

A Balancing Act:

Mediating Public
Access Services in
Academic Depository
Libraries



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Agenda

1. Federal mandate
2. Case study: University of Montana
3. Review of the public access landscape
4. Considerations in the context of an all-digital FDLP



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Depository libraries shall make
Government publications
available for the free use of the
general public.

— Title 44 U.S.C. § 1911

“Depository libraries must provide free access to FDLP information resources **in all formats to any member of the general public** without any impediments, such as age limitations, technology barriers, or residency status limitations.”

“Depository services and assistance for the depository information resources **must be of the same quality or comparable** to that for other collections and services in the library.”

Public Service

33. The depository collection and services must be visible to library users and potential users. For example, depository or Federal government information may be visible through cataloging, information on Web pages, or other promotional efforts.

34. Depository libraries must provide free access to FDLP information resources in all formats to any member of the general public without any impediments, such as age limitations, technology barriers, or residency status limitations. Providing for free access to the depository collection is a fundamental obligation of Federal depository libraries.

35. Depository services and assistance for the depository information resources must be of the same quality or comparable to that for other collections and services in the library. Services for non-primary users must be provided in a manner comparable to services for primary users of the library, such as hours of service, degree of assistance and professional expertise of staff. For example, in academic libraries, reference interviews must be conducted for the general public to the same degree as that offered to primary patrons.

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Legal Requirements & Program Regulations of the Federal Depository Library Program, 2018

36. If the library establishes different privileges for primary and non-primary library users that impact access to the depository collection (e.g. shorter hours for non-primary users), any signage, policies, or online messages must make exceptions known for those wishing to use the library's depository collection.

37. Access to the depository collection must be provided in a reasonable amount of time regardless of its format; electronic media must be installed or circulated and online material must be accessible. Likewise, access must be provided in a reasonable amount of time regardless of their housing arrangement; documents must be retrievable if they are stored off-site or in closed stacks.

38. Depository libraries that have a library Web page or site must identify themselves as a Federal depository library on their Web page or site by displaying the FDLP logo, provide the statutory language found on the FDLP decal, or otherwise identify the library as a public access point for FDLP material. Statutory language formerly found on the FDLP decal states,

“This library is a congressionally designated depository for U.S. Government documents. Public access to the government documents collection is guaranteed by public law. (Title 44 United States Code)”

FDLP Decal



FDLP Logo





January 10, 2023

Dear Depository Library Coordinator,

I'm writing to introduce myself as the new Superintendent of Documents. I'm both excited and honored to serve in this new role. Over the last 20 years, I have held a variety of roles working in libraries and as a part of the FDLP community. I have had the pleasure of working with so many of you during that time, whether in a library or through a professional association, collaborating at a conference, or through the work of the Depository Library Council and the Task Force on a Digital FDLP. The importance of the mission of the FDLP and its integral role in our democracy cannot be overstated. I welcome the opportunity to work with all of you moving forward as we implement the [strategic plan for the National Collection](#) and continue to develop our services to you and your libraries.

At this time, I'd also like to update you on public access requirements for depository collections. Because public access is a key statutory obligation of depository libraries, the temporary restrictions on physical access permitted by the [letter from May 2020](#) should now be phased out. While the COVID-19 pandemic remains with us – and flu season has started – most restrictions on gatherings and building access have been lifted by local health authorities.

Depository libraries need to ensure that Government information is freely accessible to the public. This may be done in ways that accommodate locally required health measures, such as limiting the number of people allowed in the library at a time or recommending scheduled appointments. Please post information about Government document access on your website and in signage visible from outside the library. Additionally, you should publicize how the public may receive help remotely by email, phone, or other means. The goal is to ensure public access to anyone wishing to use Government materials received through the FDLP.

“Superintendent of Documents Letter to Depository Coordinators Regarding Public Access to Depository Collections”

January 10, 2023

All or Mostly Online Federal Depository Libraries

Last Updated: August 30, 2022 **Published:** November 20, 2014

The Federal Government and GPO have shifted toward the publication of online resources, and many Federal depository library collections reflect that shift. In August of 2014, GPO revised the [Legal Requirements and Program Regulations of the Federal Depository Library Program](#) so that FDLP selective depository libraries no longer have any required item numbers to select. Therefore, new selective libraries joining the FDLP can create a depository collection that is entirely comprised of online resources. Current selective libraries who have tangible publications in their collection may utilize established selection profile and weeding processes to shift to a more online focus within five years.

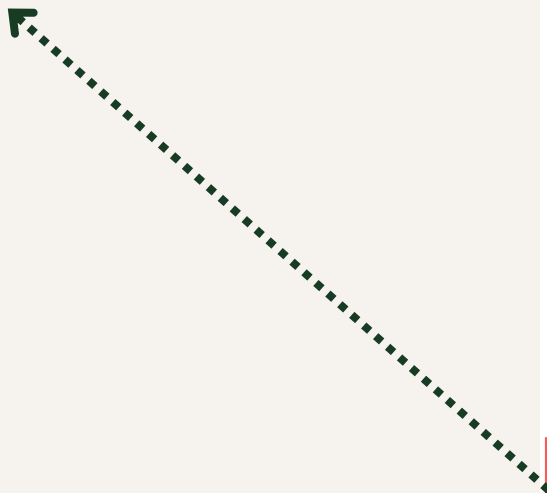
A **mostly online depository** is a selective depository library that emphasizes selection of and provision of access to online depository resources. They only select a few Federal depository resources in tangible (print, microfiche, CD/DVD, maps, etc.) formats, and weed or have weeded the bulk of the library's historical tangible collection.

An **all online depository** is a selective depository in the FDLP that is not selecting any tangible depository resources by item number and does not intend to add any. Current selective depository libraries may transition to become all online over time by deselecting all tangible format item numbers and by properly weeding all tangible depository publications in the library's collection. The transition to become all online is expected to take five years for current depositories because of the five-year publication retention requirement for most Federal depository resources.

Note: Libraries do not receive digital files or copies of electronic content when they select an online (EL) item number. While libraries are not required to select online item numbers, reasons for selecting them are outlined below.

Online depositories must continue to provide free, public access for patrons in person, just like other Federal depositories.

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Public Access Services Landscape

Trends:

- Most libraries allow public onsite use of materials
- Cybersecurity concerns and authentication requirements result in more locked-down computers and spaces
- Most libraries want unaffiliated users to feel welcome, but not entitled
- Specifics of public access services varies across institutions



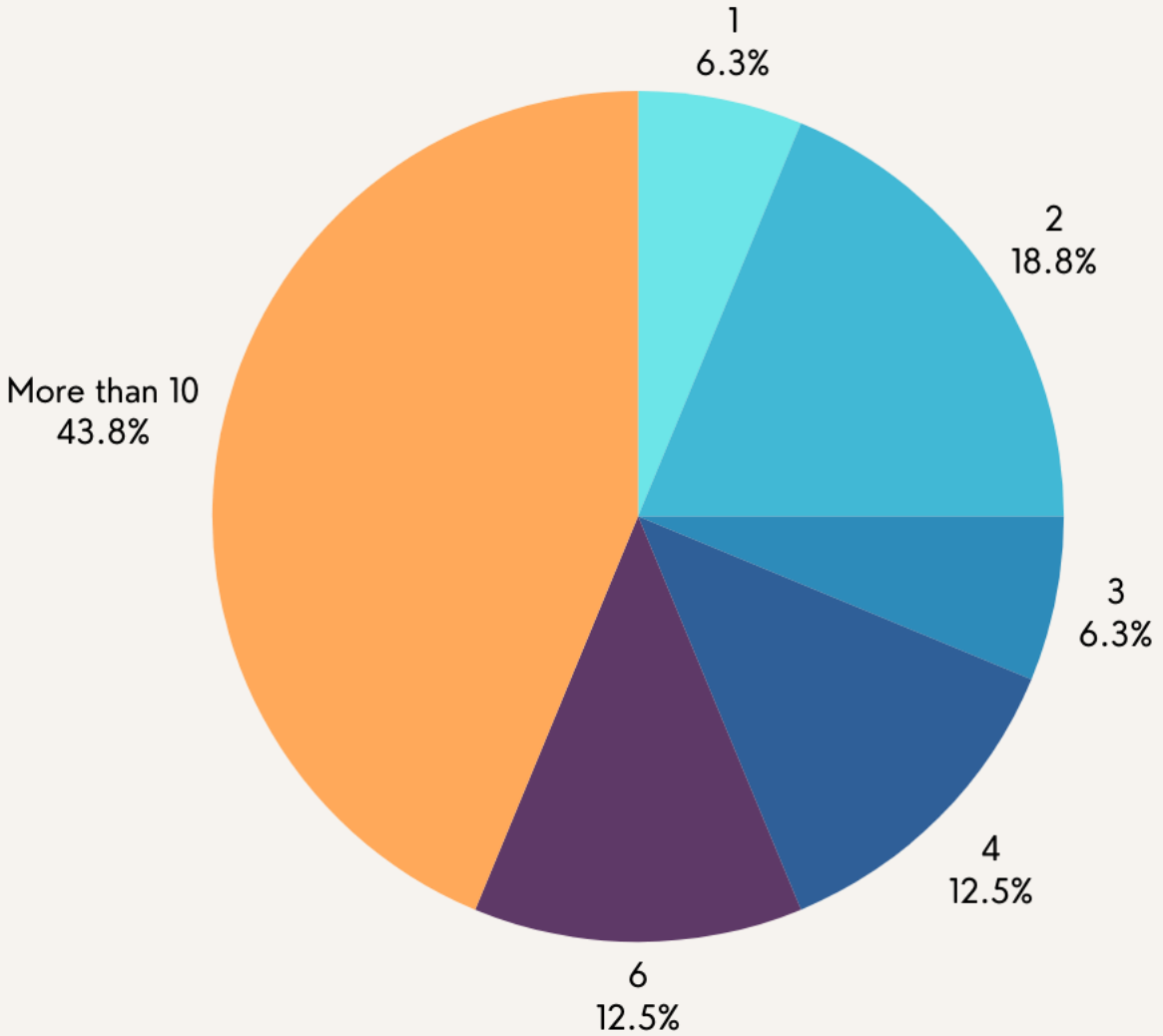
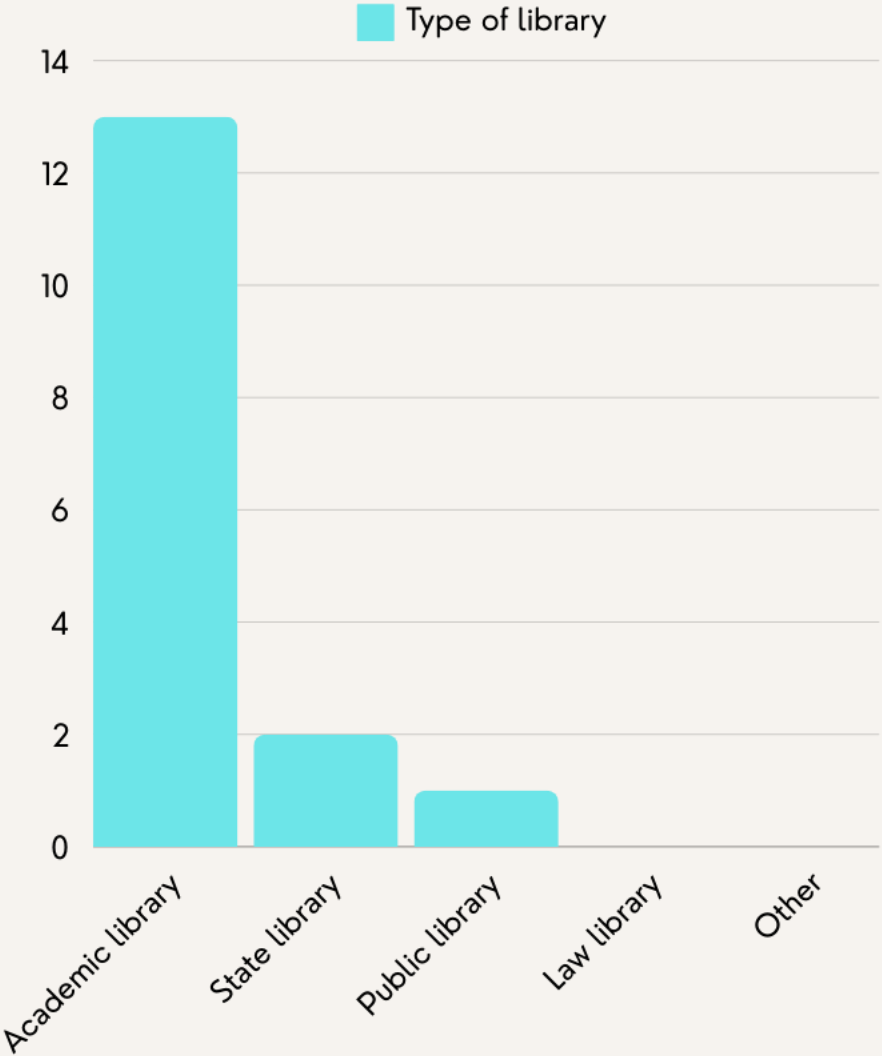
MUS 4-Year Peer Institutions

	Computers	Printing
U1	<u>Shared</u> : Public users must sign in to use a computer (logged in by a staff member)	Printing is available to public users (cost not listed)
U2	<u>Shared</u> : Public users must sign in to use a computer (logged in by a staff member)	Printing is available to public users (at cost)
U3	3 public access computers that do not require a login; no time limit	Printing is available to public users (at cost)
U4	Designated public access computers; require guest password	Printing is available to public users (at cost, or via purchase of "copy card")
U5	Designated public access computers; 2-hour time limit per day	Printing is available to public users (at cost, via a print card)
U6	<u>Shared</u> : Public users may use any computer if empty; students have	Printing is not available to public users

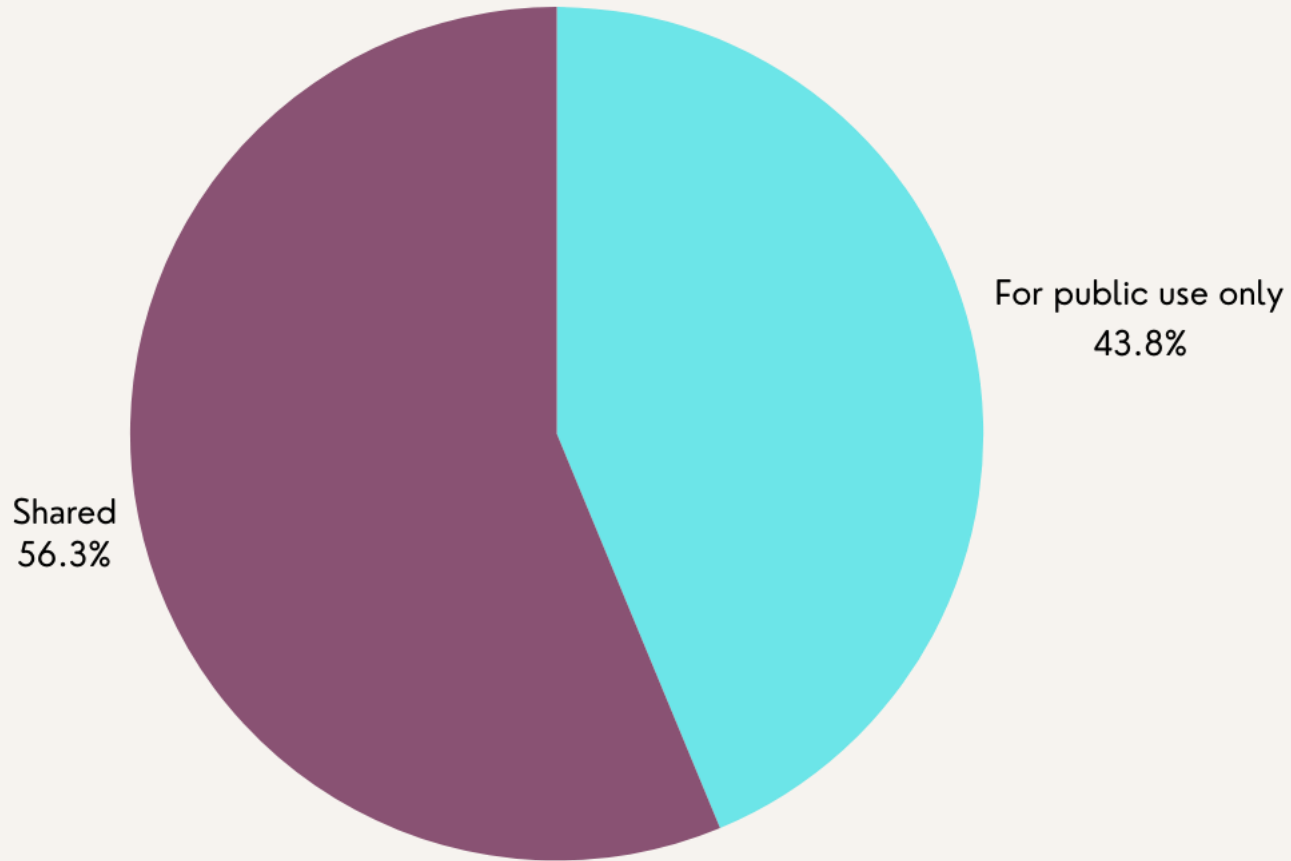
Regional depository survey, March 2024

- 1.What is the name of your institution?
- 2.What kind of institution is your depository library?
- 3.Does your library have computers available to the general public?
- 4.If your library has computers available to the general public, how many are available?
- 5.Are your public access computers designated only for public use, or are they shared with other library users (e.g. campus affiliates like students and employees)?
- 6.Is there a sign-in or login process for public computer users?
- 7.If there is a sign-in or logon process for public computer users, what does that look like?
- 8.Do members of the public have access to printing services at your library?
- 9.Is there a time limit for members of the public on library computers?
- 10.If there is a time limit, what is it?
- 11.If there is a time limit, how is it enforced?
- 12.Do your public access computers have the same software and programs installed as your other non-public access computers?
- 13.What does tech support look like for your public access computers? In this context, tech support includes purchase/renewal of hardware and software, maintenance, and day-to-day troubleshooting.
- 14.Any other comments on public computer policies and/or practices at your institution?

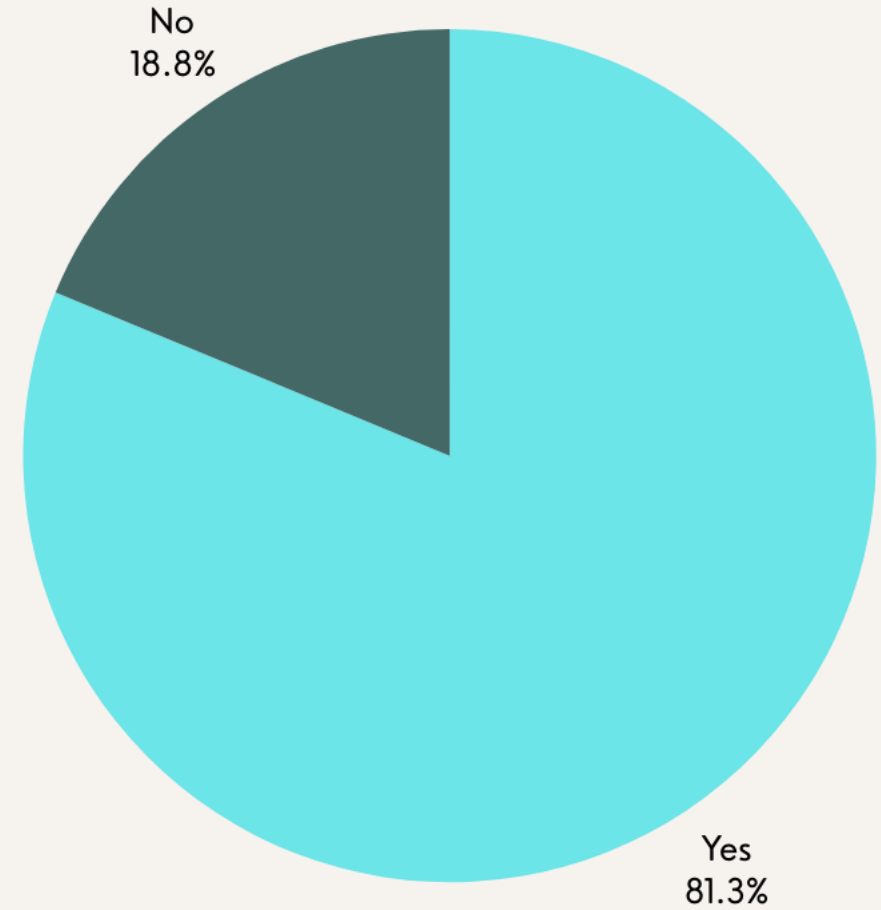
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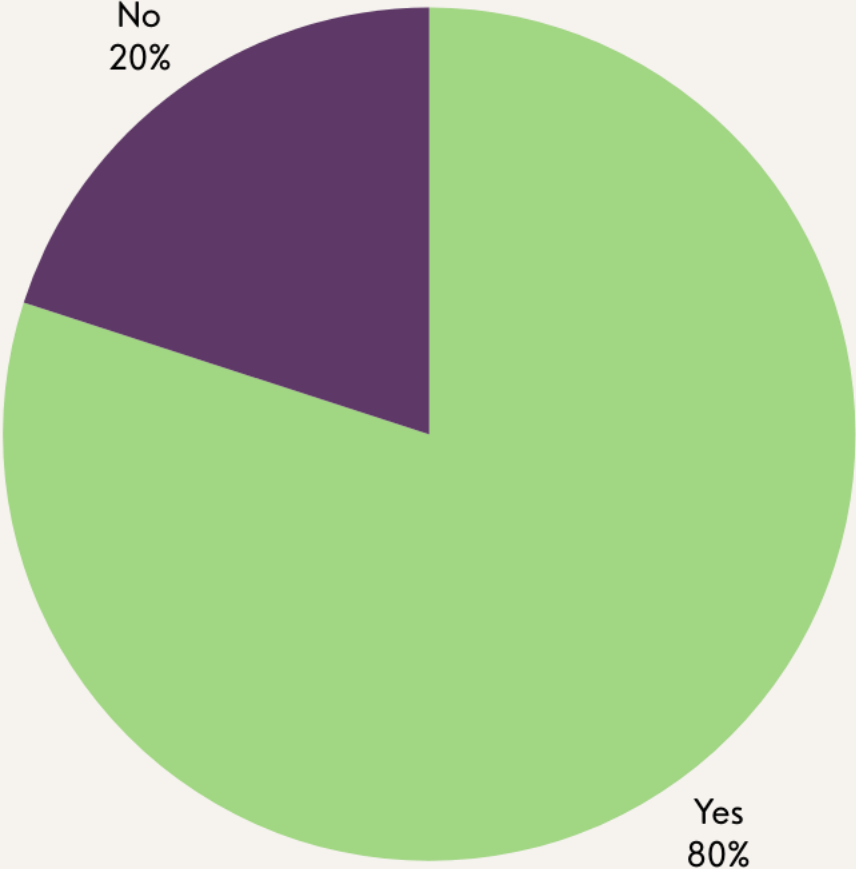
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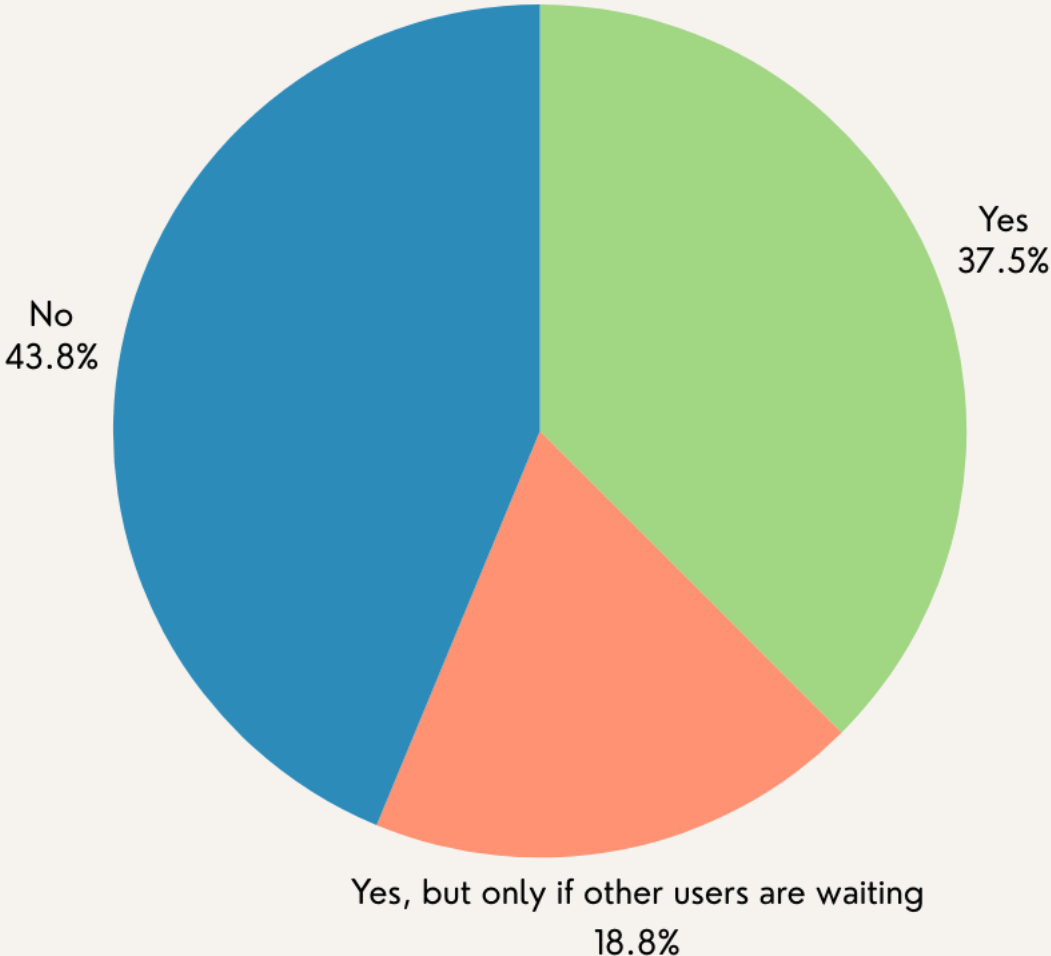
Is there a sign-in or logon process for public computer users?



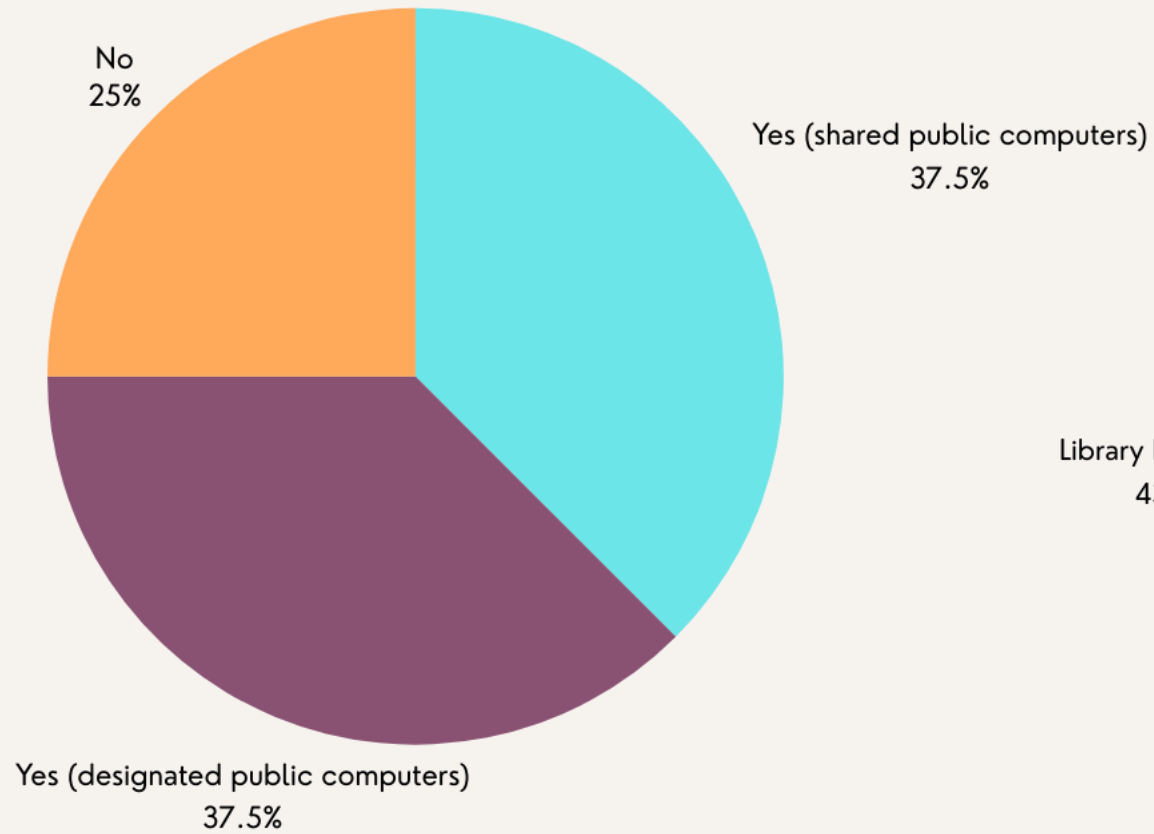
Do members of the public have access to printing services at your library?



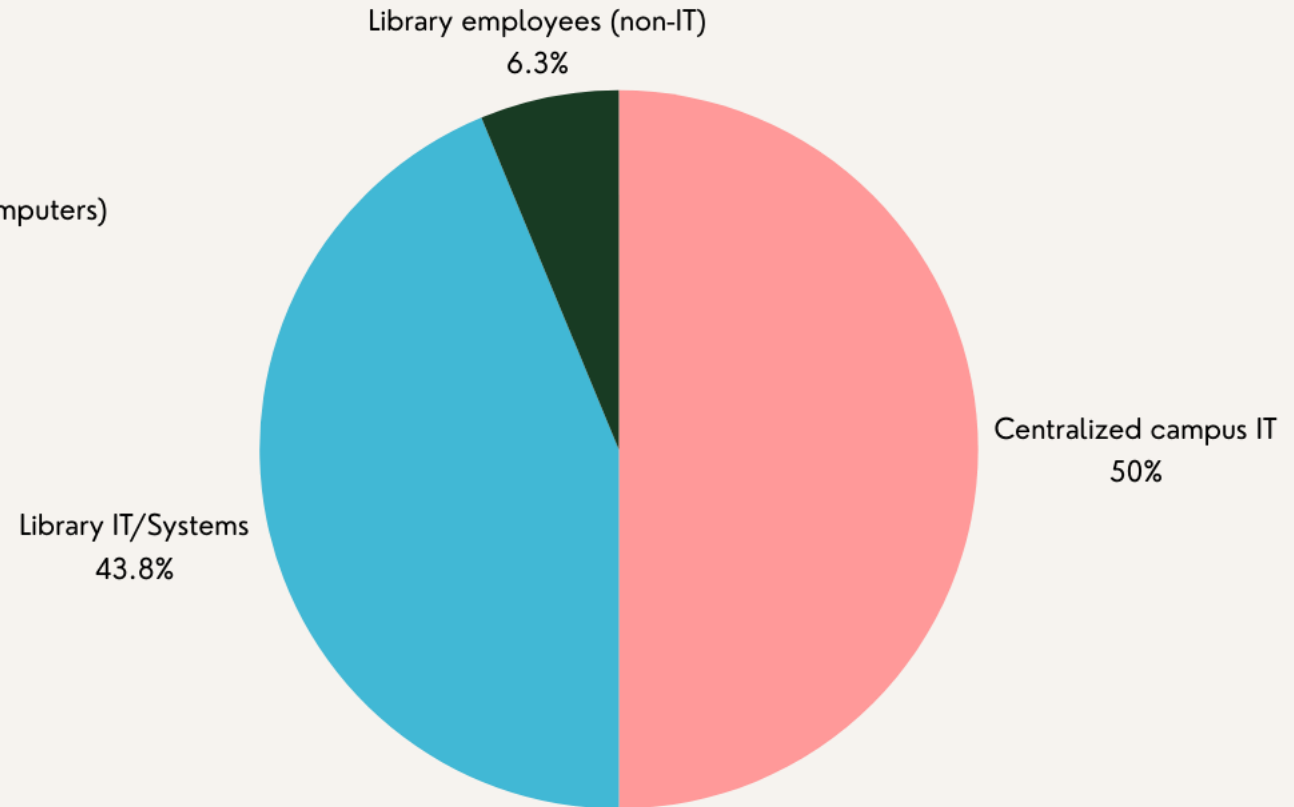
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Do your public access computers have the same software and programs installed as your other non-public access computers?



What does tech support look like for your public access computers?



UM Library public computing services

01

2 dedicated open access computers

Do not require login or intervention from library staff. Includes 1 flatbed scanner. No time limit. Computers supported by Campus IT, but have lowest priority.

02

Printing available at cost

Only available during library print shop's open hours.

03

Microfilm Reader

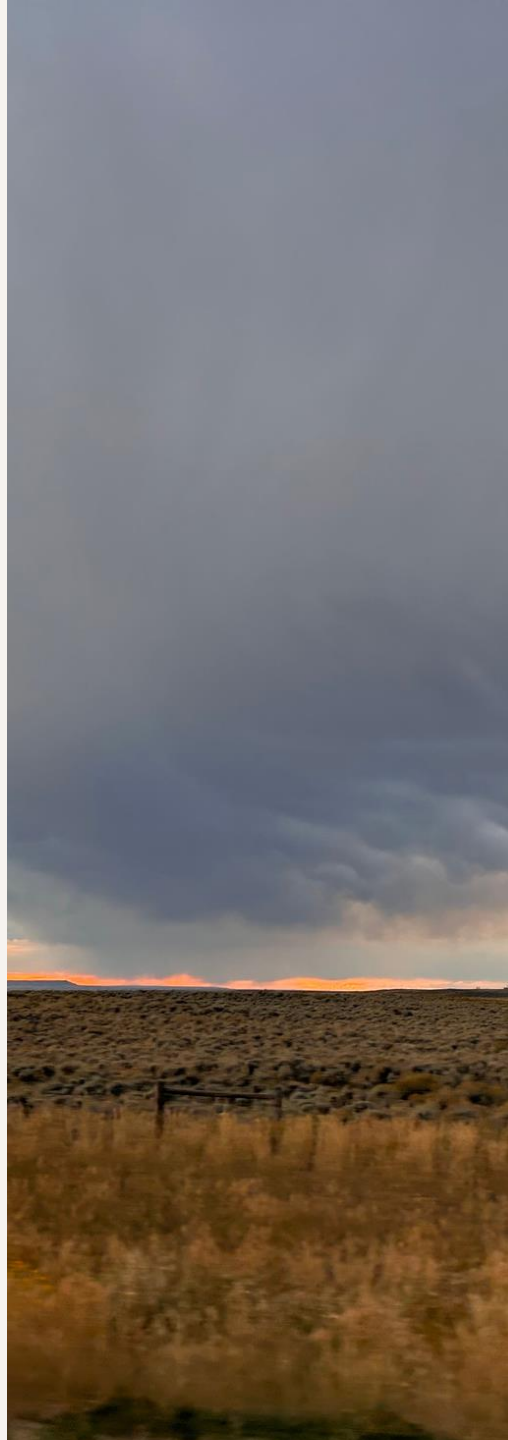
Also a music media listening station.

04

WiFi

Public wifi network available to anyone with an email address; not as secure as EduRoam; can't access databases and other electronic resources.

UM Library affiliated user computing services



- Most computers
- ****Faster computers****
- Media workstations
- Accessibility workstation
- Most software
- Remote access to databases from individual devices
- Group study rooms
- Tech equipment checkouts
- Printing at cost, during all library open hours

materials via open access computers. The unit recommends the following as immediate next steps:

- Replace the current open access computers with newer models to improve the quality (this may already be underway via a collaboration with IT--if so, confirm timeline)
- Increase the current open access computers to improve quantity and access
- Establish a timeline for maintenance of open access computers and associated equipment
- Establish clear technical support responsibilities for open access computers and associated equipment
- Ensure that all time limits and associated warning language are removed from the open access computers
- Integrate the open access computers into the affiliated user computer bank to increase equity in the look and feel and experience of users
- Replicate the current spacing/distance specifications of the affiliated user computer bank to improve the experience of users and eliminate unnecessary/undesirable crowding
- Investigate the possibility of expanded after-hours printing on the open access computers:
 - Utilize a mapped printing queue to allow for printing jobs to be released/paid at the Circulation Desk (enabled only during early morning and evening hours outside of Paw Print service hours)
 - Investigate whether the current self-service printer can accommodate this queue, or if another printer would need to be located in the computer bank near the open access computers

The group identified additional questions and suggestions that may comprise future steps, and would require more analysis:

- Investigate and/or document the need for specialized equipment (i.e. scanning, CD/DVD operability) on the open access computers, being mindful that Paw Print provides scanning service and printing/format transfer from CD/DVD for a fee
- Investigate and/or document the need for specialized software on the open access computers (one example might be to maintain parallel structure between the open access computers and the affiliated access computers; however, this may be limited by licenses being subscription/NetID dependent)
- Currently there is no language on the library website about the public access computers; while this didn't emerge in the IUS discussion, we note its importance for future discussions

“Public Computer Access and Printing Services at Mansfield Library”, Public Access Services Working Group, Mansfield Library, 2024

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Re-localization / Globalized library

“What would it take to really create a library-of-place? Not merely an attractive space with comfy chairs, broad tabletops, fast Internet and plentiful electrical outlets; not just a “third place” for community gathering; but a re-localized information space that curates, preserves and tells a story about a specific place--one that respects and represents both the human and non-human environment, promotes civic engagement and the democratic process and **enables members of the community to be active participants in writing their own story?**”

— Amy Brunvand, “Re-Localizing the Library: Considerations for the Anthropocene”

Local nonprofits survey & focus group

01 Most do not have a designated person in their organization responsible for research

03 Most rely on outside people and groups for data and information resources

02 All but one seek out specific government information resources to inform research and support advocacy work

04 Most indicated that UM could support their work through workshops, printed educational material (e.g. handouts), and an online guide. All wished they could have access to UM databases.

Paths forward?



Retain in-person public access



Do an audit of public services! How might you deploy FDLP mission and values in support of equalizing public and affiliate services?



Explore community needs; identify ways in which government information can support those community needs



Hold OA workshops for community members



Surface pathways for accessing electronic government information resources



Collaborative and cooperative collection development within NCSAs



Thank you!

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