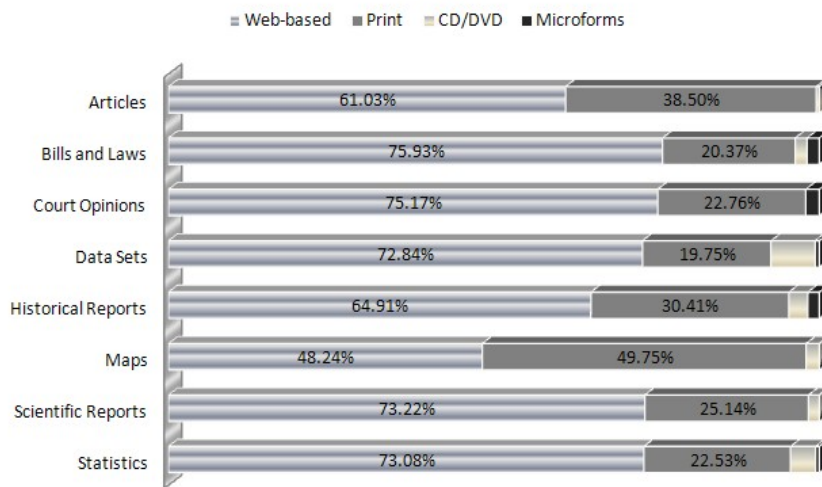


Format Preference by Type of Information



Assessing User Preferences for Government Information

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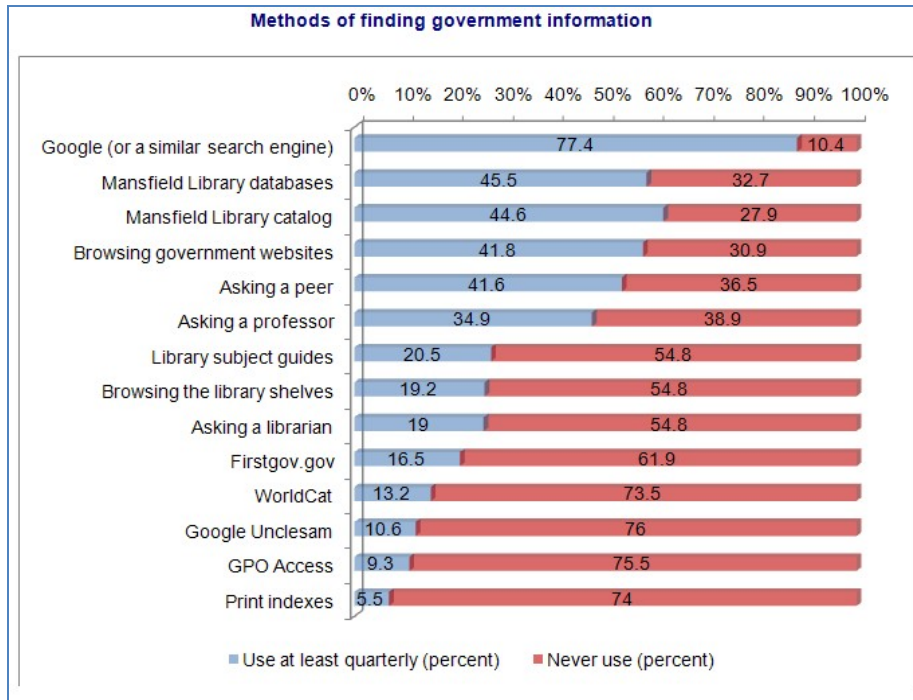
Assessment Tips

1. Determine what you want to ask and who you want to ask. Think about how you will use the data.
2. Check for pre-existing data or questionnaires by investigating data already collected at your library, reviewing the library literature, checking sources such as Pew Internet & American Life, or asking within the library community.
3. If you decide to conduct a survey, get approval from library administration, from a campus Institutional Review Board, etc.
4. Determine how you will administer your assessment. Is it better to reach your population online, through the mail, through paper forms within the library, or through a link on the library website? You can conduct your survey online using free or inexpensive software to save printing and mailing costs. Survey Monkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/>) is a well-known survey tool that is relatively inexpensive. If you're at a university, does your campus subscribe to a survey software package?
5. Pre-test your survey with a subset of the study population to check for jargon and potential implementation problems.
6. Decide on potential incentives for participation.
7. Establish how you will follow up with survey participants or how you will safeguard participant responses and anonymity. Recognize that tracking participation or allowing anonymity will affect survey participation. Release your survey and follow up after a set period of time with emails or postcards. The largest bursts of activity will come after publicizing the survey.
8. Analyze the survey results. Question assumptions. Use the data to inform your decisions. If using online survey software, utilize the built-in analysis software. If you're at a university, does your campus license data analysis software such as SPSS?

For more information:

Burroughs, Jennie. "What Users Want: Assessing Government Information Preferences to Drive Information Services." *Government Information Quarterly*. In press. [doi:10.1016/j.giq.2008.06.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2008.06.003) (<http://weblib.lib.umt.edu/faculty/burroughs/WhatUsersWant.pdf>)

Why assess user preferences?



Place information in the preferred pathways of information seekers to aid discovery and save user time.

Draw on user preference data to gain support for new initiatives.

Services Requested by Survey Respondents

Service Requested	Percent of Cases
Web-based tutorials	52.60%
Notification of newly available government documents	43.35%
Library training on specific subjects (e.g., Census materials)	36.99%
Government information subject guides or handouts	34.68%
Virtual reference	34.10%
Library instruction sessions on government documents	31.21%
One-on-one research consultations	26.59%
Government documents blog	22.54%

How Researchers Hear About Government Information

Source	Percent of Cases
Websites	71.89%
Newspaper stories	71.43%
Peers	63.59%
Scholarly sources/journals	56.68%
Newsletters	30.88%
Blogs	10.14%
RSS feeds	3.23%
None	3.23%

Preferred Alerting Methods Chosen by Respondents

Method	Percent of Cases
Websites	50.47%
Email alerts	40.19%
Newsletters	29.91%
In-person library sessions	14.02%
Podcasts	11.21%
Blogs	10.75%
RSS feeds	8.88%
None of these	22.43%

Figure out the best way to advertise your services.