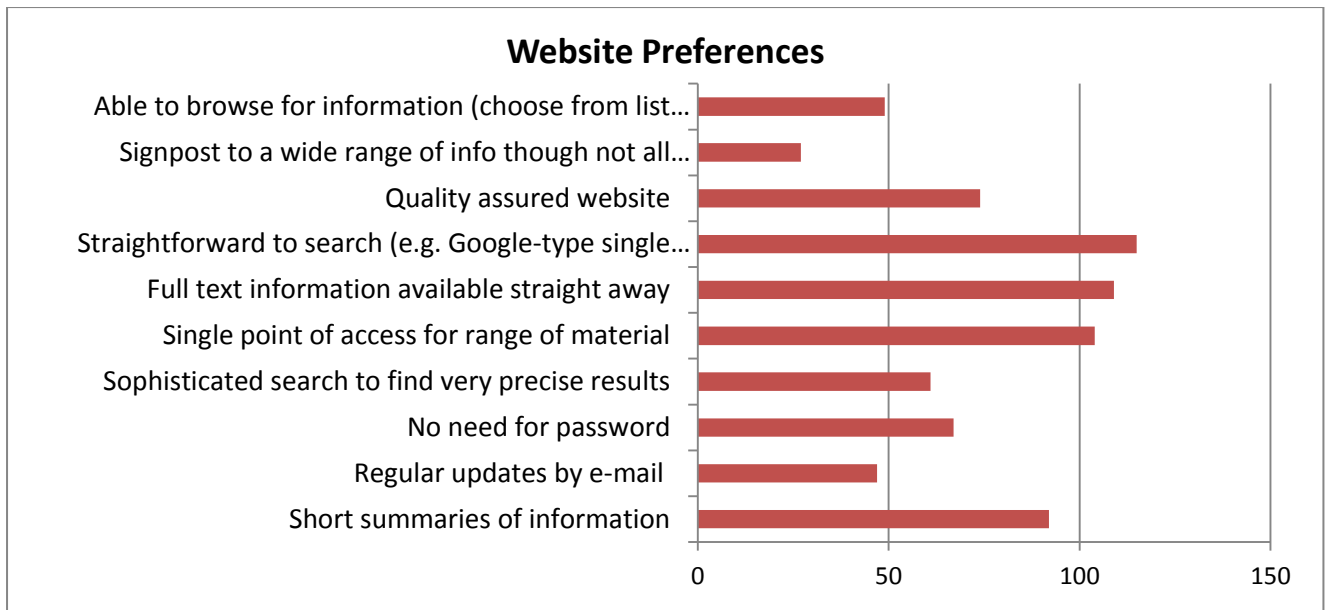


Respondents were encouraged to select as many options as applied, and the results show that a lot of people access information from more than one sort of device and use mobile as well as desktop computers. Nearly half of respondents were using some form of Smartphone (87 responses) and this size of device was more common than tablets. These results show that staff use personal as well as Trust-owned devices to search for health information online, and emphasises the need for library staff to be familiar with a range of mobile devices, not just those in use within the Trust.

This has implications for the library service in terms of the sources of information likely to be used on the mobile devices – the library staff need to become familiar with apps and mobile versions of websites, and be able to recommend and promote quality sources of information for these environments as well as the conventional websites and e-resources available for desktops and laptops.

4.3 Factors influencing respondents' choice of website

While library training and national and local e-resources provision focused on the traditional journal articles and bibliographic databases to search online, the library staff are under no illusions about the fact that most people use Google as their first port of call. Respondents were asked to select the top four factors that influenced their choice of website, in order for the library staff to try to identify the best way of encouraging use of quality information sources.



The chart above (also table 7) shows that most respondents opted for convenience and ease of use over comprehensiveness or precision of results or the quality of the website. The need for a password did not appear to be a significant deterrent for most users, whilst 74 respondents (38%) considered using a quality assured website was a decisive factor in their choice of where to search. The least important factor was deemed to be a site that signposted to a wide range of information (27 responses).

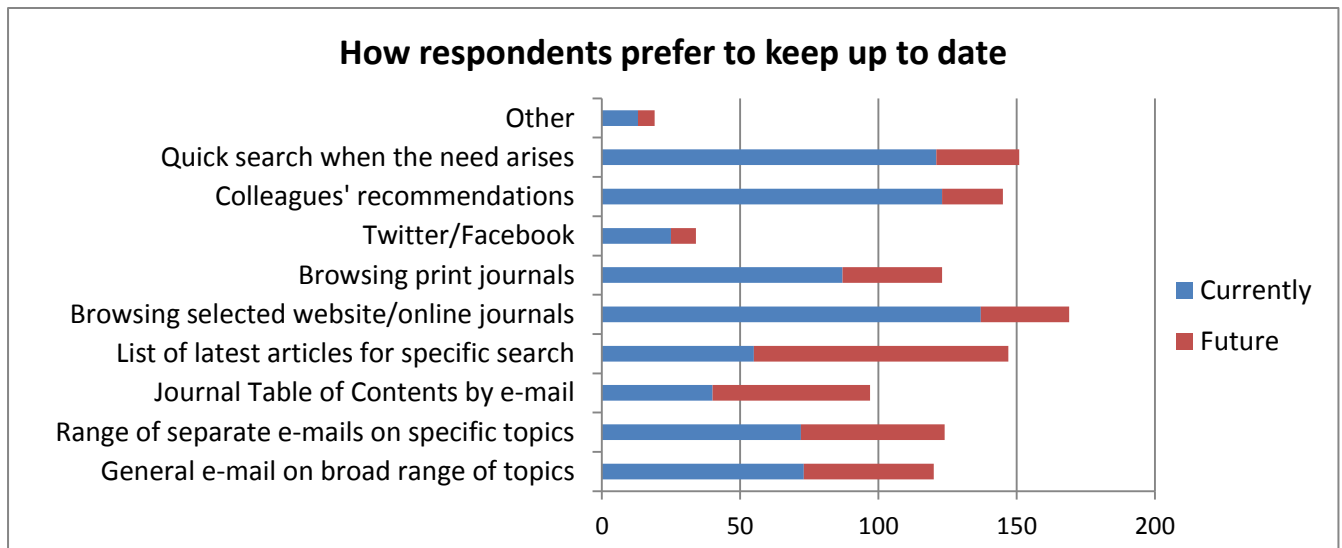
The responses to this question pose an interesting question for library staff about the appropriateness of the current emphasis on training staff to find information by searching databases using a very un-Google-like search interface that provides some immediate full text but predominantly signposts them to articles that they have to request from elsewhere. Should the library be placing more emphasis on resources such as NHS Evidence that have distinct weaknesses but that meet a lot of the criteria respondents deem important; and place greater emphasis on database searches as a 'second line' resource: something you request from the library or get training on once you've identified you can't find the information you need via NHS Evidence? This would run the risk of staff settling for the results they obtain from NHS Evidence and missing better information available elsewhere, but would usually represent an improvement on a Google search.

The responses also add some context to the library's dwindling journal collection which reduces the amount of full text information immediately available for those carrying out database searches and those receiving a list of results from the library in response to a literature search request.

5 Keeping up to date

5.1 How staff currently keep up to date

Keeping professional knowledge up to date is frequently cited as a key element of providing quality health care². Respondents were asked to select the way(s) in which they currently kept up to date from a range of options, and then which other ways they might use in future (see tables 8 and 9).



The chart above shows that the most popular ways of keeping up to date were generally methods that involve respondents going in search of information themselves: browsing selected websites/online journals, carrying out a quick search when the need arises and browsing print journals. Options in which information came to the respondent, such as receiving e-mails either on a specific topic or on a broad range of topics, were less popular. This contradicts anecdotal evidence from library current awareness initiatives that suggested that staff were less likely to use a service that they need to remember to revisit, and were more likely to use information received regularly by e-mail. There was a surprisingly high level of interest in lists of the latest articles matching a specific search – this is a service that the library needs to consider offering on a more systematic basis.

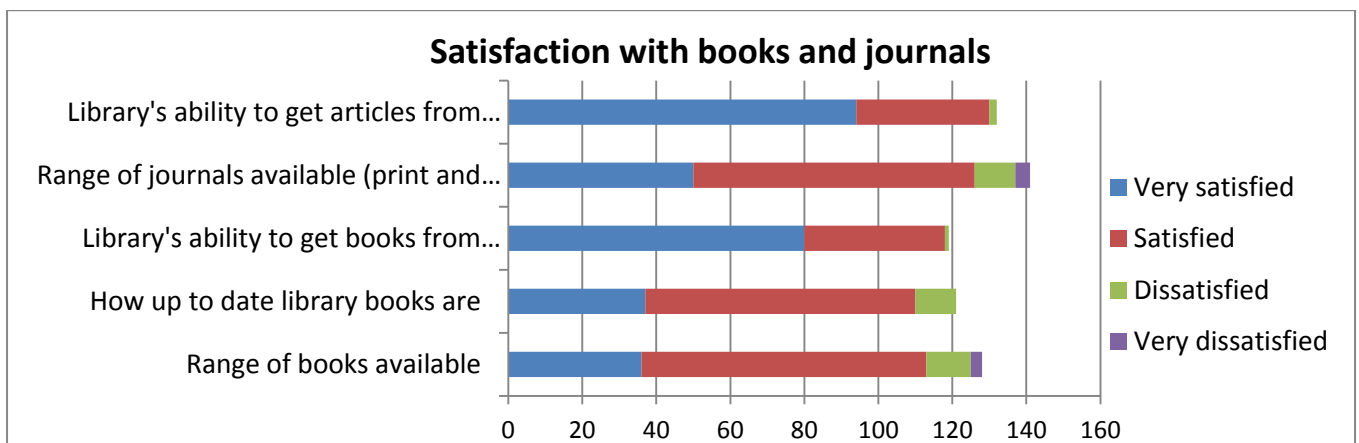
5.2 Trust library services

83% of respondents to the survey considered themselves to be users of the Trust library services (including online services such as ATHENS-authenticated resources). The majority of these used a site library in person at some point, with the most common site being Stafford followed by Lichfield then Redwoods (see tables 10 and 11). In comparison with the 2008 survey, the 2012 survey reached a lower proportion of non-users.

²For example, in the General Medical Council's 'Good medical practice' (2013 - "You must keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date"; Nursing and Midwifery Council's code of practice - "You must keep your knowledge and skills up to date throughout your working life")

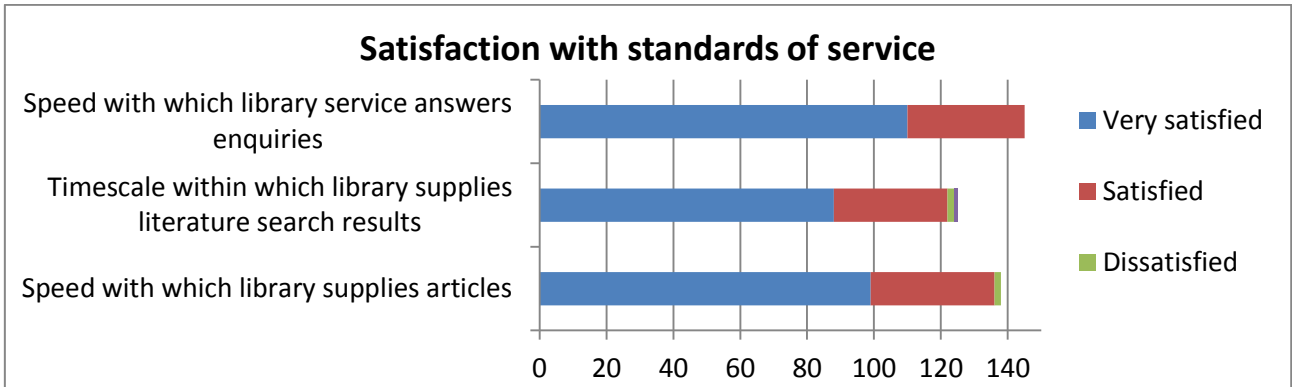
5.3 Library resources

The chart below (and table 12) shows that generally library users are satisfied with the availability of books and journals. There is some dissatisfaction with the range of books and journals available within library stock. To some extent this reflects dwindling purchasing power for books and journals. In the case of books, this has an impact on both the range of books available and the library's ability to keep the stock completely up to date when new editions are published. However, the fact that all journal titles cancelled have shown a low level of usage would suggest that there is also a mismatch between the range of journal titles deemed useful by a user base covering a wide range of areas and interests and the level of usage required to justify purchasing an individual journal title. Realistically the library will never be able to buy immediate access to enough journal titles to satisfy staff with more specialist interests. Levels of satisfaction varied little across the two Trusts, though more SSOTP staff reported that they did not use the book stock (see Appendix 4).



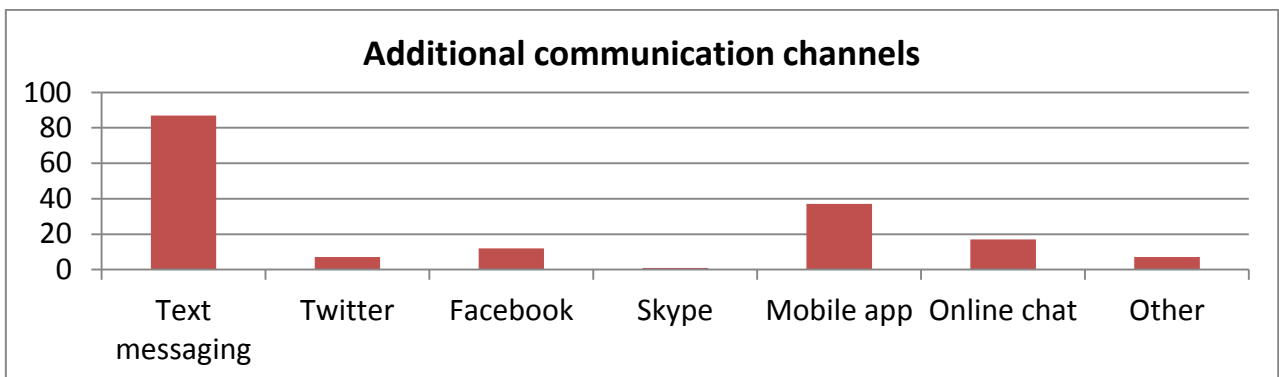
Importantly there is a much greater level of satisfaction with the library's ability to obtain articles and books from somewhere even when they are not held within stock. Respondents were also asked to be specific about gaps they perceived in the book and journal stock. The most common suggestion was for learning disabilities stock, and an action from this survey will be to carry out a review of stock in this area. There were also some suggestions as to how to improve the range of stock and access to resources from elsewhere.

5.4 Standards of service



The chart above (table 14) shows generally very high levels of satisfaction with the library’s current standards of service with regards to supplying articles, answering enquiries and supplying literature search results.

5.5 Communications

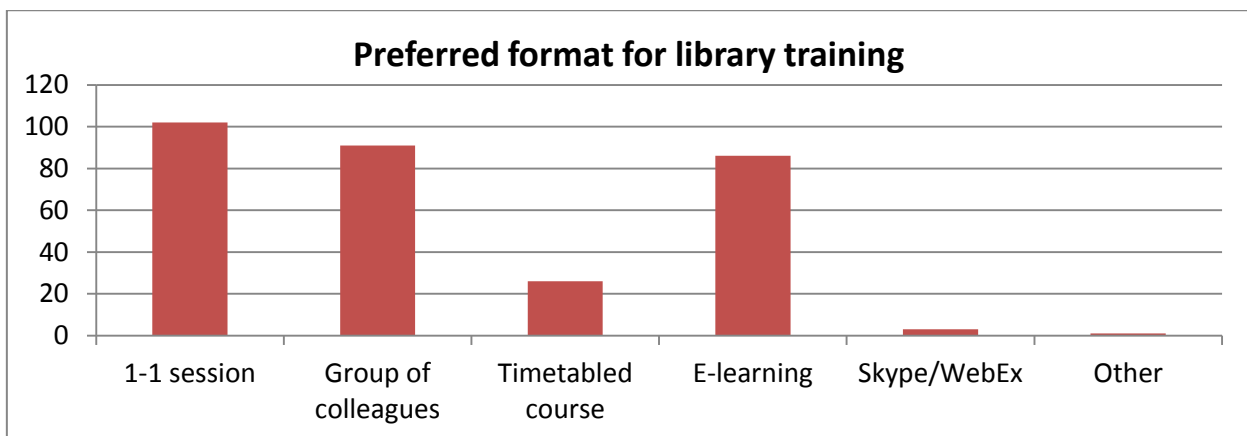


Respondents were asked about additional channels through which they would like to communicate with the library. By far the most common response (see chart above and table 15) was text messaging: the library currently sends borrowers reminder messages about overdue books by this channel but as yet there is no way for library users to contact the library by text. This corresponds to strong interest in an ‘Ask a Librarian’ service during the library strategy consultation process. Initial investigations into the feasibility of introducing such a service within the Trust library service have not revealed an easy way of implementing a text service in a way that will allow the library staff to monitor it easily but it will remain on the library’s ‘to do’ list in case future possibilities emerge.

6 Training

6.1 Training format

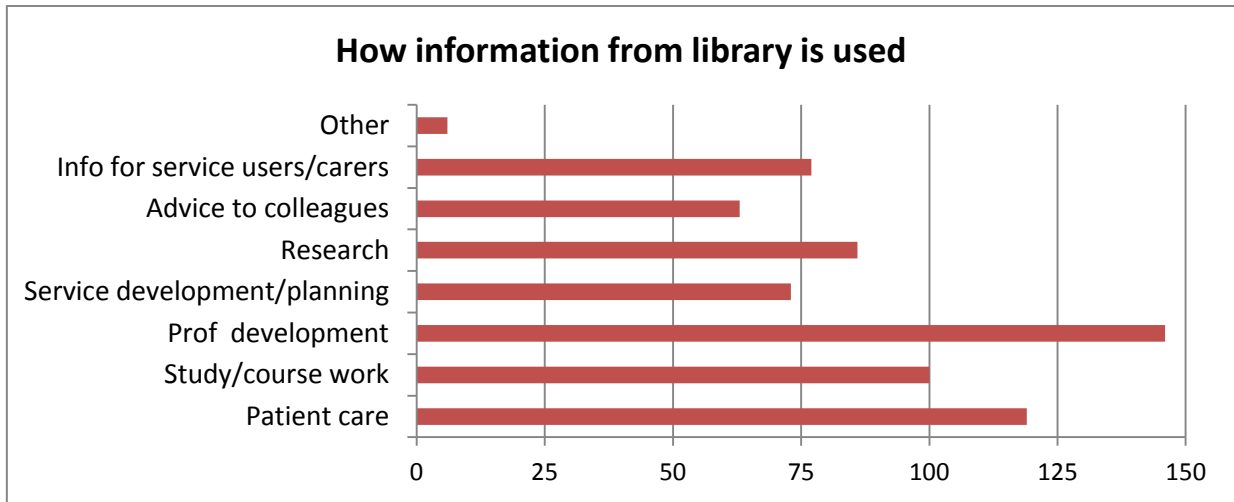
The library provides search skills and critical appraisal training in a variety of formats. Respondents were asked firstly which format they preferred for training. The results reflected what library staff had observed over the past few years: little demand for timetabled group courses, with a greater interest in sessions for individuals or small groups of colleagues. There was also an interest in e-learning (see the chart below and table 16). These results confirm that it is not worth the library continuing to advertise timetabled group sessions, and that future emphasis should be on 1 to 1 sessions and e-learning.



6.2 Training topics

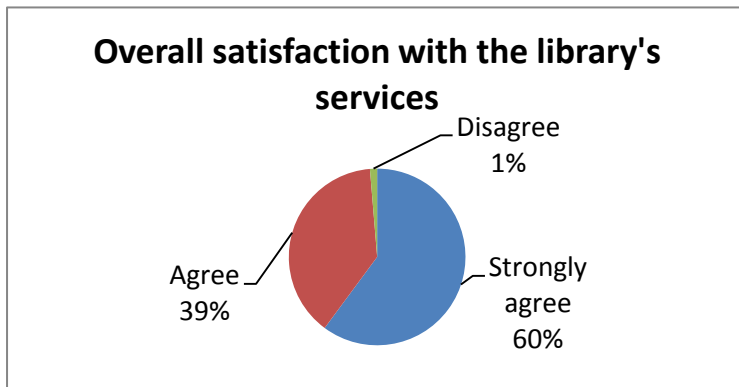
In terms of topics respondents thought it would be useful to receive training in, the most popular choices were searching clinical databases and critical appraisal. Searching clinical databases is the most commonly asked for topic in current 1 to 1 sessions. There has been a fall in demand for critical appraisal training alongside the drop in take-up of timetabled courses that is the current medium for its delivery: there is clearly a need for the library to develop 1 to 1 style critical appraisal training. The other question these results pose is why, if there is some demand for a wider range of training topics, do most of the 1 to 1 sessions delivered by library staff focus on searching clinical databases. This is an issue for further discussion within the library team.

7 Impact of the library



The chart above (table 19) showed that information that respondents obtain from library services is used to support a number of key Trust activities, including professional development (both formal and informal), patient care, research and information for service users and carers.

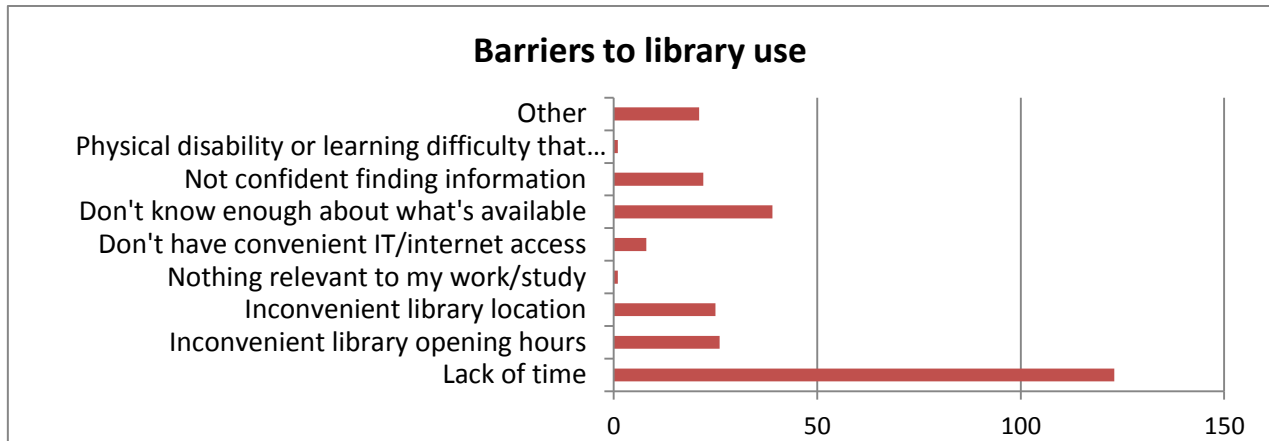
8 Overall satisfaction with the library



The chart above and table 20 show that 99% of respondents were satisfied with library services, with the majority agreeing strongly. 26 comments/suggestions were received about library services. The most common theme was praise for the library staff’s attitude, helpfulness and competence (14 responses). Three respondents commented on limited resources (either hard copy or

electronic), and two expressed disappointment at the change of Lichfield library into an e-library.

9 Barriers to using the library



All respondents were asked about reasons why they did not use the library and/or online resources (more). The chart above (and table 22) shows that by far the most common reason was lack of time, followed by a lack of awareness of what is available from the library. Several respondents were put off by inconvenient opening hours or location. 17 of the 39 respondents citing a lack of awareness of library services were non-library users.

10 Conclusions

10.1 Information use

The results of the survey suggested that Trust staff are now using a wider range of information sources and that they favour information sources that are easy to search and provide full text straight away. They are also looking for information using mobile devices as well as more traditional desktops and laptops. All this influences the sort of information sources they are using. The library has a continuing role to play, both in signposting to quality sources of information beyond the traditional books and journal articles, and in educating staff in when they can afford to do a quick search and use the most easily available information and when it is worth taking the time to do (or request) a more detailed search and then wait any information not immediately available.

10.2 Library use

Overall 99% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the library services available to them. They were particularly happy with the service they receive from library staff. There were also high levels of satisfaction with the speed of delivery of library services such as article requests, literature search results and responses to enquiries. The survey showed that information obtained from the library is used by respondents to support key functions of the Trust such as patient care, information for service users and carers, research and service planning and development. It is also used extensively for formal and informal professional development and study.

The main areas where respondents reported some dissatisfaction were the range of resources available and library opening hours. Both are the consequence of financial pressures on the service along with high levels of inflation in book and journal prices for over 10 years. The only way to improve library opening hours would be by reducing the librarians' outreach work outside the library. As the outreach work has been shown to have an impact on clinical care and service development (and also helps to improve awareness of the library service), this is not an option currently under consideration. It is also important to put these results into context: overall respondents were satisfied with all aspects of library book and journal stock covered by the survey.

11 Actions

Short-term and longer-term actions resulting from the survey have been identified. Where these have been incorporated into the 2013/14 Library Delivery Plan, references are included in brackets after the action. Other actions will be fed into future Delivery Plans. Some require further discussion as to the best way to proceed.

- Improve library staff knowledge of a wider range of information sources and incorporate these into search results [DP 13.01a]
- Consider whether to pilot a clinical summary type information resource
- Ensure library staff are familiar with a range of mobile technology (both Smartphone and tablet) and quality sources of information that can be accessed using them. [DP 13.08c]
- Reconsider the library's approach to training and to the sort of electronic resources promoted to staff, particularly the role of NHS Evidence
- Consider offering a regular update of the latest articles matching a particular search on a more systematic basis as a follow-up to appropriate literature searches
- Re-examine the library's approach to providing updating services to make sure that they respond to user needs
- Review the library's learning disabilities stock [DP13.06c]
- Investigate the provision of a different form of e-learning for search skills training
- Investigate developing individual critical appraisal training [DP 13.02a]
- Discuss within the library team why the library is not covering a wider range of topics in 1 to 1 training

12 References

General Medical Council (2013) Good medical practice Available online at http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/good_medical_practice/contents.asp [accessed 23/05/2013]

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2008) The code: standards of conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives Available online at <http://www.nmc-uk.org/Documents/Standards/The-code-A4-20100406.pdf> [accessed 23/05/2013]

Appendix 1 – Acknowledgements

Many thanks to:

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- Trust library staff and Information Team for piloting the questionnaire
- Everyone who responded to the main survey