



Emerald Ridge University Library



Community Needs Assessment

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Table of Contents

Introduction	03
Methodology	04
Library & School Information	06
Institutional Demographics	07
Collection & Services Overview	09
Informational Summary	13
Survey Findings and Focus Group Overviews	14
Proposed Actions	19
Conclusion	20
Appendices	21
References	24

Introduction

Emerald Ridge University Library has long been a staple of the Emerald Ridge University community. For years, our library has played an integral role in assisting students, faculty, and researchers with their academic and research needs by providing a variety of services, resources, and accessible technologies. As the academic environment is ever-changing, it's essential to make sure the services we offer meet the needs and expectations of our community.

Purpose

The purpose of this needs assessment is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current needs of the Emerald Ridge Library community, identify any gaps in the library's available resources and services, and create ways to enhance and improve the library and its resources. By performing this needs assessment, we can identify what library services students, faculty, and staff utilize the most, and what services users require and/or expect.

This community needs assessment will be utilized as a reference tool for current and future trends, and employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (focus groups) data collection. This dual approach ensures a well-rounded understanding of the community's needs and allows us to identify both broad trends and in-depth insights.

To better understand the needs of the Emerald Ridge University Library community, this report will address:

- Community Demographics
- Library Usage
- Community Survey
- Community Focus Group Interviews

Methodology

Data Collection Methods:

Surveys consisting of 11 questions were used to collect quantitative data on library usage patterns, community needs, and service gaps through the following target participants: Students (both undergraduate and graduate), faculty and researchers, and library staff. Surveys were distributed online via the university website and student portals, in-person using QR codes and physical copies at library service points, and by email distribution to faculty and students. Surveys were distributed over the span of several weeks in April and November 2025. The survey was available in English, Spanish, and Creole, and in both paper and online formats.

Survey Content:

- Demographic information (age, academic status, campus residency, etc.)
- Frequency and purpose of library use
- Satisfaction with current services and resources
- Barriers to accessing resources
- Suggestions for improvement

Focus Group Interviews: Focus groups were conducted to gather qualitative feedback from both library staff and library users.

Participant Groups:

- Library staff (to discuss internal processes, service challenges, and resource management)
- Frequent users (scholars/researchers) (to evaluate in-depth research needs)
- Students and faculty (to assess the effectiveness of library reference resources for coursework and research)

Methodology

Discussion Topics:

- Strengths and weaknesses of current library services
- Accessibility and usability of technology and digital resources
- Focus and need for library and resources
- Suggestions for new services or improvements

Data Analysis:

Focus group discussions were recorded (with consent) and transcribed. An analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns and insights.

Limitations:

Self-selection bias may influence survey responses, as those who frequently use the library may be more likely to participate. Focus groups may not fully represent all community perspectives due to time and participation constraints.

Ethical Considerations:

All survey responses and focus group discussions will remain confidential and anonymized. Participants will provide informed consent before participation in focus groups. No personally identifiable information will be collected in the surveys.

All survey questions and focus group questions are available at the end of the report in the appendices.

Library and Institution Information

Library Staff

Role	Number of Staff
Director	1
Librarian	10
Library Assistant	6
IT Support	2
Archives	2
Reference	5
Circulation	5
Technical Services	3
Marketing	2
Maintenance	2

Total Staff: 33

Library Use Frequency

Frequency of Use	Total Users	Percentage of Total Users
Daily	1,440	12%
Weekly	4,800	40%
Monthly	3,600	30%
Infrequent	2,160	18%

School Statistics

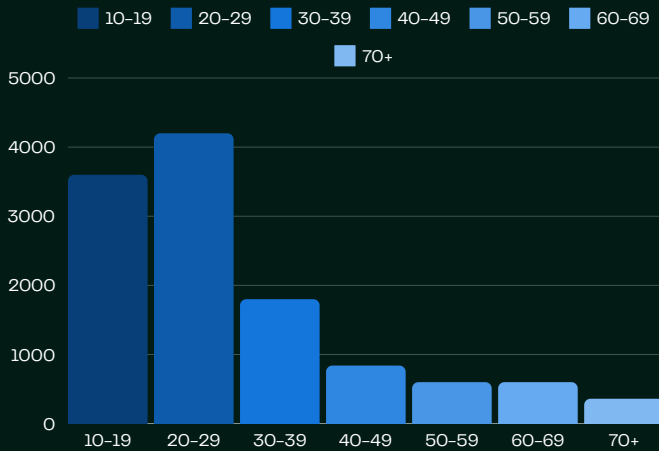
- **Students (7,200)**
 - Undergraduate: 5,000
 - Graduate: 2,200
- **Faculty (1,200)**
 - Full time: 900
 - Part time: 300
- **Professors (1,800)**
 - Full time: 1,500
 - Adjunct: 300
- **Researchers (600)**
 - Postdoctoral: 400
 - Independent: 200
- **Alumni 600**
- **Other 600**

Average Population Use

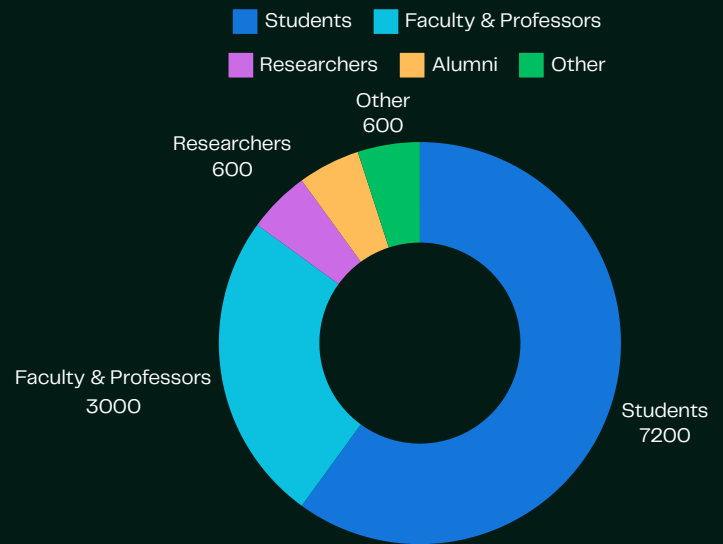
- **Students:**
 - 2,250
- **Faculty:**
 - 85
- **Professors:**
 - 55
- **Alumni:**
 - 2
- **Others (Staff/Visitors):**
 - 25

Institutional Demographic Information

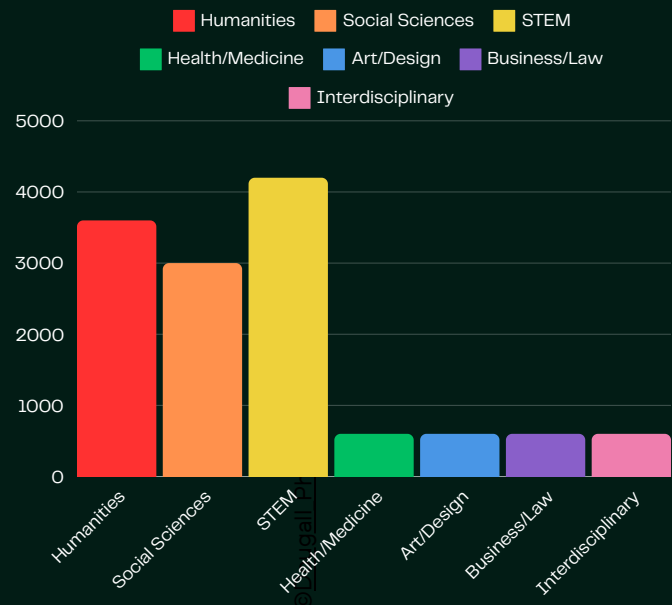
Age Group



School Classification



Academic Discipline



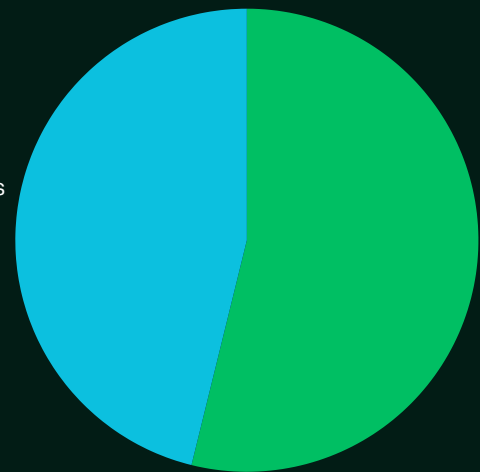
Institutional Demographic Information

Patron Residence

On Campus Off Campus

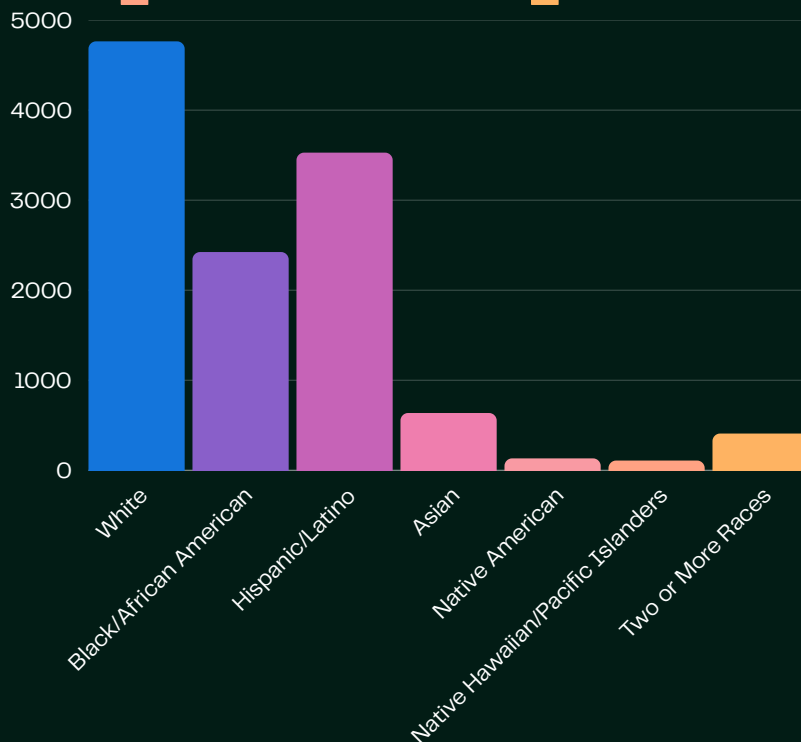
Off Campus
46.2%

On Campus
53.8%



Race

White Black/African American Hispanic/Latino
Asian Native American
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders Two or More Races



Services Overview

Services Offered

- Research Assistance
- Interlibrary Loan (ILL)
- Library Catalog Search and Discovery
- Writing and Printing Labs
- Tutoring
- Virtual Reference Support
- Citation Assistance

Services Statistics

Service	Number of Uses	% of Total Patrons	Usage Frequency (per month)
Research Assistance	3,500	29.2%	292 uses
Interlibrary Loan	1,800	15%	150 requests
Library Catalog	6,000	50%	500 searches
Writing Lab	2,200	18.3%	183 sessions
Tutoring	1,600	13.3%	133 sessions
Virtual Reference Support	2,400	20%	200 requests
Citation Assistance	1,000	8.3%	83 consultations

Collection Overview

Resources Offered

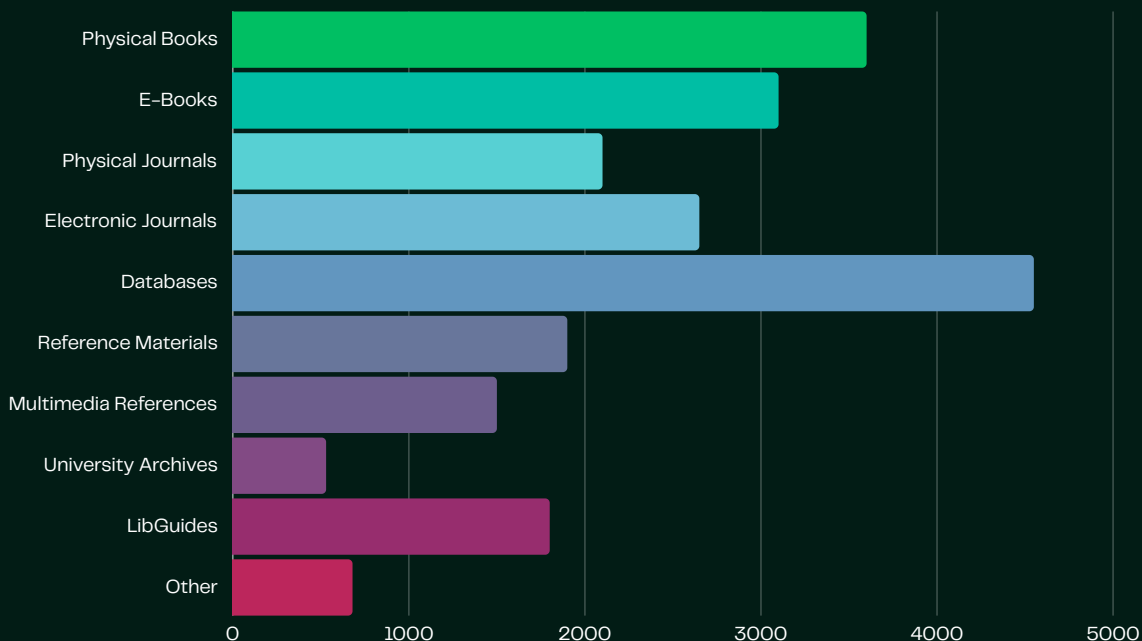
- Books (Print and Electronic)
- Journals (Print and Electronic)
- Online Journal Databases
- Reference Materials
- University Archives
- Citation Manager
- Multimedia Resources (Audio, Visual)
- Study Spaces
- Computer Lab
- Research Databases
- LibGuides
- Statistical Software

Collection Statistics



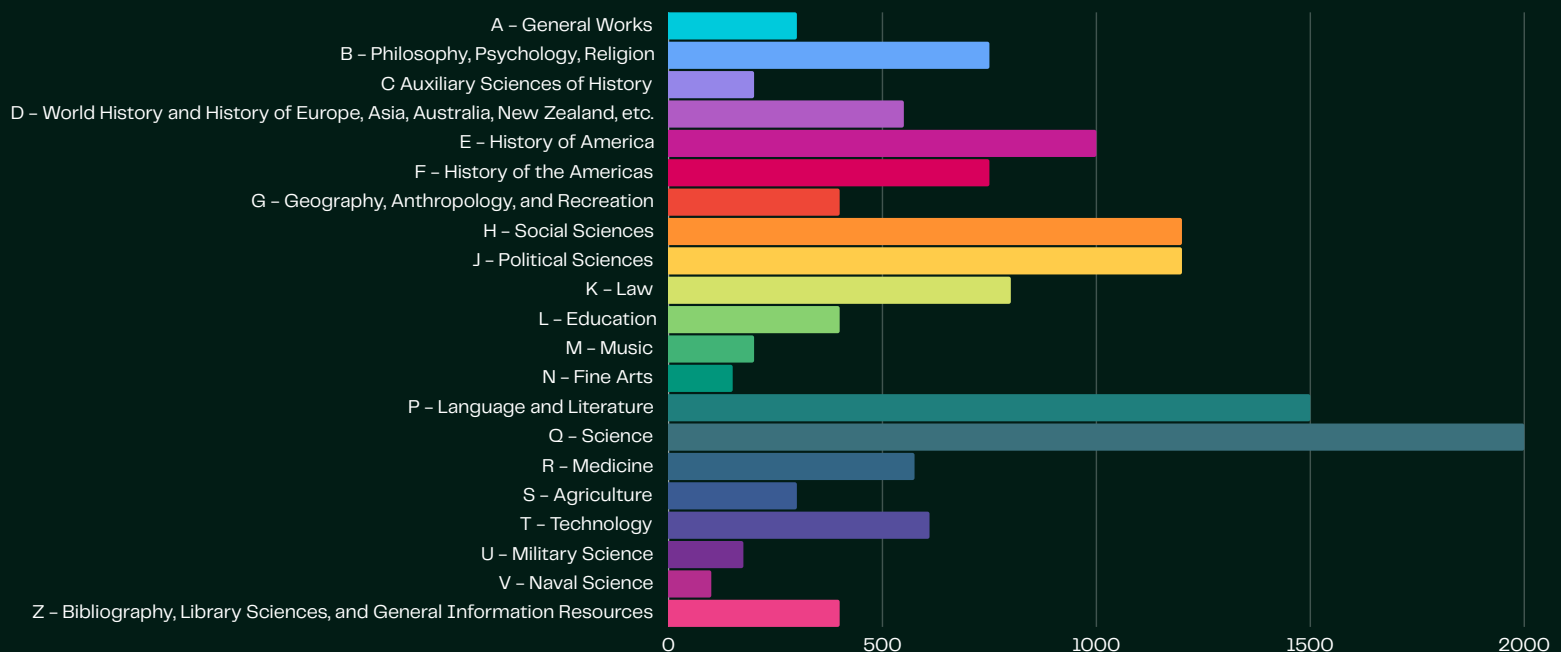
Collection Overview

Resource Use



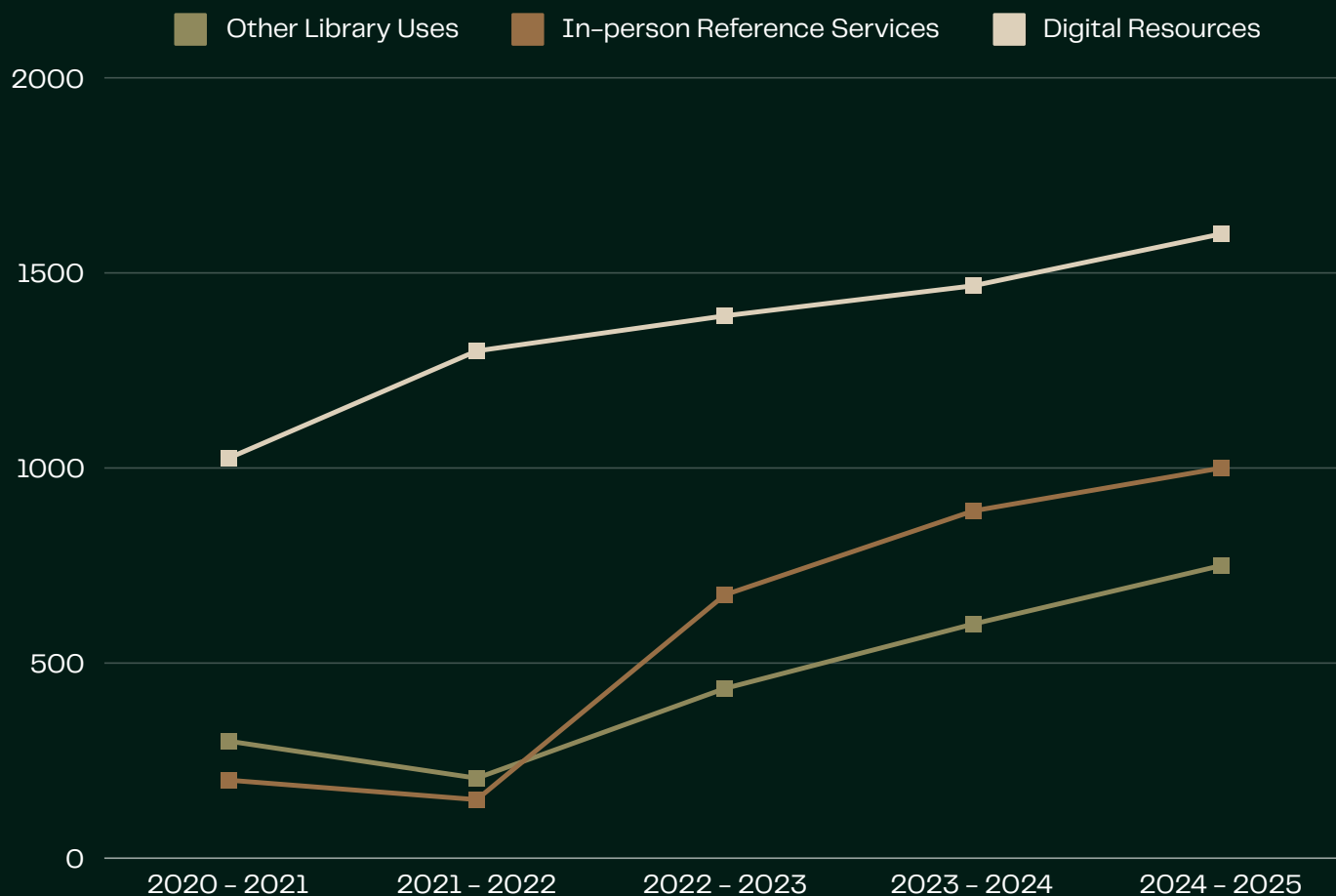
Our patrons tend to use databases and the physical books in our collections the most. With current trends, we can expect the use of physical books to decrease and electronic resources to increase.

Library of Congress Classification



Collections Trends

Demonstrated Trends of Library Services Use Over the Past Five Academic Years



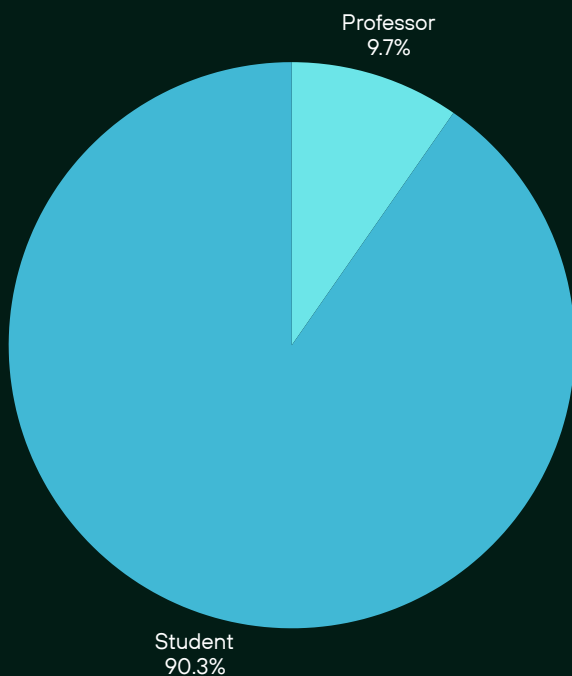
Informational Summary

The Emerald Ridge University Library is our institution's hub for physical and digital resources, research aid, technology advice, and more. Our staff is comprised of 33 amazing individuals with a diverse encompassment of specialties, services, and utmost professionalism. They are charged with maintaining and curating our library spaces, which includes our physical materials, online databases and records, self and peer-reviewed publications, multimedia, archives, and more. These well-sought materials cover an expansive coverage of knowledge related to our community and world, allowing students to indulge in academic-related research and personal indulgence. In totality, our collection holds close to 200,000 available physical and digital resources for our patrons to use, which does not include any physical texts or materials that we can source through Interlibrary Loans and other institutional relationships and gifts.

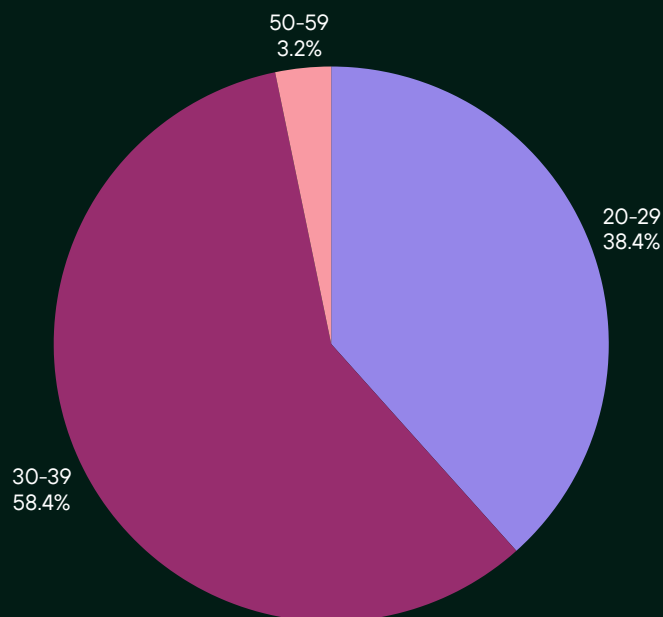
Amongst our vast collections and resources, Emerald Ridge University Library services a wide array of patrons, including non-University members, researchers, alumni, and all 12,000 students, staff, and faculty. As sourced from our 2023-2024 Demographic Survey, the current numbers breakdown indicated that about 60% of our most frequent users are our current students, both undergraduate and advanced degree-seeking. Their sought-out topics ranged between a conglomerate of our most popular areas of discipline, including STEM, Humanities, and Social Sciences. Our wonderful faculty and staff approximate 25% of library and resource use, and our additional patronage makes up the last 15% of users. This survey also provided insight as to the frequency of use of our library space and resources, indicating that that most patrons sought out the library on at least a weekly basis, with the highest average of 40%, the lowest being daily use at 12%. Of our provided resources, the top three used materials were physical books, e-books, and online databases. Between 4,000 and 5,000 patrons used our subscription databases over the 2023-2024 academic year, over 3,000 used physical books, and just above 3,000 used e-books. As always, our library spaces and the resources we select for availability for our patrons need to be reviewed on a semi-regular basis to ensure that they are current, accessible, and needed.

Survey Findings

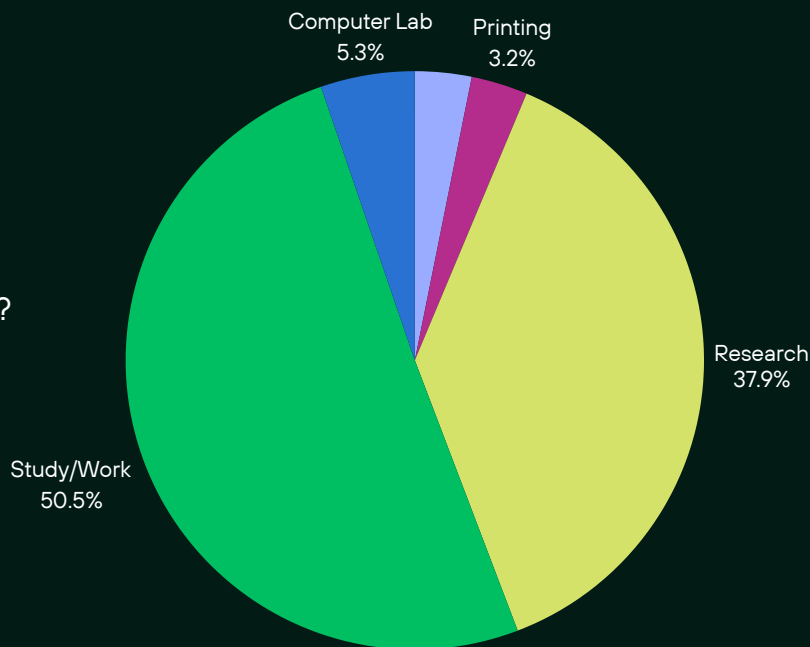
How do you identify as a member of the Emerald Ridge University Community?



What is your age group?

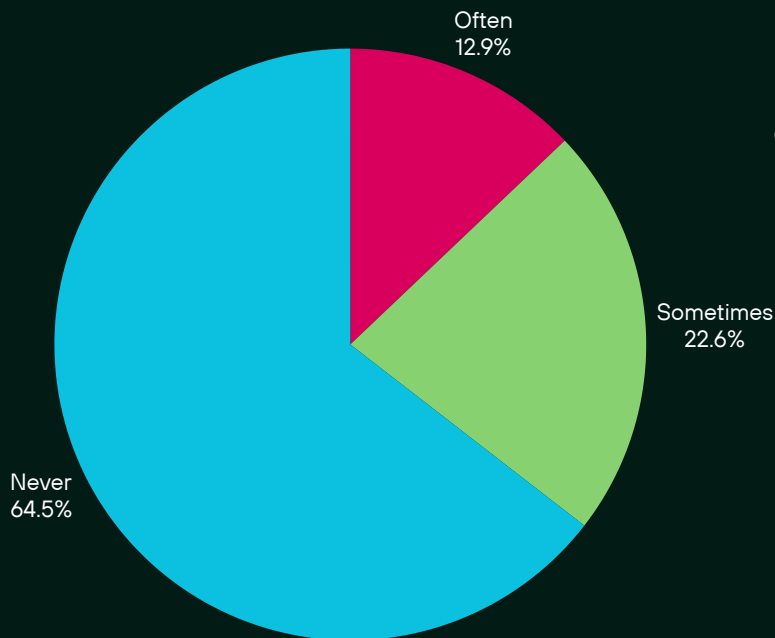


What do you mostly use the library for?

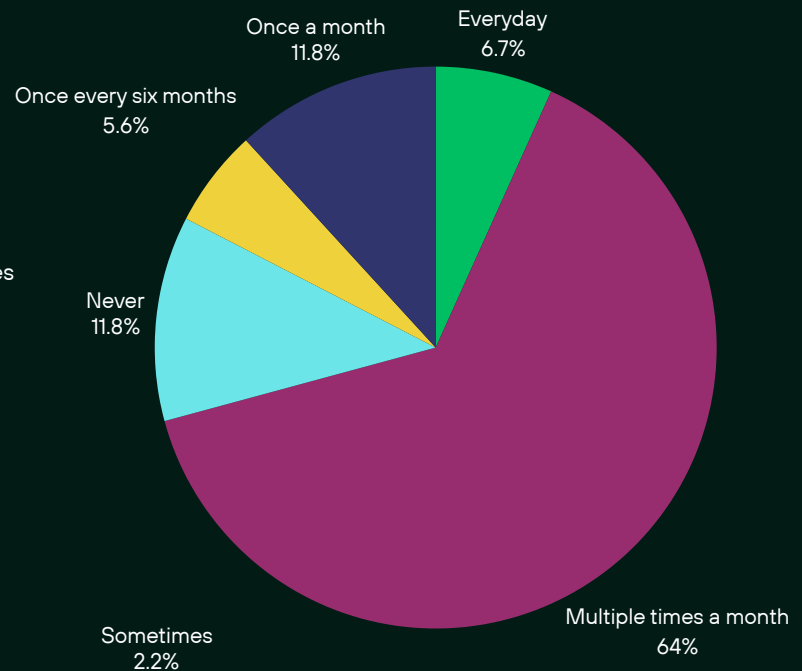


Survey Findings

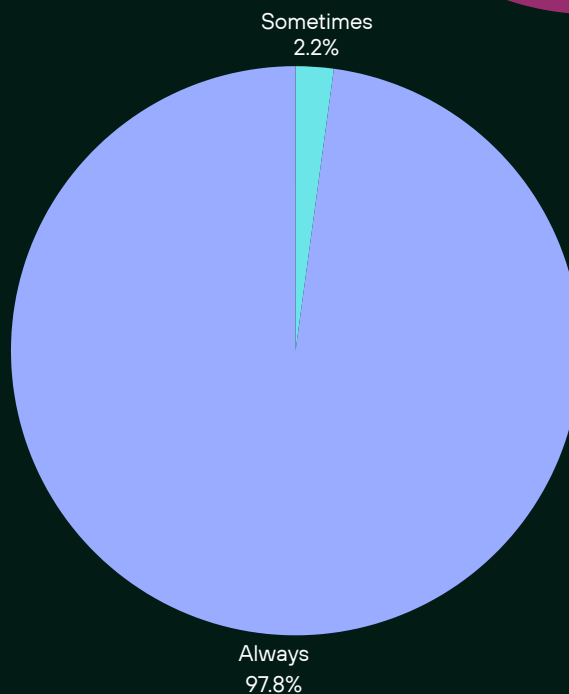
How often do you utilize the reference librarians?



How often do you visit Emerald Ridge University Library?

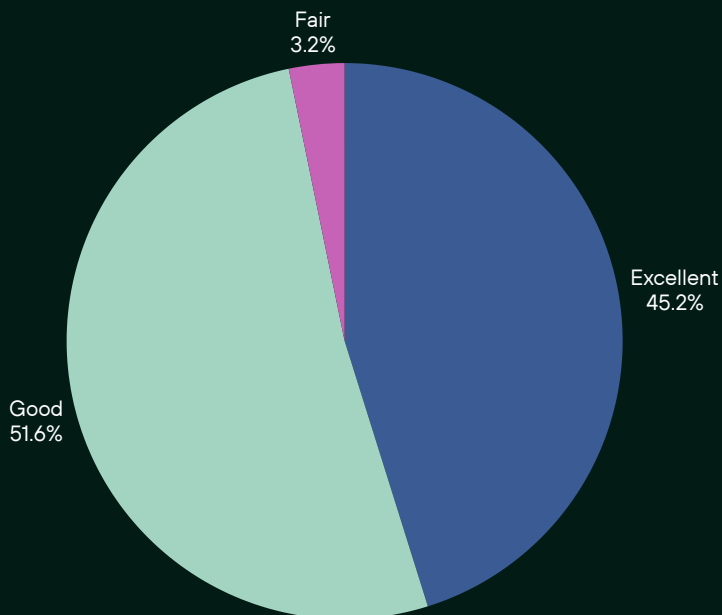


How often are you able to access the internet?

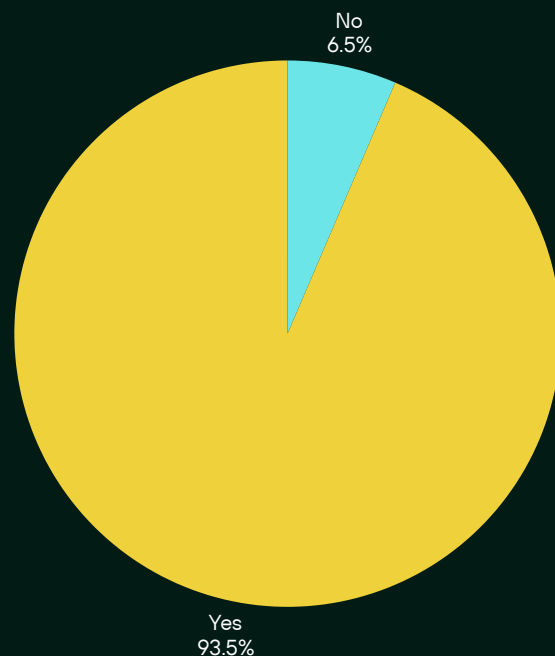


Survey Findings

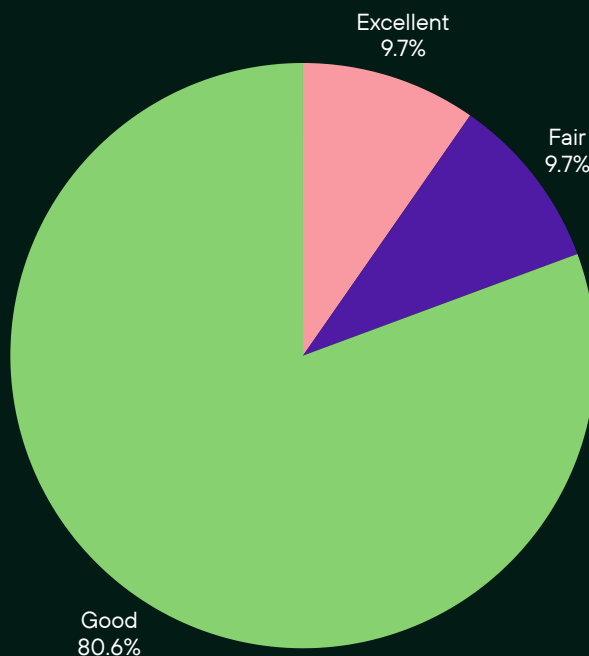
How would you rate your ability to access library materials online?



Do you feel that the materials in our collection are relevant and up to date?



How would you rate your ability to access specific materials needed?



Patron Focus Group Responses

Students who responded to the survey were asked if they would be willing to answer five additional short-answer questions (see Appendix). Students expressed a desire for extended library hours to accommodate those who work full-time, have families, can't sleep, etc. Additionally, clearer signage in the library as to what each section covers and which popular courses are connected to those sections can be helpful, particularly for first-year students who are getting acclimated to a new environment and workload. When discussing digital library resources, students expressed a desire for a live chat option on the library website to help guide their search; this confusion could also be alleviated with more in-class sessions with a university librarian on how to properly search through the online catalogue. For those students who primarily use the library as a place to meet with others, work, and/or study, more comfortable furniture was brought up.

Overall, students are satisfied with the resources available through the Emerald Ridge University Library. However, there are a few students who expressed frustration that fewer journals are available through the library than there were before, often forcing them to reach out to advisors to get through paywalls or find alternate sources. Additionally, several students expressed a desire to see more recent publications available through the library. Most student responses touched on the fact that they were not aware of all the university library has to offer. Suggestions included more marketing efforts to share available resources with students across campus, peer groups, or librarian-led groups to go over common subjects, subject-specific displays (particularly around midterms and finals), and more information dispersed in the actual classroom. Additionally, there were a few students who mentioned that while the library is great for research purposes, it is very sparse when it comes to books for pleasure reading. Increasing our collection would probably increase overall circulation and library visits according to these students.

The final survey question allowed respondents to provide additional information about their library usage that may not have been covered by the other questions or related to a question they wished to expand upon. Many of those who responded to this final question expressed security concerns with using the library late at night. They brought up ideas such as having additional security personnel patrolling parking garages at night, having security personnel walk patrons to their cars at night, or even brighter lighting on the walk from the library to the parking lots/garage. Additional comments stated that engineering students do not find much use for the library as the materials there are meant for liberal arts, business, or even medicine, leaving those studying in the engineering college to go directly to professors or teaching assistants with questions.

Librarian Focus Group Response

We had the opportunity to interview six of the librarians who work at Emerald Ridge University Library and ask them for their thoughts and perceptions on library trends and usage. It was widely acknowledged that most students who used the library did so for the study space – almost all the librarians interviewed expressed seeing many of the same students on a near daily basis gravitating towards the same study sections. As far as library services, librarians agreed that the Writing Lab was a popular stop for many students, particularly first-year students or those working on theses or dissertations. Additionally, many students approach the information desk to ask for guidance with research, primarily how best to find libguides or pertinent articles.

There is also a noted increase in the number of digital items compared to physical items. More often than not, print journals are going fully digital, magazines are making the same transition, and students are requesting assistance with our online catalog more so than our physical one. Those who tend to request physical resources are older faculty who are not as comfortable using technology or the English/Psychology professors/students who are looking for works of fiction or non-fiction rather than articles. Additionally, many students request help with citations – the librarians interviewed mentioned this is one of the most common help requests they get.

Of the six librarians interviewed, four were general reference librarians, one handled special collections, and one handled digital media such as videos and audio recordings. The reference librarians got more face-to-face time with students by nature of staffing the information/circulation desks more often, as well as their general knowledge of the library and its resources. However, it was the special collections and digital media librarians who are most often involved with research. Because they have a specialization, students who are working on projects relating to their topics of expertise sought out the librarians and fostered more of a working relationship with them. All of them, however, made note of the need for more integration of library services in courses. They all felt that only first-year courses were taught about the basic library resources, but that it would be beneficial for all courses to make note of the ways the library can be of use for that course's assignments and projects.



Proposed Actions

Based on the results of this community needs assessment, including all survey answers and focus group responses, we recommend that the Emerald Ridge University Library implement the following:

- 1 Extend Library Hours:** Implement extended library hours, particularly during exam periods and late-night hours, to accommodate students with varying schedules.
- 2 Improve Library Signage and Navigation:** Update signage within the library to indicate sections related to popular courses and provide visual maps for easier navigation.
- 3 Integrate Library Resources into Courses:** Encourage faculty across all departments to include library resources as part of their course design, not just for first-year courses. This can be done through in-class library orientations or by incorporating library-based assignments.
- 4 Implement a Live Chat for Digital Assistance:** Introduce a live chat feature on the library website for students to get real-time assistance with navigating the online catalog and finding digital resources.
- 5 Increase the Collection of Books for Leisure Reading:** Expand the collection of fiction, non-fiction, and other leisure reading materials in the library. A more varied collection could increase library visits and circulation.
- 6 Promote Library Resources More Effectively:** Increase marketing efforts to raise awareness of library resources, such as through targeted promotions, librarian-led workshops, or subject-specific displays.
- 7 Enhance Security Measures:** Improve security by adding more personnel for nighttime patrols, offering escorts for students leaving the library late, and improving lighting in parking lots and walkways.
- 8 Address Issues with Journal Access:** Work with faculty and library staff to explore ways of improving access to recent publications and resolving issues with paywalls.

Conclusion

The results from the accumulated survey and focus group responses from our diverse population of patrons at the Emerald Ridge University Library highlighted several key themes. Librarians observed that the library is primarily used as a study space, with many students and other patrons gravitating to the same sections daily; the Writing Lab was noted as a particularly popular resource. Librarians also reported a growing reliance on digital resources, with many students seeking help with online catalogs rather than physical materials. Citation assistance was one of the most frequent requests, and while reference librarians had more face-to-face interactions with students due to their presence at circulation desks, librarians in areas like digital media and special collections worked more closely with students on research projects tied to their areas of expertise. A significant concern among librarians was the need to better integrate library services into all courses to ensure that students are aware of the resources available to them throughout their academic journey.

From the students' perspective, many expressed a desire for extended library hours, particularly for those who work full-time or have family obligations. Comfort in the library was also a common concern, with students requesting more comfortable furniture for study and social spaces. Clearer signage within the library was suggested to help students navigate the space more easily, especially for newcomers in the library. There was also a desire for more in-class sessions on how to use the library's online catalog and resources effectively. Many suggested the implementation of a live chat feature on the library website to assist with digital resource searches. While students were generally satisfied with the library's offerings, some expressed frustration about limited access to recent journals and publications, often due to paywalls or a general lack of institutional description. There were also requests for a broader collection of leisure reading materials, as some felt the current selection was too focused on academic resources. Finally, security was a notable concern, especially for those studying late at night. Students suggested increased security patrols, escorts to cars, and improved lighting along walkways to enhance safety during late-night library visits.

The aforementioned proposed actions aim to address the most common concerns raised by both librarians and students. By improving library hours, resources, signage, and security, Emerald Ridge University and the library can enhance the student experience, encourage greater use of our educational space, and foster a more integrated approach to library services across all academic disciplines.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Survey Questions

1. How do you identify as a member of the Emerald Ridge University Library Community?
 - a. Student
 - b. Professor
 - c. Faculty
 - d. Other: _____
2. What is your age?
 - a. 10-19
 - b. 20-29
 - c. 30-39
 - d. 40-49
 - e. 50-59
 - f. 60-69
 - g. 70+
3. Do you live on campus?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. What do you mostly use the library for?
 - a. Study/Work
 - b. Research
 - c. Computer Lab/Printing
 - d. Socializing
 - e. Events
 - f. Class
 - g. Tutoring
 - h. Pleasure
5. How often do you utilize our reference librarians?
 - a. Never
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Often
 - d. Always

Appendix 1: Survey Questions cont.

6. How often do you visit the Emerald Ridge University Library?
 - a. Never
 - b. Once a year
 - c. Once every six months
 - d. Once a month
 - e. Multiple times a month
 - f. Every day
7. How often do you access the internet?
 - a. Never
 - b. Once every few weeks
 - c. Once a week
 - d. Multiple times a week
 - e. Once a day
 - f. Multiple times a day
8. How would you rate your ability to access library materials online?
 - a. Poor
 - b. Fair
 - c. Good
 - d. Excellent
9. Do you feel the materials in our collection are relevant and up to date?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
10. If no, please explain:
 - a. _____
11. How would you rate your ability to access specific materials you may need?
 - a. Poor
 - b. Fair
 - c. Good
 - d. Excellent
12. Additional Comments:
 - a. _____

Appendix 2: Patron Focus Group Interview Questions

1. How can the library better assist you with schoolwork and/or research?
 2. Do you feel that the current resources available are adequate for your learning or research needs? What are some of the resources you use that you find most helpful
 3. What can your library and librarians add to their services and/or collections that would encourage you to use the library more?
 4. Do you feel as though you have been properly made aware of and educated on the resources the library has available for you?
 5. Do you prefer using physical materials and resources or digital ones?
-

Appendix 3: Librarian Focus Group Interview Questions

1. What are the areas you see being utilized the most?
2. What areas are being under-utilized?
3. Do you feel as though there has been a significant transfer from analog materials to digital ones? Do you see it happening for all fields or only some?
4. Have you noticed a difference or trend in what resources faculty utilize vs. what resources students utilize? Please elaborate.
5. What is your main focus or specialty?
6. How often do you assist with research?

References

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