

Ramaker Library Survey Summary

Survey Respondents

We invited 613 juniors and seniors to answer a short (time required was less than 10 minutes) survey about the library in November 2008. We received 309 completed responses. Our response rate was 50.4%.

Students who responded represented almost every major offered on campus. We did not receive responses from any Medical Technology or Music Education majors.

The most responses came from the following majors:

Major	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents
Business Administration <i>(includes agri-business, finance, general, human resources, management and marketing options)</i>	47	15%
Elementary Education	36	12%
Biology <i>(includes ecological science, general/teaching and health professions options)</i>	28	9%
Psychology	26	8%
Spanish	26	8%
Nursing	25	8%

These 6 majors count for 60% of the total responses.

More woman than men participated in the survey. There were 229 responses (75% of the total) from women, and 76 (25% of the total) from men.

Survey respondents are successful students; 80% have grade point averages of 3.0 or higher.

Library Users

Two-thirds of the respondents visit the library twice a month or more, and one-third visit it less than once a month. For a portion of the survey, we divided participants into two groups: frequent users (twice a month or more) and infrequent users (once a month or less). You will see these groups referenced throughout the report.

Facility Summary

Opinions of the library facility varied quite a bit, which is not surprising. For students who use the library regularly, the study environment they prefer depends on the type of work they are doing. Students seemed to use all of the available study spaces at the library: the closed individual carrels, the open individual carrels, the group study room, the open tables and the easy chairs. It appears that the open carrels are used the most, yet that is likely because the library has more open carrels than any of the other available spaces.

Students were asked to indicate the 3 most important conditions of a library when they are working on an individual assignment or project.

Condition	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents
Quiet	156	78%
Computer access	127	64%
Privacy	84	42%
Adequate lighting	65	34%
Comfortable seating like couches or easy chairs	35	19%
Ability to make noise without worrying about disturbing others	35	19%

We also asked about the three most important conditions when working on a group project:

Condition	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents
Ability to make noise without worrying about disturbing others	157	79%
Computer access	119	60%
Privacy	83	42%
Ability to move furniture in an arrangement that's comfortable to you	82	41%
Comfortable seating like couches or easy chairs	41	21%

Clearly, student needs change depending on the assignment and situation, and ideally the facility should reflect those varying circumstances. Group projects are assigned frequently at Northwestern; 63% of respondents indicated they were assigned group projects, on average, 1-2 times each semester, and an additional 22% said they had group projects 3 or more times each semester.

Students who use the library regularly were also asked to rank their satisfaction with different library features (group study rooms; individual study carrels; heating, cooling, ventilation; lighting; computer availability; wireless access; furniture; cleanliness; security and safety; physical accessibility). While most things fell into the “satisfied” category, some rankings did stand out:

- 59% were **very satisfied** with the security and safety of the library. No one felt dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.
- 52% were **very satisfied** with the cleanliness of the building. No one felt dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.
- 19% were **dissatisfied** or **very dissatisfied** with the heating, cooling and ventilation of the library building. Only 18% were **very satisfied** with this feature.
- 18% were **dissatisfied** or **very dissatisfied** with group study rooms at Ramaker.

Most students, including frequent and infrequent users, felt the library facility served their needs adequately; 77.5% agreed or strongly agreed with that idea. However, that means almost one-quarter of students feel that the library does not adequately meet their needs.

When asked whether the library was a comfortable place to spend time, 67% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement; 33% were neutral about or disagreed with it.

For students who do not use the library frequently, the facility itself is not the reason why. (For more information on this, see the section of this report on Infrequent Use.) However, infrequent library users do have some concerns with the facility:

Reason	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents
Too quiet	26	25%
Location is inconvenient	15	14%
Not enough group study spaces	12	12%
Not enough individual carrels	10	10%
Network connections	10	10%

unreliable		
Uncomfortable temperature	8	8%
Too noisy	5	5%

No one felt the library was inaccessible because of a physical limitation, which is reassuring; we want to be accessible to all.

Of the students who do not use the library frequently who indicated they prefer to study elsewhere, most (97%) preferred the comfort of their own rooms or apartments. Their preference for studying outside the library does not mean, though, they do not use or wish to use the library resources; this is addressed further in the Technology section of this report.

Action Items:

- Facility adjustments are not easy or inexpensive to make, and we cannot address most of them at this time. However, we will use the information gathered to plan the new Learning Commons.
- In the meantime, we will create a list of facility items to address, based on feedback from our students. We will communicate improvements to the student body.
- Because of the frequency of group project assignments, Ramaker staff will explore ways to add group study spaces to the existing facility.
- Ramaker staff will also explore how to make the library resources extend beyond the library facility.

Staff Summary

It appears that many students have interacted with the library staff. When looking at the entire group of respondents, a full 72% had attended a library instruction session. What’s more, 60% have asked a reference librarian for help with a project.

Overall, students are satisfied and comfortable with the library staff:

- Of students who do not use the library regularly, not one respondent indicated it was because the librarians are not helpful.
- Over half (51%) of students who use the library regularly find the librarians very helpful, and another 42% find them helpful. Thirteen students, or 7%, were neutral about or dissatisfied with the helpfulness of the staff.
- Similarly, 42% found the library staff very knowledgeable, and 47% found them knowledgeable. Twenty-one students, or 11%, were neutral about the

staff or found them to be unknowledgeable.

When taking all respondents into account, not just those who use the library regularly, the impression is still that librarians are knowledgeable and helpful. One-half of all respondents agreed that Ramaker librarians are knowledgeable and helpful, and an additional 38% strongly agreed. Twelve percent were neutral.

Action Items:

- Ramaker staff should continue to reach out to students. As other survey results show, staff should be available both in person and via technology.
- Ramaker staff needs to continue to improve their knowledge of all of our resources, particularly our electronic ones.

Technology Summary

Technology continues to be an area important to our students. Of students who use the library regularly, 64% come to use a computer for writing assignments or research, and 37% come to use the computers for personal reasons.

While fewer than 10% of students who regularly use the library expressed dissatisfaction with our wireless access, comments that students left indicate that when the wireless doesn't work, it's frustrating and inconvenient.

We also wanted to know if students sought contacting reference librarians using newer technologies. Most (90%) indicated they would not contact on-call librarians via cell phone, but over half (51%) would be interested in contacting librarians via instant messaging. In addition, a few of the open comments indicated that students want to do as much as possible from their personal computers, and they welcome anything the library can do to make more materials and help accessible.

Action Items:

- Ramaker will investigate instant messaging options for reference service.
- Ramaker will explore adding additional services that can be accessed away from the library, such as subject and course guides.

Web Site Summary

A majority of students (64%) visit the library web site at least once a month. Interestingly, almost one-quarter of frequent web site visitors (46 out of 195) are

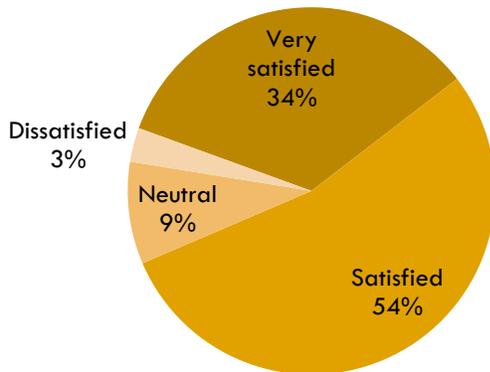
not frequent library visitors. Clearly, some students want to access our resources, yet not visit the facility.

Students use our web site for a variety of activities:

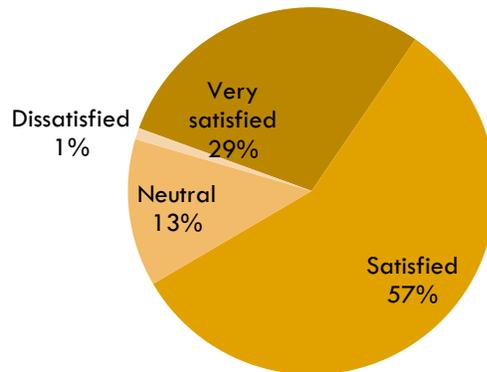
- 89% of frequent web site visitors search our catalog, while 84% search our databases.
- 46% make an interlibrary loan request.
- 45% search other library catalogs (such as WorldCat).
- 41% look up citation guidelines.
- 26% use our site to check on hours or library policies, and 26% use online reference sources.
- 21% use our site as a launch to searching the Internet.
- 3% (or 5 students surveyed) have used it to ask a librarian a reference question.

For the most part, students are satisfied with the searching tools we offer on the web site.

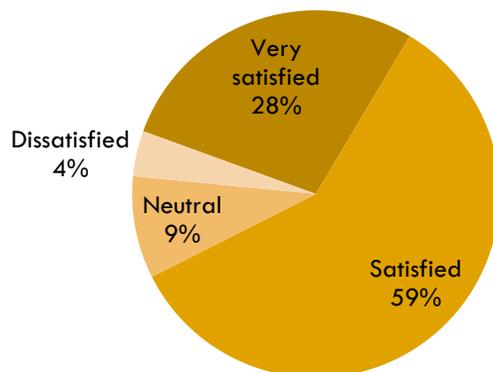
Satisfaction with RaiderLink



Satisfaction with Other Catalogs (WorldCat)



Satisfaction with Online Databases



A majority of students have no trouble navigating our web site; 68% find it easy or very easy to use. However, that means 32% find it either difficult or feel neutral about it.

Students' preference for using technology is highlighted by one question. We asked all students whether they would prefer to conduct research online or at the library. A full 75% preferred online research. Sixty-five percent of students who currently use the library frequently would prefer to conduct research online, and almost 90% of those who do not use the library frequently would prefer this option. In this piece of data, the need for Ramaker to be a virtual place, in addition to a physical place, is evident.

Action Items:

- As we continue to rework our site, we must make it quick and easy for students to navigate by using standard terms, obvious links and other tools.
- We should continue to add research tools and guides to our site, making library resources accessible for our students outside the library building.

Services Summary

A percentage of students, both those who use the library frequently and those who don't, indicated they study when the library isn't open. A total of 46 students indicated they studied on weeknights from midnight until 5am, which is 15% of the total respondents. However, most students did study during the library's current hours of availability.

Students who use the library do so for a variety of reasons:

Library Activity	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents
Study or work on assignments	184	92%
Use the computers for writing assignments and research	129	64%
Search for materials	109	54%
Check out materials	107	54%
Use the computers for personal reasons	74	37%
Request materials via ILL	53	26%
Browse the books for	37	18%

personal interests		
Ask a reference question	22	11%
Read for pleasure	18	6%

Interlibrary loan continues to be a popular service with students who frequent the library. Over 70% have used the service at least once, and over one-quarter have used it more than 5 times.

Most students (84%) who use the library felt resources were easy or very easy to find; 12% were neutral, and 4% found it difficult.

Action Items:

- We will review facility hours, especially during peak study times in school year.
- We will continue to promote our interlibrary loan services.
- Ramaker will maintain and upgrade computers to meet students' needs for writing and research.

Resources Summary

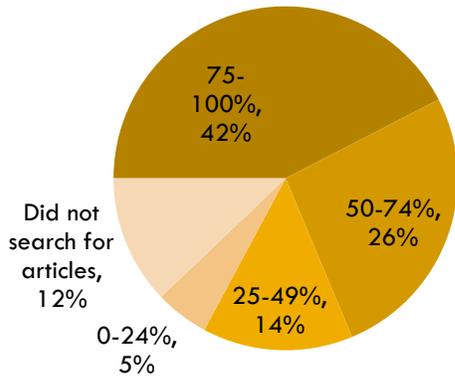
The entire survey group was asked whether Ramaker Library has adequate resources for Northwestern students. Most students (75%) agreed or strongly agreed with that statement.

Examining our resources also requires checking to see if students felt their searches of our materials yielded successful results, then assessing to see if they could locate those materials at Ramaker.

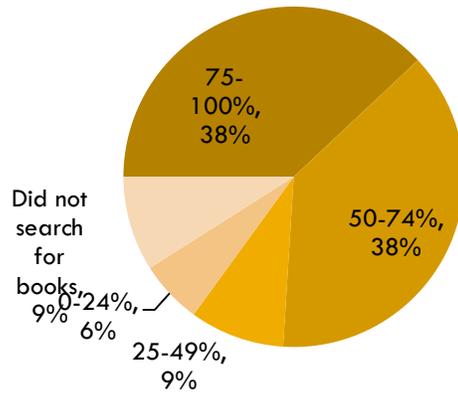
For the most part, students are satisfied with searching abilities offered at Ramaker. Over 80% of frequent library users were satisfied with the quality and accuracy of the results when searching our catalog RaiderLink, outside catalogs such as WorldCat and online databases. Very few indicated they were dissatisfied with the results. This reinforces two points: one, students who use the library know how to use the searching tools competently and successfully and two, the search tools are functioning as they should, returning appropriate results.

After searching for materials, students are able to locate many of their needed materials at Ramaker. Over half of materials desired were available through Ramaker, either in print or in full-text through a database service.

Percentage of Articles Available at Ramaker or in Full-text



Percentage of Books Available at Ramaker



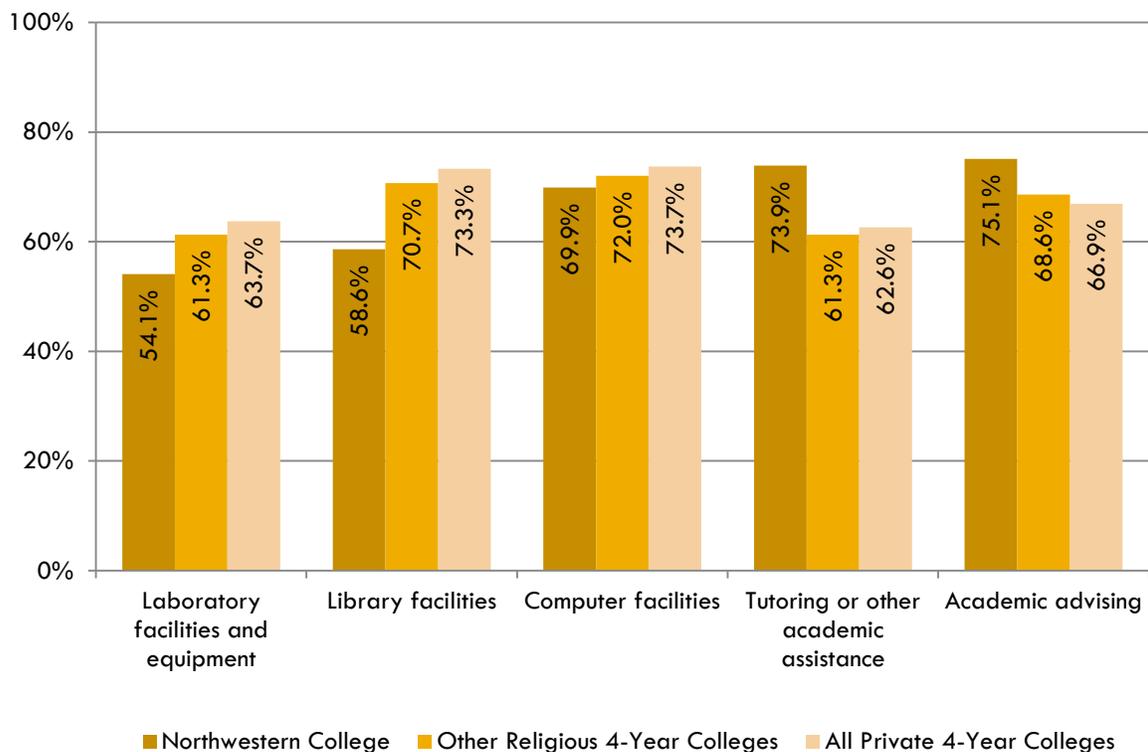
Action Items:

- Ramaker staff will continue to work with faculty to build our collection with resources applicable to their courses.

Why Some Northwestern Students Don't Use Ramaker Library

The 2008 Junior/Senior Library Survey was, in part, intended to help library staff better understand why some students rarely visit the Ramaker Library building. The interest in exploring this question grew out of responses to the 2006 College Senior Survey (CSS) that indicated that Northwestern seniors were less satisfied with library facilities than their peers at other four-year institutions. The 2006 College Senior Survey indicated that slightly more than half (58.6%) of the respondents were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the library facilities, which means that almost half were not satisfied. Satisfaction is low compared to students in other colleges and compared to Northwestern students' satisfaction with other academic support areas.

Satisfaction with Facilities and Services Spring 2006



On the assumption that levels of satisfaction with library facilities are related to actual use of facilities, the 2008 Junior/Senior Library Services Survey asked those who indicated that they visit the library once a month or less to respond the following questions:

- Which of the following are reasons why you choose not to use the library often?
- When you need to use a computer, what do you usually do?
- When do you study?
- Where do you prefer to study?

- How often, on average, are you assigned group projects?
- Have you ever attended a library instruction session?
- Have you ever asked a reference librarian for help on a project?

Which of the following are reasons why you choose not to use the library often? Responses to this overarching question did not support the above assumption. Rather, the survey revealed that infrequent use is not necessarily a function of *satisfaction* with library facilities. Rather, infrequent use is more closely connected to the lack of need to visit the library building due to the lack of assignments requiring library services or, at least, traditional services that cannot solely be accessed through Ramaker's digital library services available at <http://library.nwciowa.edu/>.

Of the 104 respondents, 80 indicated that, among other reasons, they do not use library services because their assignments don't require them to do so. Of 16 possible choices or answers, the only other choice that topped the lack of assignments was simply the preference to study elsewhere. Of the 104 respondents, 88 indicated preference to study elsewhere.

The picture that seems to emerge from responses to the question exploring infrequent use (Which of the following are reasons why you choose not to use the library often?) is characterized less by student dissatisfaction with the facilities and more by student needs and preferences. Moreover, the respondents who use the library once a month or less don't do so because of either negative experiences with staff or unfamiliarity with the library. None of the respondents indicated that they have found the librarians unhelpful, while 81 of 105 indicated that they have attended a library instruction session and 47 of 105 indicated that they have sought help from a reference librarian.

While need and preference are the main reasons students do not use the Ramaker Library building, their responses that relate to facilities should not be ignored. Dissatisfaction with the lack of group study rooms, climate, lack of individual study spaces, and network performance are areas that students noted. (For example, 12 students noted that there are not enough group study spaces. The library only has one room designated for group study; students improvise using other spaces such as the Dutch Heritage Room.) Improvements to the Ramaker Library building are under consideration while Northwestern waits for the construction of the learning commons.

Finally, while student preference cannot be changed, the high number of junior and seniors responding that they don't have assignments requiring use of the library warrants reflection among librarians, faculty, and administration. Areas of future reflection include potential questions such as: While students are not necessarily regularly using the building, are they regularly using the library's digital services? The 2008 survey did not explore use of library as either visiting the Ramaker

building or visiting the Ramaker homepage. Are faculty satisfied with student competency in locating and critically evaluating literature in their disciplines?