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arcadia@cambridge: rethinking the role of the research library in the digital age

ARCADIA

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About the Arcadia Programme

The Arcadia Programme is a three-year programme funded by a generous grant from the Arcadia Fund to Cambridge University Library. The grant will enable us to explore the role of academic libraries in a digital age, create new programmes and services, particularly for undergraduates -- and also to improve the external environment of the library.

About the Author

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Executive Summary & Recommendations

Background

This report summarizes the results of the History Uncovered project: a 10-week research project undertaken as part of the Arcadia Programme. The project studied the information needs of undergraduate historians at the University of Cambridge and aimed to analyse both their use of resources and the wider networks that support their search for information.

Data for the History Uncovered project was collected through an online survey of History undergraduates. The survey was completed by just under 40% of the current population of undergraduates studying History. The survey was followed by a series of four focus group sessions, allowing further exploration of some of the issues raised by the survey. To ensure that recommendations were also grounded in the teaching and learning goals of the Faculty, six interviews with senior faculty members in History were conducted.

Based on this research, a number of key findings are reported here, along with some recommendations made for the future provision of resources to History undergraduates.

Key Findings

Use of Resources in History & Reading Habits of Undergraduate Historians

- Senior members of the History Faculty at Cambridge are generally enthusiastic about how digital resources are enhancing resource provision to undergraduate students, although they view the essentials goals of their teaching as unaffected by digital tools. Key concepts stressed by the faculty in their teaching include the interpretation of historical sources and the understanding of historical context. While there were mixed perceptions and some uncertainty about changes in students' methods of working and ability to handle information sources, faculty members emphasized that the demands on students are unchanged. Undergraduates are required to read widely, absorb information, and abstract to the right degree from the available evidence, in order to construct arguments in their essays and exams. Monographs remain a key source of information for historians.
- While most History undergraduates consult journal articles online, students concluded that their overall use of electronic resources and the availability of such resources for their course were low. Despite this, they were generally satisfied with the level of provision as they preferred hard copies for books and were able to find the majority of the articles they needed electronically.
- Students preferred journal articles—and other short resources—to be delivered online, either because they felt able to concentrate on shorter resources on a screen or because they could print them. Reading or skimming a (usually long) text for general information and context—an essential activity for undergraduate historians—is still almost universally confined to print.
- History undergraduates are most regularly reading articles and chapters or sections of books. Skimming and note taking from resources are common reading techniques. Reading a book in its entirety is not a regular activity for undergraduate historians. While most students thought it was easier to use hard copies for their reading tasks, preferences for print or electronic format for different reading activities did vary. Students' emphasis was

not necessarily on the format of the resources themselves, but rather on the ways they personally felt they could most effectively absorb the information.

- Access to key texts, however, was seen as a significant problem. Students generally thought that ready access outweighed their preference for hard copies of books, although this was qualified by how essential the resources were and by the time constraints on the students.
- Although the balance between primary and secondary source use does change by year group, primary sources were never seen as the predominant resource used in the undergraduate course. Faculty members are interested in incorporating more digital primary sources into the curriculum. Students prefer to read primary sources in print; they recognize, however, that the best format depends on the nature of the source itself and the kind of research they are conducting.

Finding Resources

- Undergraduates overwhelmingly relied on their supervisors' reading lists to discover the materials relevant to their course, not the Faculty reading list. While supervisors' reading lists were particularly important for students' weekly essays, they were also viewed as more important than Faculty reading lists for exam revision and starting independent research.
- In History, supervisors vary widely in what they give on their reading lists—some create unique lists, others amend the Faculty lists and suggest a few other resources, and still others simply point to the Faculty lists—but most undergraduates reported that their supervisors had directed them to the key resources for their readings. While the vast majority of students said that they could find the resources on their reading lists, many complained about competition over the key texts.
- Undergraduates rarely have time or reason to go beyond their supervisors' reading lists, a factor contributing to the low usage and awareness of some databases and electronic resources. When students do have to find resources independently, it is generally because they want to extend the range of their knowledge on a topic or they need to find alternative sources for books and resources that are unavailable.
- Faculty do not, on the whole, require or even desire their students to go beyond their reading lists: they are teaching students how to use resources, not how to find them. Reading is highly directed due to the large amount of information students are expected to engage with and utilize each week.
- For independent projects, students expressed varying degrees of confidence in their ability to find resources. Again, variations in the assistance given by individual supervisors affected the individual student's need to find resources independently; most faculty members interviewed in this project reported starting their students off with a reading list. Student strategies for finding more resources were mainly comprised following footnotes and references and browsing. Undergraduates expressed concerns about being able to find primary sources for dissertations, managing their references, discerning the reputability of sources, and feeling unprepared to find sources on their own.
- Google and JSTOR were the predominant ways undergraduate historians searched for electronic resources because they were readily accessible and easy to use.

- The library is still seen as an information centre providing both traditional and electronic resources and physical study space to undergraduate historians. However, some Papers and some supervisors are providing and organizing resources via CamTools sites.

Undergraduate Support Preferences & Recommendations

- Access to key texts was a prevalent concern. The Faculty reading lists—which form the basis for the provision of resources in most libraries serving historians—do not differentiate qualitatively between resources, although supervisors clearly are assessing both relevance and quality. Resource provision across the University could be eased if reading lists highlighted key texts.
- Libraries should be sensitive to the fact that undergraduate historians generally prefer hard copies for many of their study activities and their reading of monographs. However, undergraduates wanted journal articles to be delivered online and reported that they used chapters and sections of books extensively. While not totally replacing the need for physical copies, key chapters and sections could be digitized to ease constraints on access. CamTools currently is being used by some Papers and some supervisors for resource provision, and the History Faculty Library could assist with this project to widen access to resources.
- As resource use is highly directed by supervisors, more attention should be directed towards defining and meeting supervisors' information needs, in order to a) facilitate their own awareness of electronic resources b) enable better provision of the key resources they assign and c) increase the use of the subscription resources currently held by the University. This will enhance teaching within the University as well as the broader educational experience provided by the Faculty and University.
- Because of the breadth of subjects and resources encountered in History, electronic resources should be grouped and publicized by subject or topic, as rarely are resources of relevance to all historians. Finding primary sources online was also an area of difficulty, as there is currently no clear pathway to find either the subscriptions the University has, resources freely available online, or resources available in archives and collections in Cambridge.
- While supervisors and the provision of the materials they set should be the main targets of libraries and information services directed at historians, due to the directed nature of the course in Cambridge, undergraduates are also interested in more pathways for independently finding the electronic resources available to them. Undergraduates use browsing in libraries as a key strategy for gathering more information on a topic, and browsing content online—both recommender services and the ability to search content and see if materials are relevant to read—would be services that would support historians.
- Undergraduate historians develop different information needs as their studies progress. First years are often still struggling to find resources on their reading lists. Second year students' needs are focused around Themes and Sources Long Essay assignment, while third year students mentioned that they would have liked more support while writing their dissertations. The current provision and marketing of resources for undergraduate historians should be reassessed at the University and Faculty level, to ensure the teaching and learning goals of the History Faculty are met.

1. Project Background

The aim of the History Uncovered project is to better understand the information needs of students in both Part I and Part II of the Cambridge History course by 1) analysing their use of resources and 2) contextualizing these results within the wider networks that support their search for information. Either one of these areas might have been the entire focus of the project, but it is hoped that this twin focus will provide a better overall picture for libraries and information services supporting undergraduate historians. Data was collected in Lent 2011. It should be noted that the project was completed over a ten-week time frame: accordingly, all results should be interpreted as an investigation into issues and trends and not as a detailed study. Given the time constraints of the project, data was only collected from undergraduate students and teaching staff.

History at Cambridge

Following Bodi and Maier-O'Shea (2005) on the importance of information services' attention to the teaching and learning goals of departments, this project was designed to reflect emphases by the Faculty, as well as the interests of the Faculty Library. The latest figures (2009-2010) released by the University reported 671 undergraduate students reading History at Cambridge (University of Cambridge, 2010, p. 18), and there are "over one hundred" academic staff (History Faculty, 2009a). According to the Faculty website, the aim of studying History is "to further your understanding and knowledge of the past and your ability to present that understanding and knowledge with clarity, insight and discrimination" (History Faculty, 2009b, p. 1).

Undergraduate teaching takes place through both lectures and supervisions. Supervisions are small-group, sometimes 1-to-1, discussions between students and either postgraduates or senior faculty members. The supervisory system is considered to be the heart of undergraduate teaching in the History Faculty and what distinguishes History at Cambridge and Oxford from other universities (Directors of Studies, 2010, p. 1). While most Directors of Studies "believe that an element of one to one teaching remains vital" (Directors of Studies, 2010, p. 1), it is worth pointing out that currently undergraduates may not be taught individually, and there may be some motions by the University to move away from 1-to-1 supervisions (Shepherd, 2011). Supervisors currently create topics for study, give readings, and set essay questions for their supervisees (Directors of Studies, 2010).

Undergraduate historians at Cambridge are required to evaluate and synthesize large amounts of material drawn from original sources and from the work of other historians (History Faculty, 2009b, p. 1), and the idea of reading, note-taking, and absorbing information is emphasized in the Faculty's literature (History Faculty, 2009b, p.3). Student and faculty perceptions on effective reading were explored in this research. Understanding student strategies for reading and resource-gathering gives libraries and information services a better understanding of students' information needs as well as reveals current weaknesses within library provision. While this project tried to get a complete picture of undergraduate historians use of resources, there was a particular focus on the use (and usefulness) of digital resources, in line with the objectives of the Arcadia Project.

Using primary sources well is a key part of historical training and is a vital skill for success in Cambridge (History Faculty, 2009b, p. 2); moreover, as the Faculty stresses, contextualizing and interpreting sources is also a valuable transferable skill (History Faculty, 2008). All successful undergraduate dissertations must draw on primary sources, and the compulsory Part II Special Subject papers are also centred around primary sources (History Faculty, n.d., p. 1; p. 4). Throughout this project, attention was paid to undergraduates' use of primary sources, the formats that were important to them, and their ability to find primary source resources in Cambridge.

Previous research on the information skills of Cambridge undergraduates showed an overwhelming reliance on reading lists as the basic source of information, followed by lecturers' and supervisors' recommendations (IRIS Project, 2009, p. 7). This study explored how undergraduate historians use their Faculty reading lists (which often run to 50+ pages) and their supervisors' reading lists (which libraries usually never see). As Stamatoplos (2009) pointed out, many undergraduates also engage in independent projects that require them to use different methods of information searching, and this is not always reflected in information literacy programs. The History Uncovered project aimed to determine where and how students search for information when they undertake independent research.

Two coursework exercises were identified as areas where students were required to do independent research: Themes and Sources Long Essays, a compulsory exercise in Part I, and Part II dissertations. Dissertations are an optional component of the degree. The latest Faculty information indicates that about half of the students currently write a dissertation and that they may become compulsory (Goldie, 2007). Themes and Sources papers take a broad theme in History and look at how it changes over time. The Long Essay is "set in May of the first year and submitted in January of the second year, so most of the work for it is done in the intervening vacations" (History Faculty, 2009c), and some Themes and Sources options are based on reading primary source material. Students receive one supervision for their Themes and Sources Long Essay and are prohibited from receiving any further supervision (History Faculty, 2009b, p.6). These two projects were targeted throughout the research project.

There is currently little information on the specific information needs of Cambridge undergraduate historians, taking into account the various requirements of the degree and the differences in Cambridge undergraduate education due to the supervisory system. The History Faculty does regularly survey students, and there is a question on the survey asking for suggestions to improve the Seeley Library. The wording of the question leads students to comment on the provision, policies, and environment of the Seeley Library, but not to comment on Cambridge's resources as a whole. According to the Seeley circulation data, there has been little change in borrowing since 2001-02, and the average number of users in the library has also remained constant. Since 2003-04, there has also been a large decrease in the circulation of Special Subject primary source packets. Anecdotal evidence confirms a decrease in the use of print journals, although journals have never been borrowable. Borrowing of Special Subject packets is assumed to have decreased as a result of the use of CamTools to provide scanned documents and primary sources.

Literature Review

While there is no shortage of information on historians—their use of sources and their information-seeking behaviour—research tends to focus on professional historians (Anderson, 2004; Anderson, 2009; Dalton & Charnigo, 2004; Maxwell, 2010; Tibbo, 2003b; Warwick, *et al.*, 2008) and, to a lesser extent, postgraduates (Delgadillo & Lynch, 1999; Tibbo, 2003a; Barrett 2005). As a result of this, the use of primary sources, formats of primary sources and the importance of preservation are prominent issues. Some recent studies on historians and primary sources have concentrated on the needs of academics teaching with primary sources and the numerous difficulties in teaching students how to approach primary sources and simply finding available primary source material, especially digital resources (Malkmus 2007, 2008; Krause 2010). Using the data from these studies, issues of undergraduate teaching and primary sources were explored in the History Uncovered project.

These studies have also looked at academic historians' use of electronic resources. Historians are not seen as being on the cutting edge of digital scholarship, perhaps due to necessary research methods in the discipline: "qualitative analysis of paper documents" (Maxwell, 2010, p. 24). However, this

certainly does not mean that historians do not use or know about information technologies, or that digital resources have had little effect on the study of History. Brockman *et al.* (2001) found even ten years ago that it was not resistance to change that stopped humanities scholars from using digital resources but their effectiveness, and that scholars were using them, when they enhanced their “tried, tested, and somewhat traditional research functions” (p. vi). Transformations in the field include the accessibility of resources, the availability of new material, full-text searching, and the use of bibliographic databases and online forums for disciplinary awareness (Maxwell, 2010; Anderson 2009). In other areas, the humanities seem to have remained the same, due to the continued importance of printed materials and also the range of resources necessary for work in the humanities (Warwick, *et al.*, 2008; British Academy, 2005). Extensive research done specifically on historians (Tibbo, 2003b; Dalton & Charnigo, 2004), while a little dated, confirmed the importance of traditional methods:

In research, informal means of locating information, especially references in the works of other scholars and book reviews, continue to be prominent. Browsing is still important. Print remains the principal format of the information used, although electronic databases are used extensively in the discovery of information, and books still dominate the discipline. This domination of print is even clearer in the citation analysis than in the survey results. It is still true to describe the physical library as the laboratory of the historian, a role that explains much of the heavy use of WorldCat. E-journals are used rarely; most historians are uncertain of their value and thus of their reliability as sources of information. (Dalton & Charnigo, 2004 p. 414)

These perceptions are explored in the History Uncovered project, primarily with undergraduates, but also with some faculty. Subject-particular differences in information searching and sources of information were expected to be less pronounced than studies done on academics or more advanced students; however it is instructive for libraries and archives to know how historians are teaching the next generation of historians about finding and using sources (Tibbo, 2003a), even if at the undergraduate level.

There is also no shortage of research on undergraduates and their information-seeking behaviour. Kulthau (1994), Leckie (1996) and Mellon (1984) are still cited for models of the undergraduate research process: a process usually starting with anxiety and confusion and characterized by haphazard information-seeking strategies. Head (2008) found that undergraduates primarily use their course readings, Google, and public websites for their research, concluding that, as far as finding course-related readings, university students are not any more likely to be naturally adept at finding information than anyone else. Previously mentioned studies (Krause, 2010; Malkmus, 2008; Stamatoplos, 2009) focus on the library’s role in enhancing the undergraduate experience through primary sources and mentored undergraduate research.

It is worth noting that library studies on undergraduate users are difficult to generalize from institution to institution. Most of the aforementioned research was done in America—where undergraduates are usually required to find sources independently for each essay or project in a class—and even studies done in the United Kingdom would be difficult to extrapolate onto the situation at Cambridge, because of the 1-to-1 or small group supervision experience.

There are numerous user studies published which address use of digital resources and digital information seeking. The “Digital Information Seeker” report (2010) summaries 12 recent studies on researchers and students. The key findings of relevance to this study are that users want more functionality and enhanced content in library systems; information literacy has not necessarily improved; Google is used to locate most subscription resources; e-journals are increasingly vital; and

more digital content of all kinds is almost uniformly seen as better. Despite this, the summary found that disciplinary differences exist in the use of resources and research behaviours. Furthermore, a very recent study by the Book Industry Study Group (2011) in the United States showed that nearly 75% of undergraduates surveyed prefer printed texts.

These issues are explored in the History Uncovered study by examining how Cambridge History undergraduates read, use electronic resources, seek information, and interpret their reading lists. It is hoped that through this research the libraries and information services involved in supporting undergraduate teaching and research in History will have a more complete understanding of their users and will be better able map the way forward in terms of resource provision and information-skills teaching.

2. Research Methodology

The History Uncovered project employed a mixed-methods approach, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data sets through an online survey for undergraduate students studying History, semi-structured interviews with senior faculty members in History, and focus groups sessions with undergraduate students studying History.

Survey

An online survey, created with SurveyMonkey, was the main instrument for collecting data from undergraduate History students. The target population was all undergraduate students enrolled in History. Given the lack of information the library has on the needs of its users, a survey was chosen in order to be able to gather information from as many students as possible, within the timescale of the Arcadia project. An online survey was deemed a suitable collection tool as the target population was known to have internet access (e.g. CARET Learning Landscape report). The subject matter of the survey was not sensitive and no participants expressed concerns about the online survey format, which allowed for anonymous participation.

The survey featured a range of questions on the themes including:

- Sources of information
- Reading and use of resources
- Primary source use and format preferences
- Information searching
- Using reading lists

The survey was pre-tested with a small group of involved undergraduates and postgraduates (representatives to Faculty Board or the Teaching and Learning Quality Committee) who had previously been asked to help with advice on the project. The survey was also pre-tested with an advisory panel of librarians and social scientists. After the pre-test results and comments had been collected, the survey was re-tested with the advisory group, but not with students.

The survey was open for two weeks and was publicised through a variety of channels. Because the target population was only undergraduate historians, the survey was not publicised through JCRs or on general library websites. Instead, the survey was first emailed directly to all undergraduates currently registered in History. This method ensured that students not in the Faculty and Faculty Library would have an equal chance to participate. Two follow-up emails were sent, reminding students about the survey. The survey was also advertised on the History Faculty website, and publicity materials—including posters and bookmarks—were distributed around the History Faculty. As an incentive to complete the survey, all survey participants providing a valid Cambridge University e-mail were entered into a prize draw.

When there were concerns about how respondents would interpret terminology (“electronic resources”, “primary sources”), survey questions were prefaced by a definition, with examples for added clarity. For consistency, “electronic resources” is the terminology applied in all questions on digital tools. “Electronic resources” was chosen because it mirrors the University Library’s terminology.

Only two of the questions required an answer, so the response numbers for questions will vary. The number of respondents is shown as (n) in the discussion of results. In general, there is about a 5% difference in response rates for any given questions (e.g. n=262 vs. n=255).

In total, 266 survey responses were received. Based on a full-time enrolment in History for 2009-2010, this represents a response rate of just under 40% of the total (University of Cambridge, 2010, p. 18). The response rates by year group are given in the table below; n=266 is used to calculate the percentages.

Year	Percentage	Respondents
First year	28.9%	77
Second year	39.1%	104
Third year	32.2%	85

The quantitative survey data is not intended to show statistical significance, but to highlight trends emerging in the Cambridge situation and to give some evidence—other than anecdotal—for libraries and information services to be able to use to approach their resource provision and services.

The online survey included many opportunities for students to give free-text comments on questions. One question was entirely free text. The free text comments given were analysed using grounded theory, and the key codes and categories that emerged are presented in the main body of this report. Most respondents gave detailed or complex answers that contained more than one theme or could be analysed in more than one way. Therefore, while numbers of responses are given for certain themes, this is to give an indication of the weight of the theme, and cannot be translated into a percentage of the whole.

Faculty Interviews

Faculty interviews were conducted in order to explore the teaching methods and perspectives of current teaching staff. The interviews were semi-structured in nature; however, the goal was for the interviews to be more conversational than interrogative, to gain insight into the methods and approaches of the Faculty.

The interviews lasted no more than 30 minute and were structured around four themes:

- how digital tools are changing both research and teaching (if at all)
- the perceived effects of digital resources on undergraduate patterns of work and use of resources
- what information seeking strategies they teach undergraduates, in either lectures, supervisions, or the mentoring of students' independent projects
- the use of primary sources in undergraduate teaching and the benefits and difficulties of assigning online primary sources

Six faculty interviews were conducted. Faculty were approached directly and were selected to represent a wide range of teaching experience. Faculty were also carefully selected so that a wide range of subject groups – and geographical and chronological specialities—were represented. Faculty members universally acknowledged the difficulties of speaking for History, as historians, because of the variety of sources historians use. Different types of sources present their own set of challenges, and different research methods have evolved to meet those challenges.

All faculty interviews were recorded and transcribed with the consent of the participants. The transcriptions were then coded using grounded theory. Some of the quotations presented in this report have been edited for clarity by the faculty.

Focus Groups

Following the online survey, four focus group sessions were organized to explore some of the trends emerging from the quantitative data. The demands of the students' time schedules meant that focus

groups could not be organized by year group, although students from all three years were well represented.

All participants were self-selecting, and each had expressed an interest in participating via the online survey. Participants did not receive details of the topics for discussion in advance of the group meetings, but the schedule was outlined at the start of each focus group. Each focus group lasted between 50-60 minutes, and the number of participants involved in each session ranged from 3-6. Discussions were sound recorded and transcribed with the consent of the participants. Free refreshments were provided throughout each focus group, and participants received an Amazon gift voucher for their time.

All comments included in this report were received via the online student survey, the faculty interviews, or the focus group interviews.

Limitations

This study has some data limitations. First, usage and information skills are measured by respondents' memory and perceptions, rather than via observational methods. The time period specified for usage questions ("the current academic year") is long. Respondents to the pre-test determined that the time period "this term" was confusing, because the survey was released at the beginning of Lent term and they had not yet started their normal patterns of working. A time period of "this week" or "an average week" was deemed to be insufficient to account for the variations between terms, between supervisors and their requirements, and between the work done for weekly essays and the work done on coursework projects and assignments. Questions were intentionally worded to encourage participants to estimate their usage broadly, as the goal of this research was to show trends, not to provide a detailed analysis of usage.

There were difficulties in finding faculty members available to give interviews. Term time is busy with lectures and supervisions, as well as research, and the time scale of the Arcadia project constrained flexibility of scheduling. While attempts were made to collect data from different subject groups, there were no American historians and only one extra-European historian interviewed. The subject groups of the faculty members interviewed were: Ancient and Medieval History, Modern British History, Early Modern History, World History, and Economic, Social, and Cultural History. As the faculty members themselves emphasized, there are difficulties in extrapolating from their experiences onto a wider faculty experience.

Finally, the information environment is continuing to undergo major changes and developments. Library and information services will need to be dynamic and responsive to a rapidly changing information landscape. The current practice and opinions discussed in this report may not be relevant in the very near future.

Part A: Current Use of Resources in History & Exploration of the Factors Affecting Use

Monographs and journal articles dominate the History Faculty reading lists, but this does not necessarily give libraries an accurate representation of the resources students are relying on for information. Data from the survey, the faculty interviews, and the focus groups was collected in order to answer the questions of what information resources undergraduate historians are using for their course and what factors affect their use and choices. In line with the goals of the Arcadia Project, particular emphasis is given to undergraduates' use of digital resources.

3. Faculty Perceptions

In the Faculty interviews, academic staff members were asked to comment on how electronic resources were affecting their undergraduate teaching and on any perceived changes or trends in current undergraduates' work.

3.1. Perceptions on Teaching

Faculty members emphasized that the emergence of electronic resources has changed what they can and do provide to students, but has not changed their teaching goals. The important concept for undergraduate teaching was instructing students in how to use sources and how to understand historical context. Key themes include the importance of undergraduates absorbing arguments, making judgements about materials, creating structures for analysis, abstracting to the right degree from evidence, and reading widely and synthesizing.

Most of the techniques that one wants to get historians to be familiar with, I think, are completely unaffected by the availability of electronic resources because one is trying to get them to read texts and then think about how, as it were, how big blocks of things fit together, make connections—what sort of connections you make, what sort of structures you see the world within. And it is much more getting their structures of analysis right than it is pumping them with particular bits of data.

Cambridge Faculty

To help students meet these goals, faculty often mentioned the importance of teaching students how to read. The reading and reading habits required of students have not changed. Breadth of reading and the ability to absorb arguments and synthesize them was emphasized.

It is not like they [Cambridge students] are only able to take in small chunks of information that are sort of textbook-y. I think that might be true at other universities, but they always worked from textbooks anyway and we never did...and I don't think we are now...I often talk to my students about the different modes of reading, the intense mode that you apply to the very germane parts of your reading and the kind of sketchy sort of 'where are we at' mode that you need for orienting yourself.

Cambridge Faculty

[How to read] is actually one of the most valuable things we teach them... how to get hold of something, to get a complete sense of what it is about, with the illustrative material that you may need to justify this sort of summary that you are putting down in note form.

Cambridge Faculty

Teaching undergraduates to understand and use sources is more valued than teaching them how to find sources, and this is discussed more in section 13.2. Digital tools were seen as most useful when they enabled lecturers and supervisors to provide students with scanned documents or links to

explore. Many faculty members specifically emphasized their increased ability to incorporate primary sources in undergraduate teaching, due to digitalization.

For me it is most important in terms of my ability to create online resources through scanning, PDFs, and putting them on CamTools.

Cambridge Faculty

It is more common that I would take an extract off one of these [primary sources] databases and give it to them directly.

Cambridge Faculty

On the whole, provision of electronic resources was seen to be lacking in Cambridge, particularly for primary sources.

So they [another University] had a whole load of archives and digital resources which got me to look at things that I could not have otherwise looked at— or not very easily [...]. So that was a real learning experience for me to see a University that really had invested in those things and how incredibly useful it was.

Cambridge Faculty

While agreeing that electronic resource provision could be enhanced, many faculty members also emphasized the continued primacy of monographs for the subject of History. Faculty are unsure as to whether students can or want to read ebooks. Other resources—including journal articles—are perceived as enhancing the key texts. Faculty members themselves are format-indifferent, as long as the students are reading well.

But one of the effects of that I think is to make people with certain sorts of work habits, working in their room rather than from a library, keener to read periodical literature rather than to read monographs. So it hasn't particularly changed what I have put on my reading list, but I think it has changed the order in which people read my reading lists, as I understand. And that has upsides and downsides.

Cambridge Faculty

A large part of what we teach undergraduates is how to read books, how to read articles, how to gut them. Whether they read them online or whether read them in books—to me, that makes no difference.

Cambridge Faculty

3.2. Perceptions of Undergraduates

The overall perception is that students' performance has not changed very much, although this was an area of some uncertainty due to the small sample of students supervised and the inability to know what students were actually doing with electronic resources.

It is very hard for me to know whether they read something more thoroughly because they can access it more easily or less thoroughly. I mean I haven't noticed any difference in terms of performance since I put most of it online.

Cambridge Faculty

One faculty member did feel students were not reading very closely if they read online, while others noted that students were dependent on JSTOR and expressed concerns that copying and pasting in

quotes from online resources was not a technique that helped students absorb what they were reading. Plagiarism was mentioned once, but not seen as a large problem.

I am very concerned about how reading has changed. If they don't print out the articles, in particular, I am very struck by how much more superficial their reading is then of texts. So they are so used to, now, PDFs, that they kind of skip through it and it just doesn't seem to...even the main points are barely absorbed. So there is this illusion that they have read things.

Cambridge Faculty

It doesn't apply to all undergraduates, but some undergraduates now, so much more, are quoting modern scholars in their own words than anybody would have ever dreamt of doing in the past, and I take it that this is the ease of copying and pasting. But the problem of copying and pasting is that the technique involved is two fingers, and the content of what is copied and pasted does not have to, does not really pass through the brain except very fleetingly. And hence I think that there probably is a difference to the extent that people are familiar with, own the data, compared with taking notes.

Cambridge Faculty

Multiple others pointed out that, except in the case of ejournals, students were still reliant on print resources as a matter of choice, a perception confirmed in section 7.

But I do see it [increase in digital resources] as almost entirely positive. But I see it as positive if it is enhancing their resources and not positive, obviously, if certain things have to be taken away from them in order to strengthen the digital side. I mean they do seem I think on the whole, I mean most undergraduates seem to prefer books. It has to be said. They prefer books and they even seem to unusually print off articles. [...]. So I don't think they are as digital as we might think they are.

Cambridge Faculty

Most faculty members thought that the quality of undergraduates' coursework and dissertations had improved. This was not a universal opinion— one faculty member thought dissertation quality had decreased because students no longer had the languages required to look at documents in the original—but most found the discovery and use of sources improved.

They do a Long Essay, a coursework research-based essay and I think it has made that something where they are more imaginative in the finding of sources.

Cambridge Faculty

It is the case that electronic resources make it a lot easier to do things, people can do things at the level of undergraduate dissertations that were just unthinkable before.

Cambridge Faculty

3.3. Summary

Faculty members were enthusiastic about their ability to provide their students with more resources, although most did not see the core of their teaching changing. Teaching emphases were on helping undergraduates grasp historical context, make judgements, and use resources. While there were some positives and negatives to current student performance, generally faculty were uncertain in judging if students' working patterns had changed and the effects of any changes due to increased use of digital resources.

4. History Undergraduates' Use of Resources

To evaluate what resources History undergraduates are using and how they are using them, survey participants were asked a series of questions on their use of resources. These responses are reported below. Where appropriate, the responses are broken down further by year group.

4.1. Use of Electronic Resources

Survey participants were asked to approximate their use of electronic sources, through the following multiple choice question:

In the current academic year, approximately what percentage of the sources that you have used for your course have been electronic sources?

n= 262 is used to calculate the percentages shown in Table 4.1, and a breakdown of responses by year group is shown in Chart 4.1.

Answer Options	Percentage	Response Count
100%	0.0%	0
about 75%	1.9%	5
about 50%	19.1%	50
about 25%	71.0%	186
0%	8.0%	21

Table 4.1: What percentage of sources have been electronic sources

More than half of respondents in all three year groups reported using electronic source about 25% of the time, although third years, surprisingly, reported slightly higher usage of electronic sources than first and second years. This could be due to digitized sources being more popular with third-year Papers (see Table 4.3 and following), and, beyond differences in provision, students reflected in the focus groups that it took them time to understand how to find electronic resource (see section 16.3).

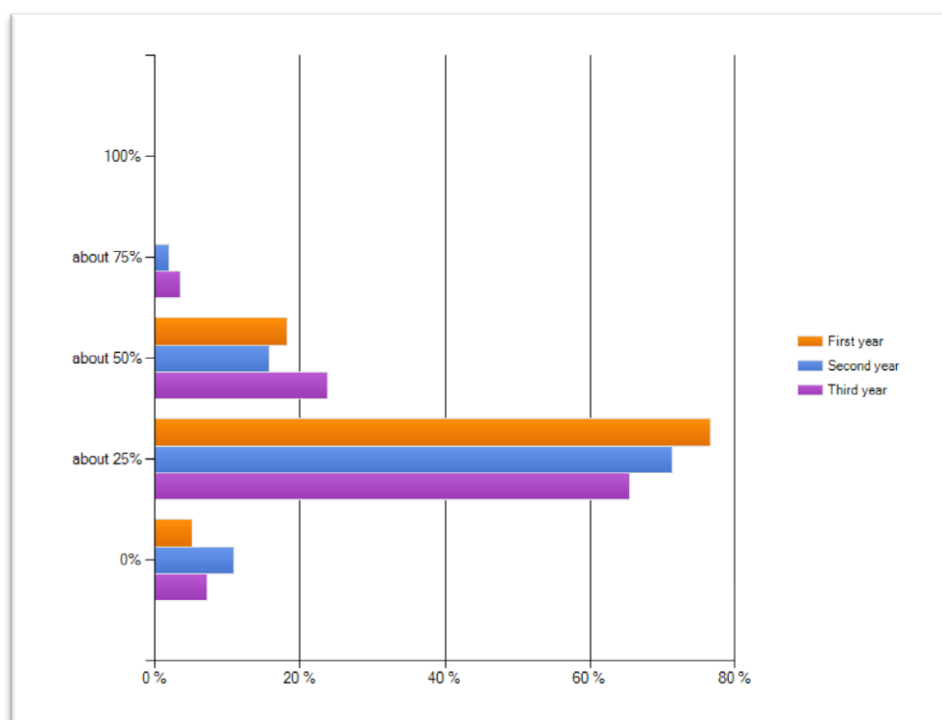


Chart 4.1 What percentage of sources have been electronic sources, broken down by year group

4. 2. Reading Activities with Print and Electronic Resources

To evaluate the relative importance of different activities done with both print resources and electronic resources, survey respondents were asked to judge how often they have done activities relating to reading and using print and electronic resources. As the survey did not ask respondents to rank print resource use against electronic use, care should be taken in comparing the results of the survey. Respondents could be actively using both print and electronic sources. This data shows how regularly particular activities are occurring, and through this, illustrates how each format is used.

Print Resource Use

Survey respondents were asked to select how often they used print resources for certain activities. Responses are presented in Table 4.2 and graphed in Chart 4.2. To calculate the percentages shown, n =(the response count shown in Table 4.2). The variation by year group was minimal, indicating consistent patterns of print resource use across the course.

In the current academic year, approximately how often have you done the following when using printed sources?

Answer Options	Weekly	Monthly	Termly or less	Never	Response Count
Read a book in its entirety	24.5% (62)	30.4% (77)	30.4% (76)	15.0% (38)	253
Read an article in its entirety	88.1% (223)	7.5% (19)	2.4% (6)	2.0% (5)	253
Read a chapter or section of a book	99.2% (251)	0.0% (0)	.4% (1)	.4% (1)	253
Skimmed books and articles for useful information	96.0% (243)	3.6% (9)	.4% (1)	0.0% (0)	253
Took notes from books and articles for further study	91.6% (230)	5.2% (13)	2.0% (5)	1.2% (3)	251
Photocopied books and articles for further study	16.1% (40)	18.9% (47)	30.5% (76)	34.5% (86)	249

Table 4.2: Activities when using printed sources

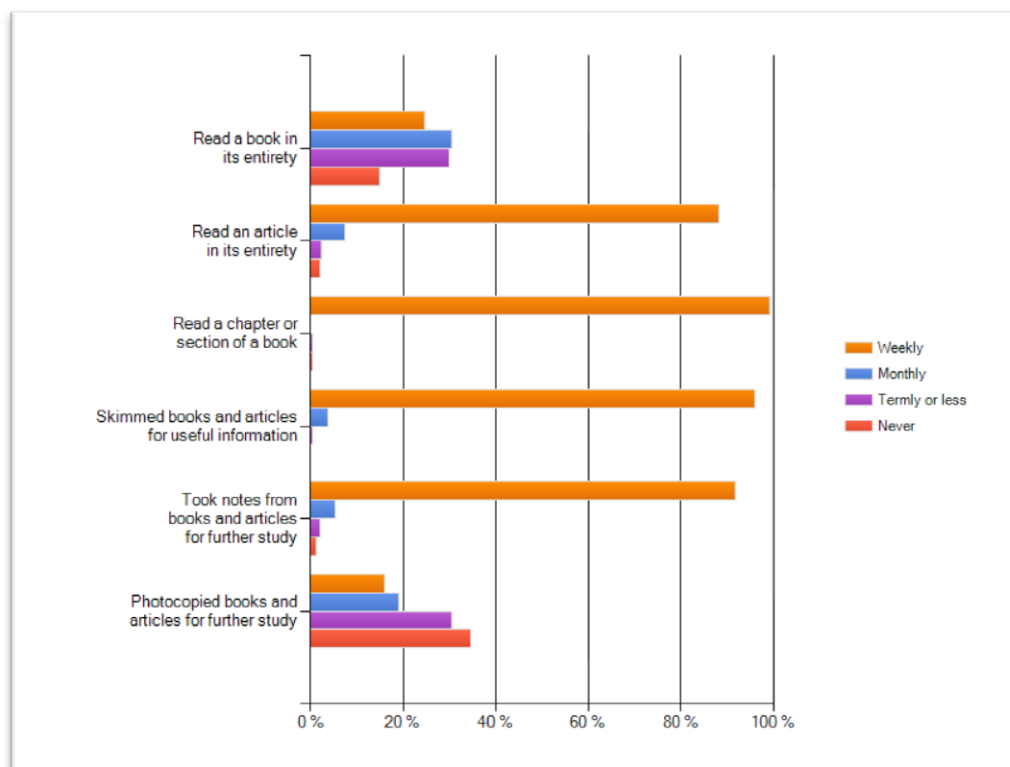


Chart 4.2: Activities when using printed sources

Reading books in their entirety was a surprisingly rare activity, while reading printed articles was unexpectedly common. It is possible, as “print” was specified at the top of the survey page and not repeated in the question on articles, that respondents interpreted this question as referring to articles in any format. The data gathered from the free texts and the focus groups (sections 7.1-7.2.), contradict this survey data.

Electronic Resource Use

Survey respondents were also asked to select how often they used electronic resources for certain activities. Responses are presented in Table 4.3 and graphed in Chart 4.3. To calculate the percentages shown, n=(the response count shown in Table 4.3). Data should be interpreted in the light of the fact overall usage of electronic resources was reported to be low (Table 4.1).

In the current academic year, approximately how often have you done the following when using electronic sources?

Answer Options	Weekly	Monthly	Termly or less	Never	Response Count
Read an ebook in its entirety	2.0% (5)	7.6 % (19)	22.7% (57)	67.7 % (170)	251
Read an electronic article in its entirety	73.7% (185)	19.1% (48)	3.6 % (9)	3.6% (9)	251
Read a chapter or section of an ebook	36.4% (91)	32.8% (82)	14.8% (37)	16.0% (40)	250
Searched ebooks and electronic articles for useful information	46.8% (117)	26.8% (67)	14.0 % (35)	12.4 % (31)	250
Took notes from ebooks and electronic sources for further study	59.6% (149)	19.6% (49)	12.0% (30)	8.8 % (22)	250
Printed sections from ebooks and electronic articles for further study	26.2% (65)	18.1% (45)	16.1% (40)	39.5 % (98)	248
Used digitized sources provided by your Paper's CamTools site	25.2% (63)	18.8% (47)	23.2 % (58)	32.8 % (82)	250

Table 4.3: Activities when using electronic sources

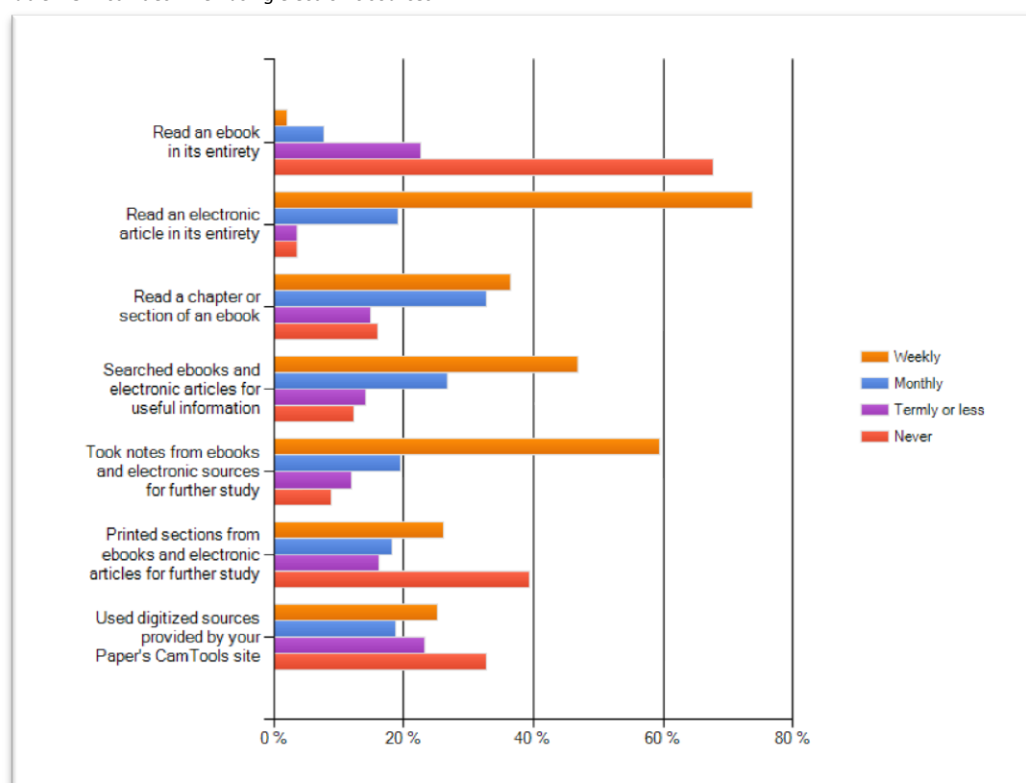


Chart 4.3: Activities when using electronic sources

Reading journal articles was the most often performed activity with electronic resources, and searching and note-taking were also common. It is clear that reading an entire ebook is not an activity most undergraduate historians do; however, this should be kept in perspective by the fact that reading print books was equally not a weekly activity. Respondents were more regularly reading section and chapters of both books and ebooks.

Again, there were not major year group differences in most of the electronic reading categories. The one dramatic difference was that 50.6% of third years (n=81) were using digitized sources on CamTools weekly, as opposed to 16.2% of first years (n=74) and 10.5% of second years (n=95). For first and second years, the largest single category of respondents (32.4% of first years and 43.2% of second years) said they had never used digitized sources provided by their supervisor or lecturer, but 51.4% of first years and 46.3% of second years used them monthly or termly. The heavy use of CamTools in the third year might be explained by the fact that some Special Subjects have digitized their primary source packets. For first and second years, the data would indicate that while there is a course presence on CamTools, there are not as many resources provided or the resources are not dynamic.

The answers given for reading activities depend on the respondents' overall use of resources, as well as respondents' personal preferences. The respondents who reported that "about 50%" or "about 75%" of the sources that they used were electronic sources (n=54) reported increased activity in all areas, including printing. Reading ebooks in their entirety was the only category that was not significantly changed, although fewer respondents reported that they "never" read ebooks.

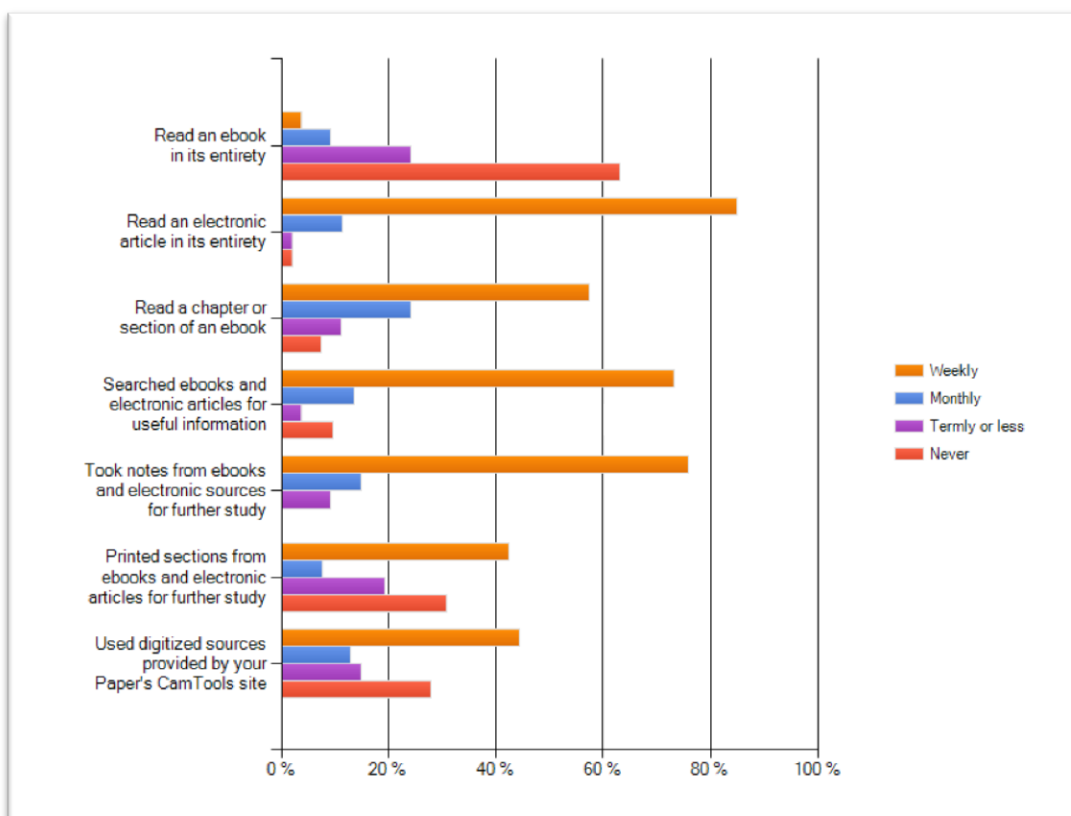


Chart 4.4: Activities when using electronic resources, by respondents who selected that they used "about 50%" or "about 75%" electronic resources

Respondents who reported that they "always" or "usually" would prefer electronic resources (n=39) reported the same or even more activity with electronic resources than the high users did, except in the use of digitized sources on CamTools. This is likely because, as some faculty members and some comments in the free text highlighted, for some courses all the sources are on CamTools, and

students then are required to use them, whether they prefer them or not. This result also adds validity to the observation that the high use of electronic resources does not automatically equal preference for the format (see section 7).

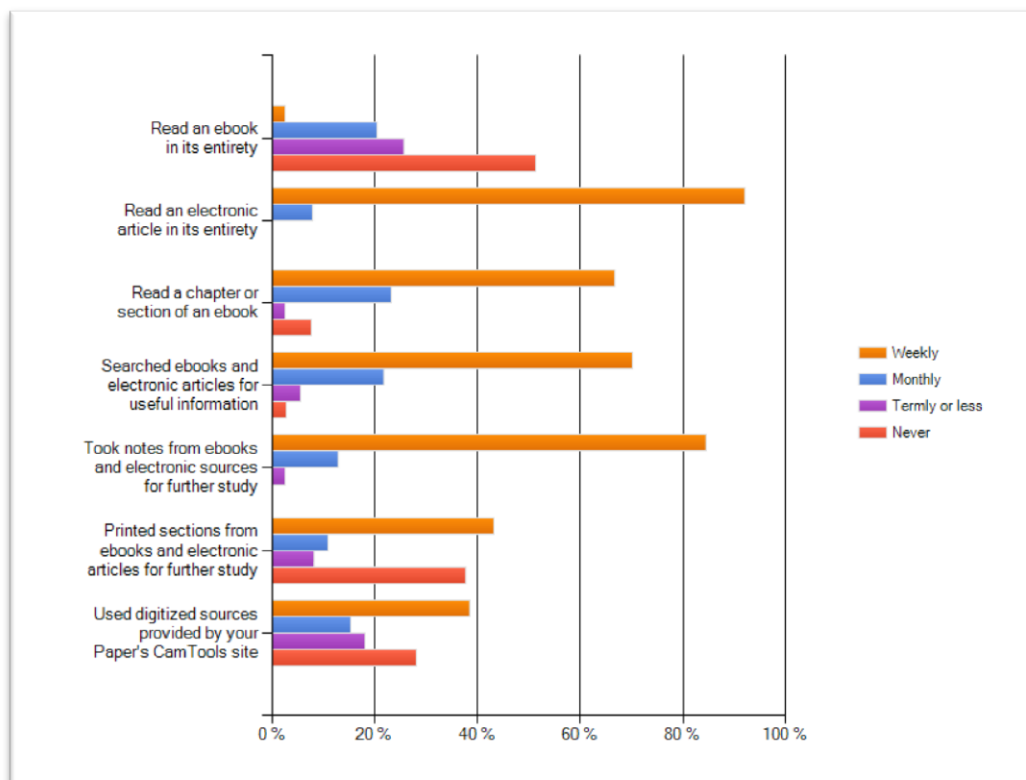


Chart 4.5: Activities when using electronic resources, by respondents who selected that they preferred electronic sources usually or always

For both of these groups, the responses in the print usage categories changed little, when compared with the overall responses. Higher usage of electronic resources did not affect print usage.

4.3. Summary

History undergraduates perceived that their overall use of electronic resources was low. Surprisingly, first years did not report more use of electronic resources, and there were no clear trends or changes in the resource use and reading habits of the current History undergraduates across year groups. Respondents emphasized reading articles, skimming resources, reading chapters and sections of books, and note-taking. These activities were also relatively important within the use of electronic resources, although when the results of the electronic reading activities were filtered by respondents with high usage or a preference for electronic resources, the importance of the activities of searching, note-taking, and reading chapters was clearer for electronic resources.

5. Availability of Electronic Resources in History & Methods of Finding Electronic Resources

5.1. Perceptions of Availability of Electronic Resources

To evaluate the perceived availability of electronic resources in History, respondents were offered multiple choice answers to the following question. Responses are given in Table 5.1, and n=262 is used to calculate the percentages.

In the current academic year, approximately what percentage of the sources that you have needed for your course have been available to you electronically?

Answer Options	Percentage	Response Count
100%	1.5%	4
about 75%	5.7%	15
about 50%	25.2%	66
about 25%	64.9%	170
0%	2.7%	7

Table 5.1: Availability of electronic resources

There was little variation by year group, and, overall, respondents were likely to judge their use of electronic resources and the availability about the same (cf. Table 4.1). A possible reason for this trend could be the amount of journal articles to monograph reading, as participants generally both wanted journal articles to be delivered electronically and found it easier to discover them. For a further discussion of types of resources and electronic format, see Section 7.1.

5.2. Methods for Finding Electronic Resources

The actual availability of resources could not be measured through the survey, but student perceptions on availability are valuable because they show how users think about provision and give an indication of how easy it is to find electronic resources. In the focus group sessions, the discovery of electronic resources was discussed by asking participants to comment on how they found electronic resources for their course.

Words or phrases used to describe how they found electronic resources were often negative—“random” (3rd year) and “haphazard” (1st year). Most participants used Google to uncover subscription resources or went straight to a resource they knew (JSTOR and EBBO were two mentioned). Across years, JSTOR was clear brand for electronic resources, although some first years confessed that, while they used JSTOR, they did not have a clear idea of what they were likely to find on it. Despite this, there was not much dissatisfaction with search techniques, and most participants said that they can usually find what they need. Students accepted that some items on their reading list would be unavailable, and this only becomes a concern if the unavailable resource is a key reading.

I mean it has been very rare, I think it has happened twice, that I've, it is just not on JSTOR and it is not on Google, and my supervisor said: "oh, sorry, I didn't realize that wasn't available, don't worry about it." So, I mean, that has been okay, but the only thing I'd say... I mean obviously, there is a lot more out there than I am aware... because everyone's telling me there is a lot more out there.

1st year undergraduate

So you know, I just, if it is not on JSTOR, then I think like, "oh obviously something is wrong." And then, and then I Google search it, and if it is not on Google search then I'm like "pffff, whatever, not my problem". And if it is on Google search, then I'm like: "Cool, went the extra mile, went to Google".

2nd year undergraduate

The focus group participants who mentioned using LibrarySearch were impressed by it, although the number aware of that resource was small, and the number aware that it searched for articles, even smaller. The Cambridge eresources page had mixed reactions, with some students really liking it, others being completely baffled by it, and many not knowing about it at all.

I use JSTOR or Google more than I use the Cambridge...I mean, sometimes the Cambridge one is just a maze and you won't be able to find it there.

3rd year undergraduate

Second and third years were more likely to be satisfied with their search techniques and show awareness of resources like LibrarySearch and the Cambridge eresources page, although they were not universally more likely to know how to search for electronic resources than first years.

The only way I look for electronic resources is through the Newton catalogs. That is the only way I know how to do it [...] if it says on Newton "there is an electronic resource of this" then I'll go to that. Other than JSTOR, I'll just go straight to JSTOR if I need an article.

3rd year undergraduate

In the third year, I find it fine now. I mean, I think it took a couple of months to really understand the whole journal system [mentioned Cambridge eresources page], but I find it really easy to use electronic resources now and I use them a lot because of that reason. So I don't really have any problems there at all.

3rd year undergraduate

There was a tension between most students wanting all resources to be found through one search, and students expressing that they wanted to know what kind of things were likely to be online or that they would like a "a list" of electronic resources. Multiple students described finding resources in Newton as accidental or random. As discussed in section 7.2, this may be because students are using electronic resources differently than their print counterparts.

I think it depends. I think it is about knowledge and then accessibility. Because I wouldn't know what kind of things you have as an ebook... if they are the most popular [books]... or things that have gone out of copyright, so I just wouldn't know. So if it was just on Newton and you searched for it, then I would do it through each individual item... whereas if I knew the general system for how ebooks worked, then I would know in advance.

1st year undergraduate

You need one box to type in.

2nd year undergraduate

While focus group participants used Google to uncover electronic resources, they generally spoke about seeking electronic versions of the books and articles on their reading lists. It is indicative of students' focus on finding sources given on their reading lists that no one mentioned searching for online resources not on their reading lists nor did they mention the use of online bibliographies or citation databases.

Awareness of electronic resources and effective searching techniques is, then, important for supervisors as well as students, as supervisors set the materials that students are using. Many faculty members expressed the idea that they were not completely sure what the University subscribes to and would not be confident in knowing that they were using the best tools for their work, because of the explosion of electronic tools and databases and resources.

I also think that you could certainly flag up primary source collections with undergraduates, but even more useful would be to have the odd presentation at subject groups...it needs to be subject specific because there is quite a lot out there. But I certainly feel that I don't know enough about what is available.

Cambridge Faculty

I would have no confidence that I was actually going straight for the resources that were the ones I really needed. There just has been such a proliferation.

Cambridge Faculty

I don't think they [students] know what ebooks are there and what ebooks aren't there. And we don't always know, although I know we are told, I know, in theory.

Cambridge Faculty

Faculty and students indicated it would be ideal if electronic resources were to be highlighted for individual Papers or, at least, organized by a subject or time period. The breadth of resources used by students in History requires clear organization for findability and usability.

5.3. Summary

Undergraduates' use of resources is dependent, but not determined by, the availability of resources. Perceptions of the availability of relevant electronic resources help explain students reported use (section 4). While the availability of relevant electronic resources for History was deemed to be low, the focus group discussions cast some doubts on the accuracy of students' perceptions of availability. Focus group participants generally use Google to uncover subscription resources or go directly to a resource they know, like JSTOR. When participants were searching for electronic resources, they were seeking the books and materials on their reading lists; therefore, it is also important to ensure that the supervisors and academic staff are aware of available electronic resources.

6. Difficulties in Using Electronic Resources

In the focus groups, participants mentioned difficulties in accessing and using electronic resources. Issues included log-in problems, lack of awareness that resources could be accessed outside of the Cambridge domain, inability to search databases effectively, and difficulties with the format of some online resources. However, technical difficulties with electronic resources was not as large of a theme as might be expected— perhaps due to the fairly low overall use of electronic resources.

In fact, I have found some of the other electronic resource websites [other than JSTOR] very frustrating, some of them don't seem to give you access, even though they say you have access...but oh actually this one is blocked... why is that one blocked?

1st year undergraduate

Whereas on the rare occasion that I have had to use an ebook, like during the holidays, it doesn't seem to work that well. I mean it will time out and it will send me right back to the beginning of the book, or something like that. I don't know whether it is just my laptop. But it just ends up wasting my time. I mean, I have driven back in the middle of the holidays before to pick up a stack of books rather than having to resort to the ebooks. If there are going to be more ebooks, I think it needs to be done in a different way than it currently is, more like JSTOR.

3rd year undergraduate

In the opportunities for survey respondents to give free-text comments, some participants also discussed this theme. Comments on access difficulties were found throughout the free text, and focused on log-in difficulties and problems with the software used to read resources.

Occasionally I have trouble accessing online journals where, despite the fact that I have logged in via Athens or equivalent institutional login procedure, I am directed to buy the article on an individual basis whenever I try to download it.

3rd year undergraduate; explaining why s/he sometimes has trouble finding things on the reading lists

I find the navigation on e-books rather fiddly

3rd year undergraduate; explaining why s/he prefers hard copies

...current electronic media falls short of books in two ways: 1 many of the methods display one page at a time with significant loading waits and poor search provisions (presumably because they are scanner images rather than inputted text), 2 electronic media tends to be mnemonically and accessibly deficient in comparison to hard copy books. This is possibly because of the lack of fluidity of changing pages as mentioned but moreover because hard copies can be casually flipped through, bookmarked (when necessary with torn pieces of paper, kleenex, old bankstatements, or whatever else is on hand), and just generally manipulated, while electronic copies are static and at times unwieldy.

2nd year undergraduate; explaining why s/he selected "I don't know" on whether satisfied with the provision of electronic resources

6.1. Summary

While lack of awareness of the electronic resources available was a much more prominent theme than technical difficulties (see section 5.2), some undergraduates had difficulties with electronic resources, primarily centred around log-in difficulties, software problems, and issues relating to format preferences and methods of reading, discussed further in section 7.2.

7. Format Preferences

To evaluate students' overall preference for print or electronic resources, participants were asked the following question:

Where a source is conveniently available both electronically and as a hard copy in a library, which one would you prefer?

Respondents were offered the multiple-choice responses given in Table 7.1, and n=255 is used to calculate the percentages. The responses are broken down by year group in Chart 7.1.

Answer Options	Percentage	Response Count
Always hard copy	25.1%	64
Usually hard copy	49.4%	126
Either	10.2%	26
Usually electronically	10.6%	27
Always electronically	4.7%	12

Table 7.1: Format preferences

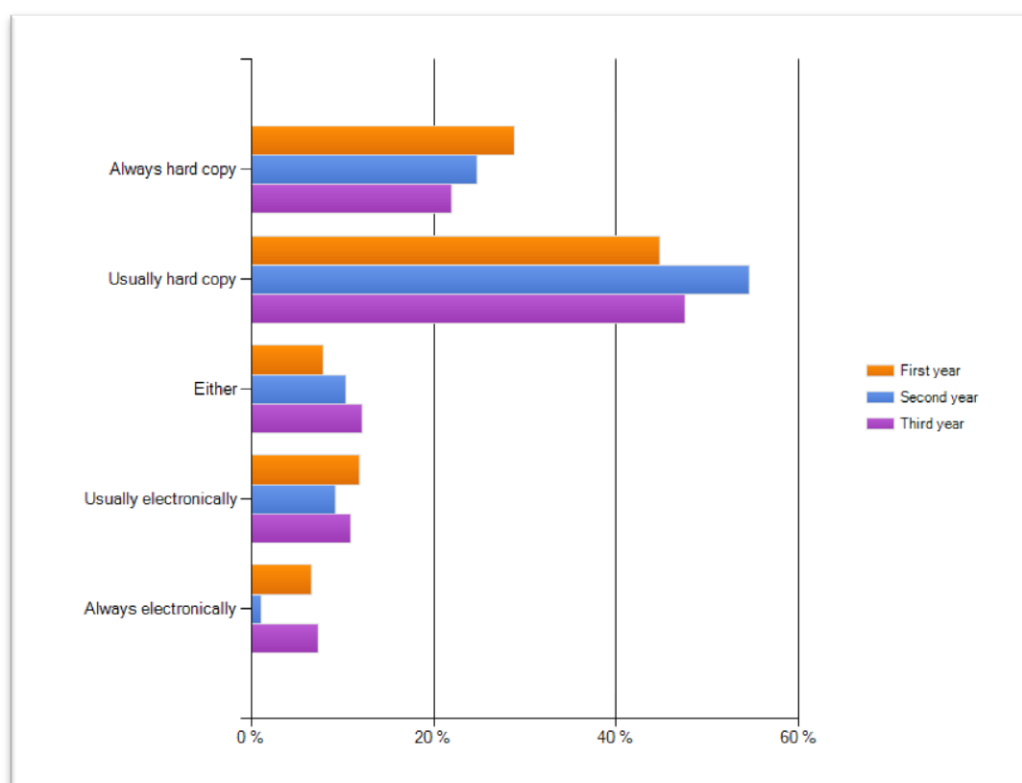


Chart 7.1: Format preferences, broken down by year group.

Over 70% of the respondents always or usually preferred hard copies, and this rises to close to 80% for second years.

In the survey data, preferences did not map neatly onto use or perceptions of availability. All of the highest users (those who chose "about 75%": Table 4.1) and most of those who report high availability (all of those who chose "100%" and all but 3 of those who chose "about 75%": Table 5.1) selected that they always or usually preferred hard copies. For this survey, however, these respondents were at the extremes. When the responses from people who chose "about 50%" usage

were examined, the landscape was more complicated. Those who selected that they used “about 50%” leaned toward preferring electronic versions. The data is presented in Table 7.2, and n=49 is used to calculate the percentages shown.

Answer Options	Percentage	Response Count
Always hard copy	8.2%	4
Usually hard copy	30.6%	15
Either	16.3%	8
Usually electronically	28.6%	14
Always electronically	16.3%	8

Table: 7.2 Format preferences, by respondents who selected they used electronic resources “about 50%”

Respondents were asked to give the reasons for their preference, and 195 participants responded.

Respondents who had selected that they always or usually preferred electronic highlighted the functionality of digital resources (searching, copying/pasting) and their constant availability, while they often mentioned that they do not like reading on a screen.

Electronically available sources are easier to summarise as they allow cutting and pasting of text fragments. Furthermore, there is no time limit in having them available, no need of urgent return to the library.

3rd year undergraduate; chose “always electronically”

I prefer printing out information from the internet, as I find it hard to read from a computer screen, but it very useful during the holidays when the source is available online, as I live too far from a library to have access to books.

2nd year undergraduate; chose “always electronically”

The respondents who answered that they always or usually preferred hard copy expounded more on the utility of print—including finding them easier to read and use—and also mentioned not reading well off a screen. A large minority, however, said that they would like electronic resources as a backup and mentioned preference variations for different types of resources.

On the whole I find it easier to read hard copies (reading from a computer screen offers more distractions, making it harder to concentrate and is physically uncomfortable over long periods; it can also be easier to skim read and find things with a physical book to flick through). However it is useful to have the option of online sources for convenience when desperate (e.g. when required outside of library opening hours, or when more than three books are needed simultaneously) and journal articles in particular are the exception, these being both easier than books to read online (because shorter) and not available to borrow from the library.

1st year undergraduate; chose “usually hard copy”

I find it easier to take in information from a hard copy than from an online source.

1st year undergraduate; chose “always hard copy”

The respondents who had chosen “either” generally summarized the picture that was coming from most of the free text: hard copy is usually easier to read, while electronic copies are more available and are particularly useful for certain types of activities such as searching and checking references. This group often specifically mentioned that the type of resource affects their choice of format.

A hard copy is much easier to refer to and read, however the electronic copy is extremely convenient and can be downloaded as a PDF and referred to on more than one occasion quite quickly

2nd year undergraduate; chose “either”

It depends on the source. I find journal articles are most easily accessed via the Internet and don't mind reading shorter sources online, but I prefer to read longer sources in hard copy. I would be more likely to read a book in the library and a journal article online.

1st year undergraduate; chose “either”

While there are clear differences between the groups, and there are obviously idiosyncratic preferences, many students responded that, while they preferred to read hard copies in many cases, they were concerned about access. Respondents also made distinctions between their format preferences for different types of resources and their format preferences for different types of learning activities. These two themes were explored further in focus group sessions.

7.1. Format Preferences and Types of Resources

Focus group participants were asked to think about all the sources they use for their course and then judge what kind of things they prefer in electronic form or, perhaps, are only available electronically. It was explained that every source they used for information (blogs, Wikipedia, other websites) was a resource, not just the official readings. Students still discussed books and journals when answering; for their course-related readings, they continue to use traditional resources.

While there were outliers that thought everything, or nothing, was best delivered electronically, the vast majority of people said they preferred journals and any shorter resources (short books, book reviews, chapters from books, essays, primary source selections) to be online. Articles were usually preferred online even by those who did not like reading off a computer screen, because of the ease of printing. Print journals were also seen as difficult to find and inconvenient, as they generally cannot be borrowed.

I would have a preference for journal entries and short entries being digitalized just because the succinctness makes it easier to use on a laptop, whereas obviously it would be more of a task to read 400 pages on a laptop. It is already tough enough with the hard copy. So I just think that the succinct nature of a lot of journal entries and short books lends itself to being in digital format.

3rd year undergraduate

I think that is because, with a journal article, it tends to be a more concentrated argument. If it is on your reading list, it tends to be largely all relevant. So taking notes from it is quite difficult, so that is probably why I would print it off and then highlight it or something like that rather than—it would take me ages to take notes from a journal.

3rd year undergraduate

Other digital resources that students used and liked online—mainly, they were keen to stress, for their own interest or profit and not because they were key resources—were blogs, images, lecture notes, radio programmes, online lectures and debates, Wikipedia, and general websites for information.

If it is for an initial ‘here is what happened during decolonization’, then I would Google it...have a quick look.

2nd year undergraduate

Activities, other than reading resources, were also highlighted as easier online: keyword searching, citation chaining, referencing, finding quotations. Ebooks were almost universally not seen as ideal, although many people mentioned the above activities were often very useful when performed on ebooks.

If you need to get to a source quickly, being able to go to JSTOR or something like that is amazing because I have been...there are times when I have been working on my essay in my room and just need that extra snippet of information or a citation or something like that.

3rd year undergraduate

7.2. Format Preferences and Reading Habits

Following up on this concept of different uses for different formats, focus group participants were asked to comment on whether they read print and electronic sources the same way or whether the format influenced the nature of their reading. Reading activities like skimming, searching, and note-taking—identified through the survey as key activities (see section 4.2)—were discussed.

The conclusion for the vast majority of participants is that their reading differs, but the interpretation of how their reading differs varies. In the variation, there were some patterns. Journals and shorter works could be read online by most people because they were concentrated—all the information was relevant, and it was usually not giving context or background, but a particular interpretation or argument. This idea spilled over into the use of ebooks in that particular functions—searching keywords, just reading for one particular argument or idea, finding references or quotes, reading introductions/conclusions—could be useful, and, indeed, ebooks were often preferred for those tasks.

I think it does depend on what you are looking for. Because if I am just doing general reading, I have no idea about a topic, then I would prefer to go to a book. But if I have done some general reading or there has been a lecture, then I can remember vaguely like there has been a quote or there is an author, if I can just type that into Google books and the quote can pop up, that it so much easier than having to go back and look through all the books you have read.

3rd year undergraduate

Many participants did not express satisfaction with their ability to concentrate fully online even for shorter resources, although they used them. Others said they needed to print out journal articles. Concerns about reading online included that it was too easy to copy and paste, there were too many distractions, it was more difficult to take notes, and that it was hard to read and concentrate on a screen.

I try not to use the online version even for journals because I know that it is very bad, for me personally, historical practice because I do just take quotes or I'm like: I'll read page one and then I'll read page 17 and then I'll read page 23 and that is done. And I don't reread things when I don't understand them...the sort of scroll down nature of pages, it makes it, you kind of lose track of where you are. Whereas when I read a book, I quite often post-it note pages and then I can flick backwards and I know what is on what page vaguely, which you can't do on a screen. You can't write a note and stick it in the middle of your ejournal.

2nd year undergraduate

I think when I have a photocopy of a book or a book I own myself, I find it really useful to kind of underline stuff and make notes. I put little tabs on the pages. I feel that the reading that I

do is more thorough. Whereas because you can search through PDFs, you can just search what you want and get it straight away...like I wouldn't read an electronic resource through, start to finish. It is easier to abstract particular information, but I am probably not as thorough. But it is quicker.

2nd year undergraduate

This was countered by another, smaller group who felt that they were more focused and took better notes when reading online resources. It is worth noting that most of these students specified using electronic journals, not ebooks, and also mentioned they like reading articles rather than books, because the information is more concentrated.

I prefer electronic resources...I like topics where I find that most of my reading list can be covered electronically. When I take notes down with a hard copy, my concentration lags a bit, so normally I read it and then I take notes afterwards, because stopping and starting my note taking, it is hard to get back into the reading. Whereas for some reason I find my focus is better with electronic resources.

3rd year undergraduate

With books, many participants discussed the idea that it is easier for them to skim well with print: to read something, have a good idea of what it was saying, skip over the less relevant parts, and read in detail the important parts.

I actually find that I read more, kind of, efficiently with a hard copy because, like just in general, I find I get a bit too bogged down in the detail and I don't skim enough, but I find it easier to do that with books where you can just flick through [...] I think it is because with a book, you can flick through and skim it first and pick out the important bits, and I just find it harder to do that online.

1st year undergraduate

A main theme was that, regardless of the format or method of note-taking, the quality of reading matters. The Faculty's focus on reading is reflected in the students' preoccupations and concerns.

I think the medium, what you have a preference for...and in terms of how you get your notes... really boils down to the most effective way in which you can absorb the information.

3rd year undergraduate

7.3. Format Preferences and Access

Free text responses from the survey highlighted the importance of access to resources, as well as preference for format. In the focus groups, participants were asked whether access or preference were more important, and in which situations they might avoid using a resource because it was not in the format they preferred. Participants usually focused on ebooks, even when encouraged to think more widely about resources. Books are a key information source for historians, and, also, access to articles online was not generally seen as a problem.

While there was one participant who said he would always prefer an ebook and a vocal minority that felt they could never use an ebook, most people grudgingly said that having access to the resources they need, when they need them, is more important than their preferences for format.

Ultimately, although it kills me to say it, we are here to read and we are here to get as broad of an idea of things as we can, to hear what other people say and interact with these things

as much as we possibly can. While it would be lovely to sit with 5 nice books in front of us, if the only way to do that is to put some things online...then we'll have to live with that, I think.
2nd year undergraduate

This majority view was almost always qualified by how important the resource was for their work and how desperate they were. All the groups also brought up the concept of time, both in time of the week determining desperation and as in there is only one week, so they do not have a lot of time to find alternate sources in preferred formats. There were also comments made on the importance of having access to key resources during the vacations.

Obviously if it is a key text than you are going to use whatever resource is available, but if it is not as important, you might just skip over it [if it was not in a format they preferred]
2nd year undergraduate

I always think of it in terms of in the holiday, when I have to go to revise it again [...] I mean if I were in Cambridge, I might prefer to have the book to flick through it and highlight it, but I know that in the long run, it is probably easier to have it online because then it is a constant, you have it at all times, like a constant reference.
2nd year undergraduate

If it were at the beginning of the week, and I couldn't get the hard copy, I could only get the electronic resource, I would probably leave it a couple of days. If it were the day before I needed to write my essay and I really needed to look at that book, then I would be a little more desperate. Electronic resources, for a book, would always, always be my last port of call. But it really does come down to where I am in my week.
3rd year undergraduate

Most groups also continued to highlight different reading activities and specified that they would be more likely to read an ebook towards the end of their week when they have a context and are just looking for specific information or a particular author's interpretation, not doing general reading.

I think it does depend on how frantic you are. Because if it towards the end of the week and you understand your topic vaguely and you are just looking for a certain author's opinion, you can generally get that from the introduction, the conclusion, and then I'm like okay. [...] I would always prefer to get my general information from a hard copy, but I would rather use the resource than have to buy a hard copy.
3rd year undergraduate

7.4. Summary

The survey responses indicate that students prefer hard copies over electronic; this preference, however, was qualified in the free text and the focus group discussions by type of resource and type of reading activity. Participants overwhelmingly preferred journals and other short resources to be delivered online, both because they were easier to concentrate on and because they could be easily printed. The reaction to ebooks was mixed, with some students saying they could never use them and others highlighting their utility for certain activities like finding references and keyword searches. The activity of reading a (usually long) text for general information and context is still almost universally confined to print, and this is a key activity for undergraduate historians. While most respondents thought it was easier to use hard copies, preferences for print or electronic for other activities (skimming, flicking through, searching, using an index) did vary from person to person.

8. Primary Source Use

There are three areas of the undergraduate History course where primary sources are known to be used regularly: Themes and Sources, dissertations, and Special Subjects. Currently, there are no library services designed around finding or using primary sources, either originals, published versions, or electronic copies.

8.1. Use of Primary Sources

To test the overall proportion of primary source to secondary source use, survey participants were asked about primary source use.

In the current academic year, approximately what percentage of the sources that you have used for your course have been primary sources?

Responses are presented in Table 8.1; n= 250 was used to calculate the percentages, and a breakdown of responses by year group is presented in Chart 8.1.

Answer Options	Percentage	Response Count
100%	0.0%	0
about 75%	8.0%	20
about 50%	16.4%	41
about 25%	64.8%	162
0%	10.8%	27

Table 8.1: Percentage of primary sources used.

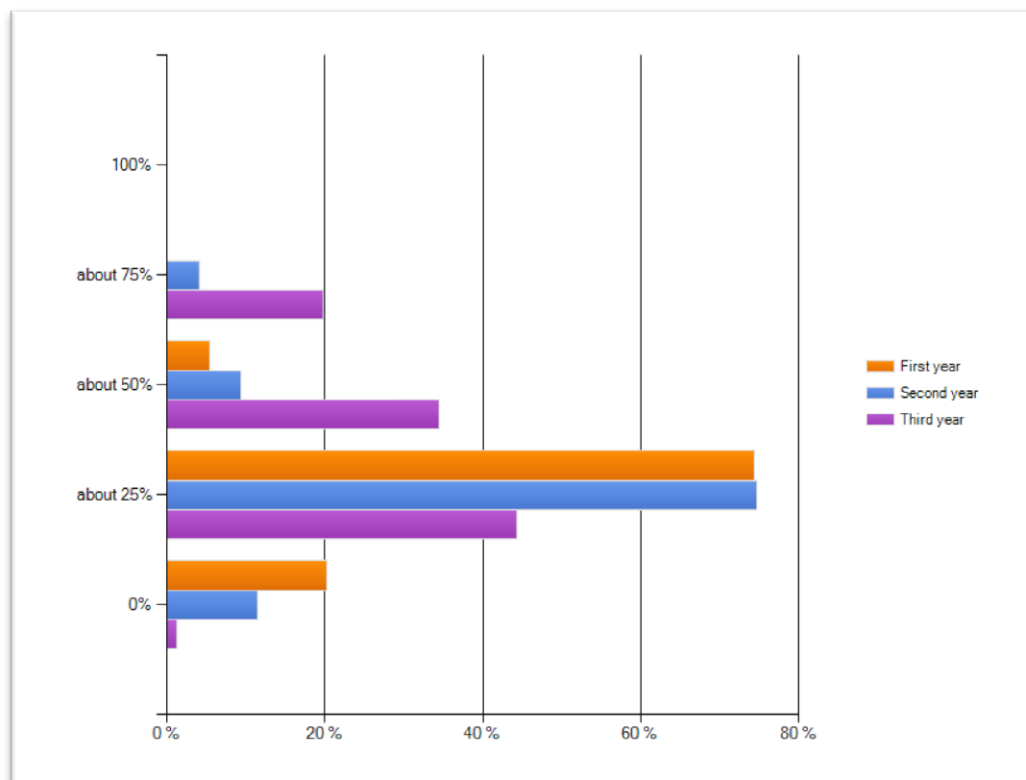


Chart 8.1: Percentage of primary sources used, broken down by year group

It was expected that primary source use would vary greatly by year group. Third years overwhelmed first and second years in the “about 75%” and “about 50%” categories (54.4% over 5.4% of first years and 13.7% of second years), but “about 25%” was still the most chosen category across years.

Focus group participants rarely mentioned primary sources during the sessions unless they were asked directly or until the discussion turned to dissertations. Overall, there was a fairly relaxed attitude to seeking out more primary sources for weekly essays, with students citing lack of time and the importance of the materials on their reading lists.

And I know there are some websites [primary source databases] there but, um, they haven't come to me, and I'm going to have to go and find them, and I just haven't had the time to go and find them.

1st year undergraduate

Problems were noted in locating primary source collections for dissertations. Most participants indicated that their supervisor guided them to sources, while others felt stranded during the beginning stages of their dissertations.

But I think also the biggest problem for me was knowing where to go for primary sources. Because that was kind of addressed, in an online way, but I couldn't find anything online, and then I had no idea—where do you go to get a primary source?

3rd year undergraduate

8.2. Current Formats for Accessing Primary Sources

Survey respondents were further asked to select all the formats in which they had accessed primary sources. There was a lower response rate for this question since the majority of people who answered that they never used primary sources (“0%”) skipped this question. n= 233 was used to calculate the percentages show in Table 8.2.

In the current academic year, in which formats have you accessed the primary sources that you have used for your course? (Select all that apply.)

Answer Options	Percentage	Response Count
Original version	28.8%	67
Printed version	86.3%	201
Facsimile version	18.9%	44
Digitized version (of a non-digital original)	61.8%	144

Table 8.2: Primary source formats accessed

When responses were evaluated by year group, printed resources remained the most often used format, although third years (n=79) made use of a much wider variety of formats than first (n=64) and second (n=90) years, presumably due to their mandatory Special Subject Papers and optional dissertations.

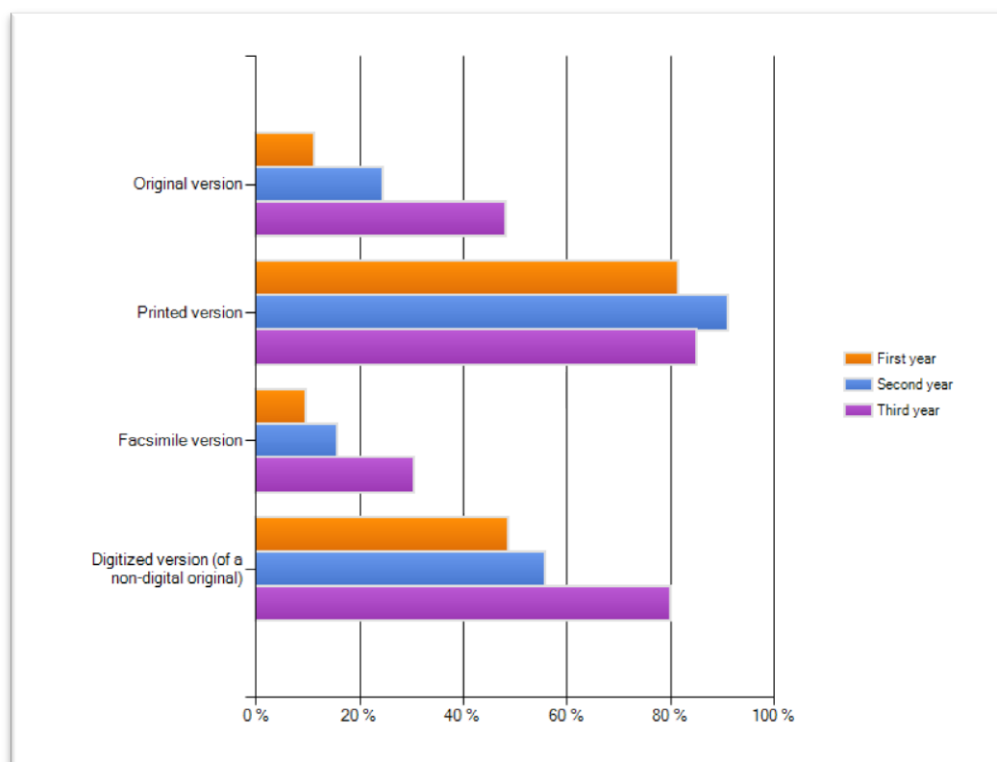


Chart 8.2: Primary source format accessed, broken down by year group

In the focus group sessions, participants indicated that the primary sources they used were set on their reading lists, except in the case of students writing dissertations. Participants accessed primary sources mainly through published editions, photocopies or via Camtools.

The library has digitized copies of my Special Subject's primary resources, which again is incredibly convenient because I don't know where I would find them otherwise.

3rd year undergraduate

Digitized primary sources [on CamTools], that is quite convenient, when you don't have to go and look for it yourself, just download it or read it.

1st year undergraduate

A few students, of all year groups, spoke of seeking out an original of a set primary source. Other students expressed interest in using more primary sources in all formats. No participants expressed inhibitions about using archives or rare books collections, although some spoke of the difficulties they encountered.

Well, for my last essay I had to look at one of Edmund Burke's essays and, at the UL, I noticed they had a 1770 copy, so I thought, well, I'll go and read the original. And that is really nice, but it was really, really hard because it took them 2 hours to find it and they didn't have the right copy, and they had to do a bit of cataloguing as they went along. So to have it online would be nice, but I don't know, it depends, with a historian, because for me, it is this feeling, you know, it is interacting with a primary source that makes it more interesting.

1st year undergraduate

8.3. Preferences for Primary Source Formats

To evaluate which primary source formats undergraduates would like to use, survey respondents were asked to select their preferred format or a combination of formats. Participants were given an

opportunity to explain their preferred combination in free text. It was hypothesized that primary source format preference would be a complex issue and that students would prefer to use different formats for different activities. For example, a student may want to see the original once, have a digitized version of that original to search, and have a published version for an up-to-date translation. So a combination of multiple choice—for those people who had a preference—and free text response was chosen to evaluate this question. In Table 8.3, n=241 is used to calculate the percentages.

Where a primary source is conveniently available in all of the above formats, which one would you prefer to consult?

Answer Options	Percentage	Response Count
Usually the original version	15.4%	37
Usually the printed version	51.5%	124
Usually a facsimile version	2.5%	6
Usually the digitized version	16.6%	40
A combination of versions	14.1%	34

Table 8.3: Preferences for primary source formats

Mirroring the overall perception of all respondents, the largest single selection for each year group was also “usually the printed version” (first years, n=67; second years, n=95), although, unsurprisingly, there was more variety in the selections by third years (n=79).

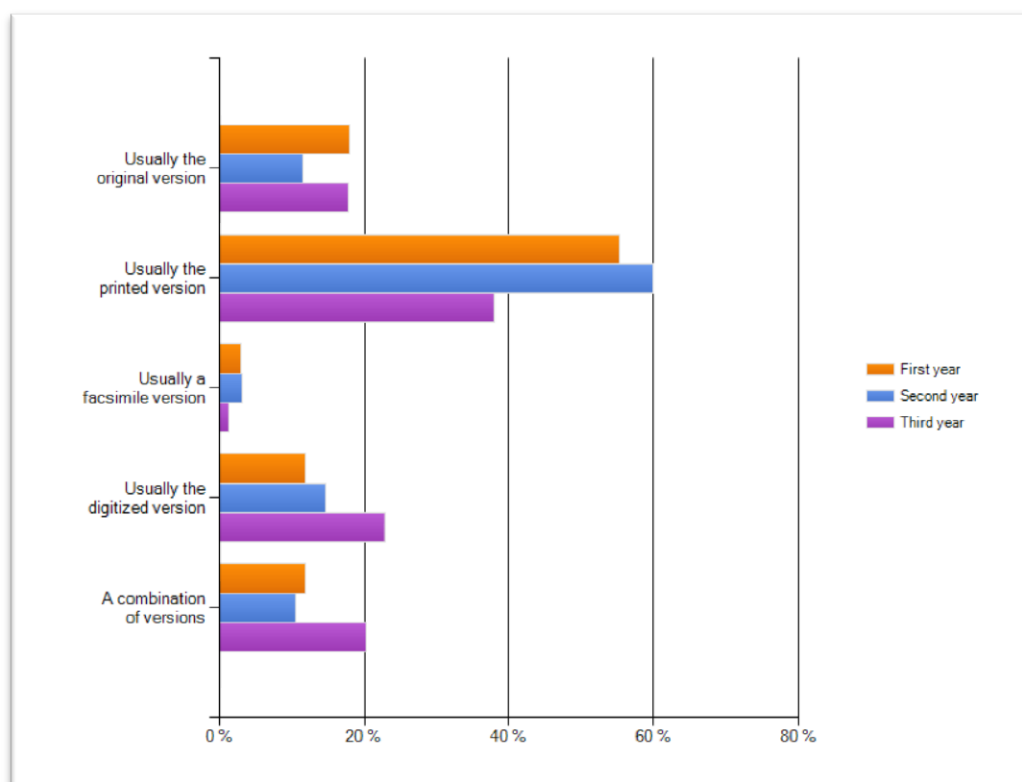


Chart 8.3: Preferences for primary source format, broken down by year group

It was surprising that relatively few people chose “a combination of versions”. Respondents were invited to comment on how they used a combination of versions. There were 45 free text responses, 11 more than had actually chosen “a combination of versions” in the multiple choice.

Respondents gave wide-ranging answers evaluating the merits of the individual formats. Some people mentioned that they enjoyed seeing the original, and some even found such autopsy useful for their work, although originals were often difficult or impossible to access. Published editions were generally thought to be easier to read as well as containing useful commentaries. Digitized copies of originals, however, were more accessible and easy to search. Most respondents thought digital copies were equally useful for seeing the context of the original source, although they often highlighted their awareness of the fact that originals or digitized versions (when images or scans of the documents) can be difficult or impossible for them to read. The best format for a primary source was chiefly dependent on the nature of the source itself—where it is, how long it is, whether they can read it the original, how it was digitized—and also what kind of research (e.g. keyword searching, close reading) the individual wants to perform.

A hard copy can be easier to get to grips with. Sometimes using the original source can be more informative as you see it in context. Compared to some digital versions which, for example might only show the single article from the newspaper. However digital sources are often much easier to search for information.

2nd year undergraduate

I prefer to see both the original version and the printed version, as a printed version might be easier to read/ comprehend, but the layout of the original may give further clues about its origin and purpose.

1st year undergraduate

[Digital is] Sometimes easier, particularly as I'm working on American sources (found in US archives) to consult documents in electronic form, due to logistical constraints. But even if I'm using digital versions in the UK, they're almost all of sources that I've already seen in manuscript, simply because it's preferable to see the original than to rely on reproductions for accuracy etc. Although digital copies can be useful, too, as can be easier to read and find what you want quickly (particularly when in typed transcript - as nineteenth century handwriting can be difficult to skim and glean information at the same speed!).

3rd year undergraduate

Many students expressed that the experience of seeing and handling original sources was enjoyable, and some students writing dissertations explained that they specifically wanted to work with originals, or in archives.

For dissertation purposes, I prefer to use original versions. However, for normal course reading, digitized versions are fine.

3rd year undergraduate

8.4. Faculty Perceptions on Primary Source Use for Undergraduates

Student comments on primary sources in the focus groups and in the open text parts of the survey matched with the perspectives expressed by faculty members, except that students, on the whole, seemed keener to see the originals than Faculty members thought they were or wanted them to be. Academics always qualified their remarks on the importance of seeing the original with mention of the nature of the source material with which they had their students work. For some sources, the original is difficult or impossible for the students to access or read. For some sources, there is not much of an advantage in seeing or handling the documents. For others, however, looking at the original is a vital part of research. Library services for the discovery and use of primary sources, in any format, should be sympathetic to this variation.

I quite like to have both a photograph of the newspaper, so they have a sense of what it looks like, which I suppose is a bit like having the real thing, but it is not physical, because it can't be, because it is in [Region]. And they can't read that, but then I type up the text and then the translation and they can deal with that. But I sort of feel like it is a bit inadequate just having my typing. I would like them to see the context from which it comes. But I am as happy with that being a photograph or something which is digitally reproduced as it being them going off to the library in [Region] and looking at the newspaper.

Cambridge Faculty

Beyond the practical difficulties of not being able to read or access a primary source in the original, most faculty members thought that it was not as important for students to take the time to see originals or to visit an archive, as undergraduates' use of the resources did not require this. A visit took up time that could be spent actually using the primary source.

I did take them to [Archive] in the first year of the Special Subject. And they liked it but they didn't think that they had gotten enough out of it. And the problem for that is that, archives have, I mean they know what they want to show people about the nature of archiving, and it isn't what the students need. So although they found it very interesting and they liked to see, you know the broad range of material that was got out for them, and all sorts of things, I did think that they felt that they could have spent two hours better. And so I have phased it out. And depending, I mean if [...] there wasn't such an enormous range of material that it is possible to make available to them, I could imagine that I might want to make a trip to look at things that are not available. But I think it is always better, frankly, to make it available to them.

Cambridge Faculty

Other faculty, using different types of sources, found that it was useful to take students to see primary sources, and went on to say that students found this experience enriching.

Yes, but we use that more and more alongside, so we get them interested in objects and then we also do trips to museums where they can handle objects.

Cambridge Faculty

For some fields, digitization was seen as narrowing and limiting the type of resources students used for their independent projects, but most faculty members were enthusiastic about undergraduates' use of digital resources for dissertations and the potential of digitization to improve the research that undergraduates are able to do. This was qualified by the recognition that not all undergraduates want to use digital sources, and also that supervisors often do not know enough about the primary sources available online to be able to recommend them.

I think really for me it is more about how they use it [rather than format]. I think it partly will depend on the individual student. So for some of them, they will gravitate towards topics that are more material. They feel that simply downloading a set of political speeches from the internet is not research, and they don't want to do that. While others will be attracted to a project like that, and that is what they are comfortable working with.

Cambridge Faculty

Many faculty spoke of encouraging students to incorporate more primary sources, even beyond the dissertation and Special Subject classes, and emphasized that, for these exercises, digital and digitized primary sources were key to providing undergraduates with a greater ability to use primary

sources. Primary sources were almost universally seen as enhancing undergraduates' experience in the History course and also enabling more innovative and exciting work at the undergraduate level.

I think it [incorporating more primary source material] is really important for the World History papers because they are so huge. To be able to write with authority, it seems to me that you will write with more authority if you can incorporate primary sources. So what I like my students to be able to do is to engage with the big themes and big historiographical questions but be able to use case study material to answer them.

Cambridge Faculty

And what I really like about it is that I am able, in a way that I wasn't before, to supplement my reading list with primary sources. So I am making my Part I papers a little bit more like Themes and Sources options because I am putting in links to, I don't know, war poets websites or put up some lyrics of songs, or some YouTube videos of performances of songs, to try and get them to actually look at the primary sources.

Cambridge Faculty

Overall, faculty did not see students having difficulties assessing the reliability of digital primary sources nor did they see undergraduates as having trouble establishing the context of resources provided online. The fact, discussed further in section 13.2, that most students do not regularly have to find their own primary sources until their dissertations likely contributes to this lack of a problem.

Well, like I said I am not giving them all of them. I am providing them with links to quite a lot. I haven't been aware of it raising any major problems, is the truth. We, I mean, there are some things which are more sort of freelance, where just somebody in their room has done it, and on the whole I am not really using those and I don't know whether they might raise some problems....but I haven't seen that as a problem, I really haven't. And they seem, I mean they are generally very good at orientating themselves and making judgements about provenance when it comes to the web. So although they do find things like that on their own volition, I think they are pretty good at judging it.

Cambridge Faculty

If they are just using online primary sources, that is a very good start[...]but they don't really have any sense of how it was collected, what function it was trying to do, you know what the point of it was at the time, why they might have asked certain kinds of questions. So they use it in a slightly naïve way. But I am just happy for them to use anything. I love the fact that if I encourage them, they start putting primary source stuff in their essays.

Cambridge Faculty

8.5. Summary

While overall use of primary sources is not very high, some Faculty members, recognizing the advantages of digital provision, are now incorporating more primary sources into their teaching. Undergraduates generally use, and prefer using, primary sources in a printed edition, although they recognize that the best format depends on the nature of the source itself and the kind of research they wish to conduct. While faculty were generally more enthusiastic about students using digital primary sources, some undergraduates expressed a wish to work in archives or with originals, especially for their dissertations. Many students relied on their dissertation supervisor to help them find primary sources for their dissertation, but others experienced difficulties and had trouble determining what primary source collections were available to them.

9. Overall Satisfaction with Provision of Electronic Resources

To evaluate student perceptions of the availability and accessibility of electronic resources for their History course, survey respondents were asked directly about their satisfaction as well as given the opportunity to explain why they were satisfied or dissatisfied. n=254 is used to calculate the percentages in Table 9.1 and a breakdown of responses by year group is shown in Chart 9.1.

Are you satisfied with the current provision of electronic sources for your course?.

Answer Options	Percentage	Response Count
Yes	58.7%	149
No	29.5%	75
I don't know	11.8%	30

Table 9.1: Satisfaction with the current provision of electronic resources

As can be seen in Chart 9.1, third years (n=82) are slightly more satisfied than other year groups, and second years (n=96) report the most dissatisfaction with provision, although all year groups report more satisfaction than dissatisfaction.

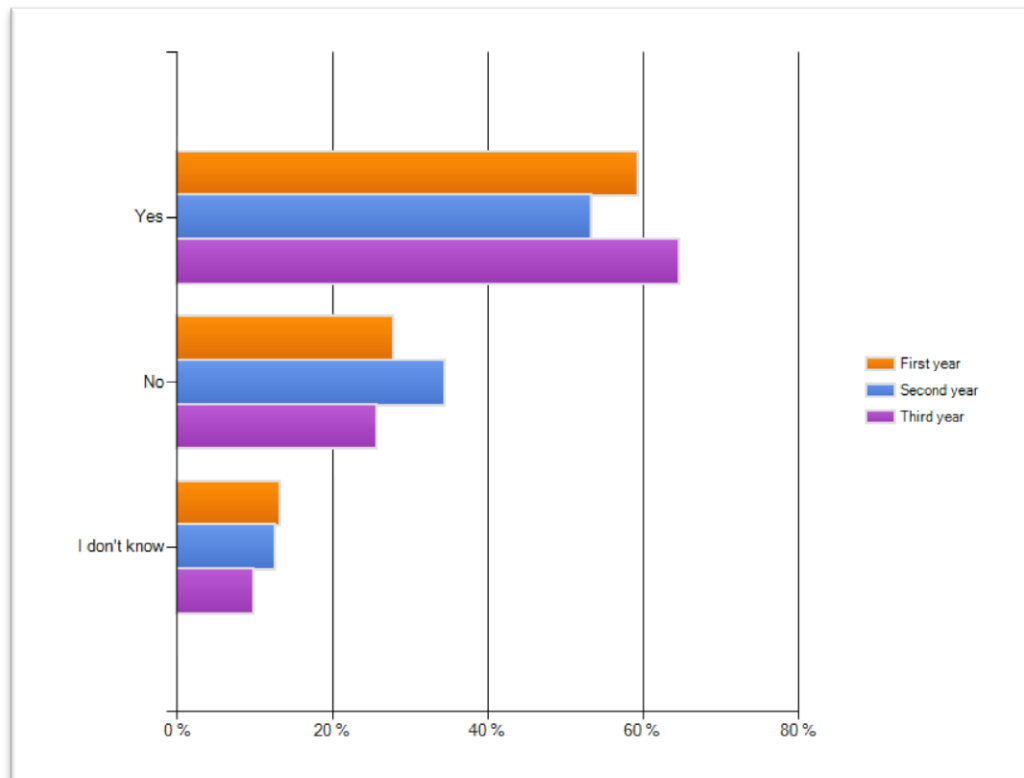


Chart 9.1: Satisfaction with the current provision of electronic resource, broken down by year group

Satisfaction with the provision of electronic resources did not correlate with higher use or perceived availability of electronic resources. Of the people who responded that they were satisfied (n=149), 71.1% said they used electronic resources “about 25%” and 61.1% chose that “about 25%” of the sources they needed for their course were available to them electronically—figures that are very close to the percentages of use and availability reported by all respondents.

The 175 free text comments further explicated this theme. Of the 87 comments by people who had selected that they were satisfied with electronic resource provision, almost half of them indicated that they were satisfied because they preferred print resources.

Whilst not all books are available on electronic resources, I would not want to read most books in electronic form, finding it easier to write notes/remember information/use indexes in books. The most readily available publications online seem to be articles, which are exactly the sort of thing that suit online study—being shorter and generally requiring less note-taking.

1st year undergraduate

Other main themes from the respondents' comments were their satisfaction with the digitized resources provided by their supervisor or lecturer on CamTools, a strong positive association with JSTOR, and an overall satisfaction with accessing journal articles online. The idea that shorter resources are more suitable as electronic resources continued throughout the free text, and respondents often mentioned the difficulties of reading off a screen. Also prevalent was the opinion that electronic resources were most useful as a backup, if the hard copies were unavailable.

All the primary sources for my special subject classes are available online, and the organiser of my specified paper classes provides primary material electronically. This is extremely convenient as it means that classes aren't competing for hard copy. The online availability of articles is a bonus.

3rd year undergraduate

I find reading from a book more productive but appreciate having electronic sources as a back up or for short pieces of research like JSTOR.

2nd year undergraduate

Of the 75 who expressed dissatisfaction with the provision of electronic resources, 69 gave a free-text response. Many people (40) expressed unhappiness with the number of ebooks that they could access, with more than half of those specifically mentioning their desire for more key texts or popular books to be available online. A reoccurring theme was that the needed books were often out on loan, and so, similar to some of the "satisfied" responses, ebooks would provide a useful back-up. Other themes were problems using electronic resources, dissatisfaction with gaps in journal provision, and difficulties knowing where to find electronic resources.

Whilst the current provision of electronic resources is good, and is constantly improving, certain key texts that are used in some papers on a weekly basis are not available as electronic resources and there are only a limited number of physical copies (despite some texts being very popular).

3rd year undergraduate

more needs to be online. also needs to be easier to log in via raven - doesn't always work automatically or first time. never really made clear if primary sources to be found online (esp images) are acceptable since there is often no hard provenance

3rd year undergraduate

Of the respondents who selected "I don't know", 19 gave free texts. The majority of them said that they did not use electronic resources regularly: most of them because they preferred hard copies, but some because they did not know how to access them. Other respondents mentioned that their use varies by what the supervisor tells them to use, by the availability of resources for the Paper

they are taking, and by the type of resources they needed (book, journal, etc.). Themes of needing electronic resources as a back-up when books are not available and difficulties finding electronic resources were prevalent.

I prefer to read non-electronic sources in general, so the lack of total provision is not the end of the world and does not majorly impact my studies or work routine. However, I do suppose that ideally there would be greater provision so as to ensure every student can always fall back on electronic resources if a printed version is not available.

2nd year undergraduate

9.1. Summary

Reported satisfaction illustrates how students feel about library services, but often the “whys” are more complicated. In this case, most participants were satisfied with provision, but the free text showed that many people were satisfied because they preferred hard copies. The other general theme that emerged from the free text, transcending the three survey responses, mirrors the results from other areas of the survey and the focus groups: while hard copies are generally preferred for reading and some types of resources are easier to use online than others, the demands of the History course and competition for resources make electronic resources attractive back-ups.

Part B: Networks for the Discovery of Resources

This section explores how discovery happens in the Cambridge undergraduate historian's experience and how students determine what material is relevant for their course. The IRIS study (2009) showed that undergraduates at Cambridge rely heavily on their reading lists (p.8) for finding resources. The History Uncovered project further explored the role of reading lists for undergraduate historians, including investigating what is a "reading list" in the History context, how students use the various reading lists given, and how supervisors want them to use their reading lists. Questions on general networks for finding information, as well as questions on specific use of databases, were also asked, to ensure the validity of focusing on reading lists.

10. Information Sources Used for Discovery

Mirroring the IRIS report (2009, p. 7), respondents were asked to consider how often they used various information sources.

In the current academic year, approximately how often have you used the following resources to help you discover books, articles, primary sources, or other materials relevant to your course?

This was a matrix-type question, in which participants were asked to select which time category best applied to their use. A free text response box also allowed participants to register other categories. The percentages shown on the graph are calculated using each answer's response count, given in Table 10.1 (n= response count).

Answer Options	Weekly	Monthly	Termly or less	Never	Response Count
Faculty reading lists	67.2% (166)	22.7% (56)	8.5% (21)	1.6% (4)	247
Supervisors' reading lists	96.4% (238)	1.6% (4)	.4% (1)	1.6% (4)	247
Recommendations given in lectures or supervisions	26.6% (70)	42.9% (105)	24.9 % (61)	3.7% (9)	245
Recommendations from friends	9.9% (24)	40.3% (98)	36.2% (88)	13.6 % (33)	243
Database or search engine	34.4% (84)	26.2% (64)	23.0% (56)	16.4 % (40)	244
References or footnotes from a trusted book or journal	24.0% (59)	42.7% (105)	17.9% (44)	15.4 % (38)	246

Table 10.1: Resources used to discover materials relevant to History course

10 participants gave free-text responses, 3 of which noted that they browsed library shelves. The focus groups also discussed browsing as a search strategy, and this is discussed more in section 16.2. Other responses specified the databases, websites, or search engines (JSTOR, Wikipedia, Google, and Newton) that they used to uncover new resources.

The relative importance of supervisor's reading lists compared to Faculty reading lists is notable, and this issue is discussed in full in section 11.

Surprisingly, the use of recommendations given in lectures or supervisions was not as prominent as might have been expected, especially given the data from the IRIS report that showed undergraduates choosing "lectures or supervisions" as a key information source (2009, p. 8). However, in History, the concept of a supervisor's reading list and recommendations from a supervisor are not clear-cut, see section 11.2, and because this question asked specifically about supervisors' reading lists, it is likely that many respondents judged recommendations given by the supervisor to be a supervisor's reading list. Distinguishing supervisors' recommendations and

supervisors' reading lists is not as important as the idea that History undergraduates are most using their supervisors as their source for information.

The findings of the other areas of this question harmonize with those of the IRIS report: the relative lack of use made of recommendations from friends, databases and search engines, and references, in comparison with the use of reading lists as information sources (2009, p. 8-9).

The key information sources identified here generally held consistent when analysed by year groups. The only major difference was that first years used their Faculty reading lists less often: 58.1% (n=74) reported they use them "weekly" compared with about 70% of second years (n=93) and third years (n=80). Third years reported slightly more usage of footnotes and references from books and journals, which is consistent with the less directed nature of third year coursework. Use of supervisor reading lists consistently remained very high across the year groups.

10.1. Use of Databases and Search Engines for Resource Discovery

Respondents to the online survey were also asked specifically about their use of databases and search engines. This was a matrix-type question, in which participants were asked to select which time category best applied to their use. A free text response box also allowed participants to register other categories. The percentages shown are calculated using the response count given in Table 10.2 (n= response count).

In the current academic year, approximately how often have you used the following databases or search engines to help you find books, articles, primary sources, or other materials relevant to your course?

Answer Options	Weekly	Monthly	Termly or less	Heard of it, but never used it	Never heard of it	Response Count
Google	53.9 % (131)	23.0 % (56)	12.8% (31)	10.3% (25)	0.0% (0)	243
Google Scholar	14.4% (35)	12.3% (30)	14.8 % (36)	29.2% (71)	29.2% (71)	243
Web of Knowledge	.4 % (1)	1.7% (4)	5.8% (14)	18.3% (44)	73.9% (178)	241
Historical Abstracts	1.7% (4)	4.1% (10)	10.4% (25)	15.8% (38)	68.0% (164)	241
JSTOR	82.6% (204)	13.4% (33)	2.8% (7)	1.2% (3)	0.0% (0)	247
Project Muse	7.0% (17)	11.6% (28)	8.3% (20)	22.7% (55)	50.4% (122)	242

Table 10.2: Use of databases and search engines

The databases and search engines selected for this question came from the IRIS study (2009, p. 11) where participants were asked about their use of Google, Google Scholar, and Web of Knowledge, as well as three subject-specific databases. Historical Abstracts, JSTOR, and Project Muse were initially chosen, in consultation with the faculty librarian, as the History-specific resources for the IRIS project. These choices were repeated here, in order to compare the results after two years.

Consistent with the findings of the IRIS Project (2009, p. 13), JSTOR was the key brand for undergraduate students. In these results, it surpassed even Google in use. Use of Google and especially Google Scholar were low, with a surprising number of students (10.3%, or 25 students out of 243) saying they had heard of Google but never used it to find resources for their course. 29.2% of undergraduate historian respondents had never heard of Google Scholar (compared with 26.3% of all undergraduates; IRIS, 2009, p. 12), and fewer historians used it regularly when compared with the overall student survey (compare 14.4% weekly here with 28.3%; IRIS, 2009, p. 12).

Web of Knowledge was even less likely to be used or even heard of by undergraduate historians, and the use and awareness of subject-specific databases, other than JSTOR, remains very low. While this may seem problematic for libraries and library services, undergraduates' reliance on reading lists means that they rarely need to find resources not given on their reading lists (see section 13).

There were also year group differences, with awareness of resources increasing greatly for third years. This is consonant with focus group and faculty comments on the greater independence of third years as they undertake dissertations and other coursework (see section 13). Table 10.3 shows the 4 databases or search engines that participants registered that they had never heard of and how the percentage of those responding "never heard of it" changes across year groups.

Answer Options	1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year
Google Scholar	38.4% (73)	29.3% (92)	20.5% (78)
Web of Knowledge	76.4% (72)	81.5% (92)	62.3% (77)
Historical Abstracts	77.8% (72)	74.7% (91)	51.3% (78)
Project Muse	68.5% (73)	49.5% (91)	34.65 (78)

Table 10.3: Lack of awareness ("never heard of it") of databases and search engines, broken down by year group.

Finally, awareness of some general databases may be low because historians might be using a broad range of more specialized resources. In the free-text comments given, multiple respondents (3 each) listed Google Books, Newton, and ejournals@cambridge as resources; however, participants also mentioned a range of primary sources collections, theses, archive catalogs, and news archives.

One respondent said in the free text that Google would direct you to the content of all of the listed resources, a perception that provides more evidence that students have difficulties knowing where and how to search, as discussed in section 5.2.

10.3. Summary

Participants were overwhelmingly relying on the reading lists, and specifically the reading lists given by their supervisors, for information sources. After reading lists, respondents chose databases and search engines as their leading means of finding information. The main databases and search engines referred to were JSTOR and Google. Awareness and use of Google Scholar, Web of Knowledge, Historical Abstracts, and Project Muse were low. The directed reading provided by supervisors' reading lists explains why the need to search for books and articles in undergraduate work is low.

11. Reading Lists in History

As anticipated, students overwhelmingly revealed that their main source for the discovery of the resources they used for their course is their reading list. The History Faculty Library and many College Libraries use the Faculty reading lists for ordering resources, although for many libraries, there are difficulties in using Faculty reading lists for provision, as they often run to 50+ pages per Paper. Reliance on Faculty reading lists has also been questioned by many libraries due to the well-known problem of students coming to a library desk with a scrap of paper—their “reading list”—that the library has never seen. Anecdotal evidence, and the belief that students might not be reading all the books on their Faculty reading lists, led to the hypothesis that supervisors’ reading lists were playing a major role in students’ information gathering strategies.

11. 1. Differences in Use of Faculty and Supervisor’s Reading Lists

Participants were asked to give the importance of the Faculty reading lists and their supervisors’ reading lists for three key areas of the History undergraduate course at Cambridge. While Long Essays and dissertations are not the same exercise, they both require some independent research. To determine students’ use of reading lists for independent projects, the two assignments were grouped together. Responses are displayed in Table 11.1 and Table 11.2

How important are your Faculty reading lists for the following assignments?

Answer Options	Very important	Important	Moderately important	Of little importance	Unimportant	Not applicable	Response Count
Supervision essays	46.0% (114)	22.6% (56)	19.4% (48)	9.3% (23)	2.8% (7)	0.0% (0)	248
Exam revision	48.4% (120)	28.2% (70)	11.7% (29)	3.2% (8)	2.0% (5)	6.5% (16)	248
Long Essay and Dissertation research	34.0% (84)	18.65 (46)	13.8% (34)	6.95% (17)	3.2% (8)	23.5% (58)	247

Table 11.1: Importance of Faculty reading lists

How important are your supervisors' reading lists for the following assignments?

Answer Options	Very important	Important	Moderately important	Of little importance	Unimportant	Not applicable	Response Count
Supervision essays	94.0% (233)	2.8% (7)	0.8% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.4% (6)	248
Exam revision	64.1% (159)	21.4% (53)	6.5 % (16)	.8% (2)	0.4% (1)	6.9% (17)	248
Long Essay and Dissertation research	49.8% (122)	15.1% (37)	7.3% (18)	5.3% (13)	0.4% (1)	22.0% (54)	245

Table 11.2: Importance of supervisors’ reading lists

Supervisors’ reading lists are judged as “very important” by a plurality of participants for every activity, and, unsurprisingly, are most crucial for the weekly essays. Supervisors’ reading lists were also ranked as more influential for directing exam revision and independent research activities, activities where it might have been supposed that students would consult the Faculty reading lists as a bibliography for additional reading.

The gap between the importance of supervisors' reading lists and Faculty reading lists narrows for independent research projects. For independent research activities, of the 23.5% that said the Faculty reading lists were not applicable for their work, almost all of them also chose that the supervisor's reading list was not applicable to that project. This was not, as might be expected, because students found sources independently for their coursework, but because the vast majority of the respondents were first years who had not yet encountered dissertation or Long Essay projects. Roughly 60% of second years (n=94) and third years (n=80) ranked Faculty reading lists as "important" or "very important" to their independent research projects, while 71.3% of second years and 87.5% of third years judged supervisors' reading lists as "important" or "very important" for their coursework exercises.

11. 2. Role of Faculty and Supervisor Reading Lists

Respondents to the online survey were further asked to explain how they used their reading lists:

How do you use your Faculty reading lists in relation to your supervisors' reading lists?

This was an entirely free-text question, because there was not enough knowledge about the role of the different reading lists to create categories or types of usage. Around 75% of the total respondents wrote free text, for a total of 188 free text comments. By year group, 57 first years, 71 second years, and 60 third years responded.

The overall theme emerging from the free text comments was that, while students do depend on their supervisors' reading lists, supervisors vary widely in what they give and how they point students to information. Some supervisors give entirely unique lists of readings. Others amend the faculty list by pointing out key texts in the supervisions. Still other supervisors do not recommend texts, but simply direct students to the Faculty reading lists. While most respondents said that their supervisors had pointed out specific readings in some form, it is important for libraries and other information services to remember the complexity of experiences, as well as make generalizations.

I've had two main supervisors. One supervisor has always created their own list, in which case I haven't had time to look at the Faculty one as well. The other uses the Faculty list as the reading list for a given topic, in which case I use both the specific recommended texts and the 'general' textbooks listed at the beginning of the Faculty list

1st year undergraduate

If a supervisor does not provide his/her own reading list, I use the faculty list. If there is one provided by my supervisor, I generally only refer to that list. If a lot of the items on the supervisor's reading list are unavailable, I may use the faculty list to supplement my reading.

2nd year undergraduate

In quite a few cases, respondents mentioned that their supervisors just pointed out relevant resources on the Faculty list and/or added some other suggestions. 40 participants fell into this category, and some expressed confusion, then, about the distinction between reading lists. A further 15 respondents noted that they usually or often were just directed to the Faculty list, again highlighting the variety of experiences.

Usually my supervisor recommends a number off the Faculty list and off her own list.

1st year undergraduate

Certain supervisors don't provide their own reading lists and just ask for me to refer to the Faculty list.

2nd year undergraduate

Similar numbers of respondents indicated that they rarely used Faculty reading lists (23) or that they tried to use both (22) regularly, which reveals very different student approaches to reading lists. Concerns about Faculty reading lists centred around the lists being long and undifferentiated.

Not very often - only if a supervisor does not provide a reading list, but most do.

2nd year undergraduate

Try to read as many from both. Often the supervisors' will be more useful for the specific essay, but in terms of broader knowledge and exam questions, the Faculty reading list is better.

2nd year undergraduate

52 respondents commented that they used their Faculty reading lists when they wanted to read more on a topic or when they wanted to supplement their given reading lists.

If I finish the supervisors' reading lists, I always move on to the faculty guide for additional reading. Also, I try to catch up on the reading on the same topic/period that might be aimed towards a different question that might appear on the exams.

2nd year undergraduate

19 respondents expressed that they used the Faculty reading list to fill in gaps on the supervisors' reading lists, while 20 people wrote that they used the Faculty reading lists to find substitutes for books on their supervisors' reading lists that were unavailable.

I sometimes refer to the Faculty reading list to supplement the reading prescribed by my supervisor. Sometimes, materials on the supervisor's list do not always provide a satisfactory overview of topics and the Faculty reading list is helpful in making up for this shortcoming.

1st year undergraduate

I tend to rely primarily on my supervisors' reading lists, using the Faculty reading list as a last resort if books on the former are already lent out or missing.

3rd year undergraduate

Finally, as indicated in the survey responses, there was some use made of the Faculty reading lists for exam revision. This was mentioned by 28 respondents.

Focus on supervisors' list first and supplement with the faculty list if there is time. Definitely use the faculty list when it comes to exam revision, as the supervisor's list is usually better for depth than for breadth.

3rd year undergraduate

11. 3. Summary

Participants expressed a wide variety of reading list experiences with different supervisors and within different Papers. While students noted many uses for the Faculty reading lists—exam revision, broadening reading, and finding substitute materials—they felt that supervisors' reading lists, in whatever form, were more important information sources, and, citing time constraints and worries about relevance, they prioritized the resources given by the supervisors.

12. Perceptions about Reading Lists and Library Provision

It was hypothesized that if students were primarily using supervisors' reading lists, there would be a breakdown in provision due to libraries generally using Faculty reading lists to order materials.

12. 1. Finding Resources on Reading Lists

Survey participants were asked whether they were usually able to find their resources, and they were also asked a follow-up free text question, allowing them to relate frustrations with finding resources, regardless of whether they were usually successful or not. n= 250 is used to calculate the percentages in Table 12.1.

Are you usually able to find the books, articles, primary sources, and other materials that are on your reading lists?

If you sometimes have problems finding these materials, why is that?

Answer Options	Percentage	Response Count
Yes	91.2%	228
No	8.8%	22
If you sometimes have problems finding these materials, why is that?		160

Table 12.1 Ability to usually find the resources on reading lists

While the overwhelming majority felt that generally they were successful in finding their resources, more than 60% expressed some frustrations in the free text. Of the 22 negative responses, 20 explained their answer in the free text, while 140 of the "Yes" responses also commented on frustrations they had.

Regardless of whether they usually were able to find their resources, participants' main frustration was that the resource they needed was on loan, or, at least, not available in the libraries they preferred to use. The recent changes in the University Library borrowing policies were a cause of concern for many undergraduate historians, as they felt there was increased competition over key texts. Somewhat surprisingly, given the reliance on supervisors' reading lists, respondents focused on availability, rather than incompleteness, in Cambridge collections.

Usually a scarcity (say, only one copy) of a book which everyone is after because of its centrality to a particular Paper.

3rd year undergraduate

If others have taken the books I need out of the various libraries at the same time.

1st year undergraduate

Often my books are only available in the UL, and now everyone is allowed to take books out of the UL often they are not there and the recall period is sufficiently long that by the time they have been recalled I have finished my weekly essay and don't need them any more.

2nd year undergraduate

Other themes, again regardless of the yes/no answer, were lack of subscriptions to electronic resources, inability to find or access the electronic resources they needed, and difficulties using Newton.

Occasionally not enough copies, even between the Seeley, UL and college library. Lack of teaching regarding electronic resources means that sometimes sources which I haven't been

able to find are probably available in an electronic format but I have not been aware of them.

1st year undergraduate

12. 2. Perceptions about Provision

Faculty members were also asked to comment on provision of resources in libraries—given the fact that most libraries never see supervisors’ reading lists. Like the student responses in the survey, faculty members’ main concern was competition over resources, and they often mentioned alternate ways that they provided resources for their students. They expressed not being aware of other problems for print resources, or noted that they had assumed libraries had the resources that they set. Throughout the interviews, faculty members did mention the lack of necessary digital resources for their subject.

I send my reading lists, or I have done, to my College Librarian, so that he can buy those things, but I haven’t ever thought of sending it to the Seeley, partly because I assumed the Seeley had all those things already.

Cambridge Faculty

And, of course, that is a problem—as we were saying before, that the reading is directed, and there are certain books that we want to make sure that they have read—that if there is one copy of the book and it’s out, then they do have trouble. And that is the sort of case when I do lend my own books. If it gets, you know, to the second day of the reading, and they say: well you said this is crucial and I can’t get it, and...I help out then.

Cambridge Faculty

While some faculty members demonstrated that they provided their supervisees with their own materials, or digitized materials, when there was a lack in provision, this was not universally reflected in the undergraduate experience. In the focus groups, discussions of different supervising experiences prompted students to make comparisons of supervisors. Students also compared Colleges, reflecting that while some Colleges have large libraries and/or have bursaries to buy books, others do not.

Or just that it puts you at a disadvantage perhaps if, say, your supervisor doesn’t use CamTools, but everybody else’s does. So, it is not fair on that person, is it? There are such different ways of approaching things for the same paper.

1st year undergraduate

Yeah, but every single one [College] is different, so if everyone... if every College gave book grants or whatever, it [unequal provision] wouldn’t be so much of a problem. I think it is more of a problem because some people and some Colleges don’t have the resources to buy a text... but they still need to read them.

3rd year undergraduate

12. 3. Summary

While provision is not generally recognized as a problem, many participants in this project expressed concerns about access to key texts. Given students’ reliance on supervisors’ recommendations (to which the History Faculty Library does not currently have access) and the fact that Faculty reading lists, for the most part, do not highlight key resources, libraries are in a difficult position when attempting to determine which are the key resources being recommended.

13. Seeking Information Beyond Reading Lists

To evaluate whether students were searching for materials independently, survey respondents were asked whether they agreed that they needed to find materials not given on their reading lists. Survey respondents were offered a Likert scale type response. There was intentionally no time frame specified for this question; the question was intended to start participants thinking about their information needs beyond their reading lists and when and why they needed to find information without the help of a supervisor. n= 250 is used to calculate the percentages in Table 13.1

I need to find books, articles, primary sources and other materials for my course that are NOT given on my reading lists.

Answer Options	Percentage	Response Count
Strongly agree	4.0%	10
Agree	21.2%	53
Neither agree nor disagree	31.6%	79
Disagree	36.0%	90
Strongly disagree	7.2%	18

Table 13.1: Responses to “need to find information NOT on reading lists”

The responses were surprising in that over 70% of the respondents disagreed, strongly disagreed, or felt ambivalent about the statement. A 4-point Likert scale might have been more appropriate for this question, removing the option for ambivalence. A 5-point Likert scale was chosen in order to avoid the problem of forcing respondents to express an opinion. Section 11 and section 13.1-2, on the use of reading lists and finding sources, shed light on the high number of ambivalent respondents: many participants felt that usually their reading lists were sufficient, although they occasionally would venture beyond them given enough time and particular interest.

Third year participants were more likely to go beyond their reading lists than other year groups.

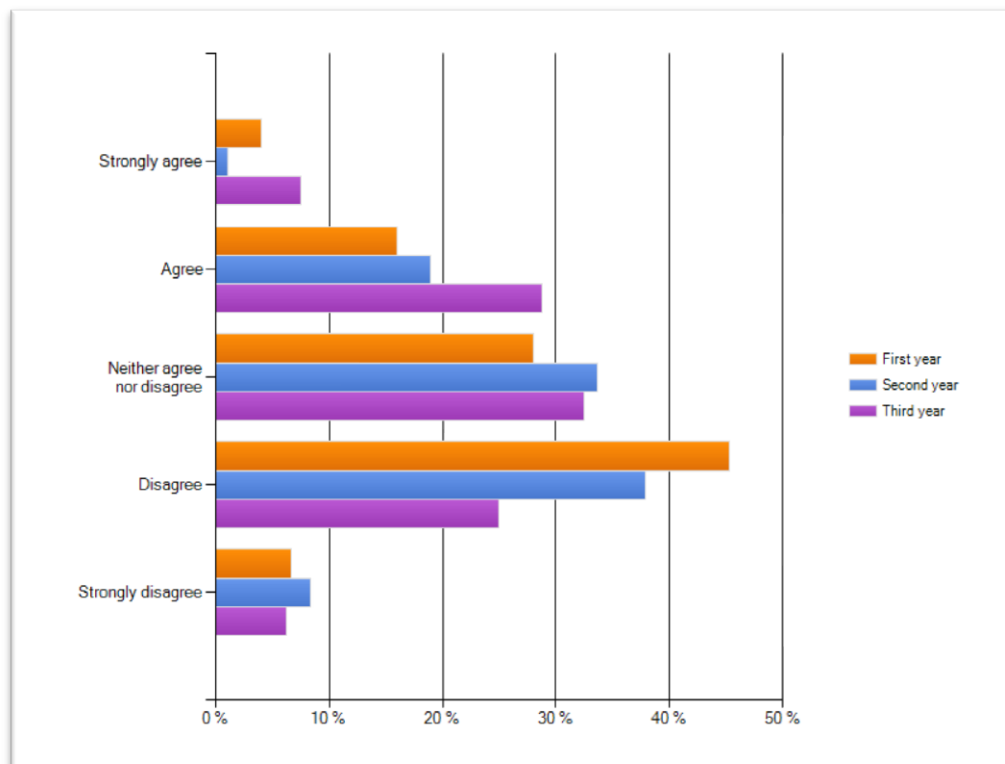


Chart 13.1: Responses to “need to find information NOT on reading lists”, broken down by year group

13. 1. Independent Information Searching

Survey respondents who selected “agree” or “strongly agree” to the statement that they need to find resources not given on their reading lists were then asked questions about what kinds of information they were searching for and how satisfied they were with their success. Only 63 (about 25%) of survey respondents were shown these follow-up questions on information searching.

Respondents were asked to identify what kinds of information they search for independently. Participants were asked to select as many categories as applied to them and were also given space to add other categories of relevance to their work; n=62 is used to calculate the percentages given in Table 13.2.

When you need to find information sources NOT given on your reading lists, what kind of information are you looking for? (Please select all that apply.)

Answer Options	Percentage	Response Count
Alternate sources (when books, journals, or other materials are unavailable)	64.5%	40
More information on a topic	79.0%	49
Books and materials in different formats to those given on the reading lists	16.1%	10
Dissertation research materials	25.8%	16
Themes and Sources Long Essay research materials	45.2%	28
Special Subjects Long Essay research materials	25.8%	16
Primary source materials	56.5%	35
If other, please specify:	1	1

Table 13.2: Independent information needs

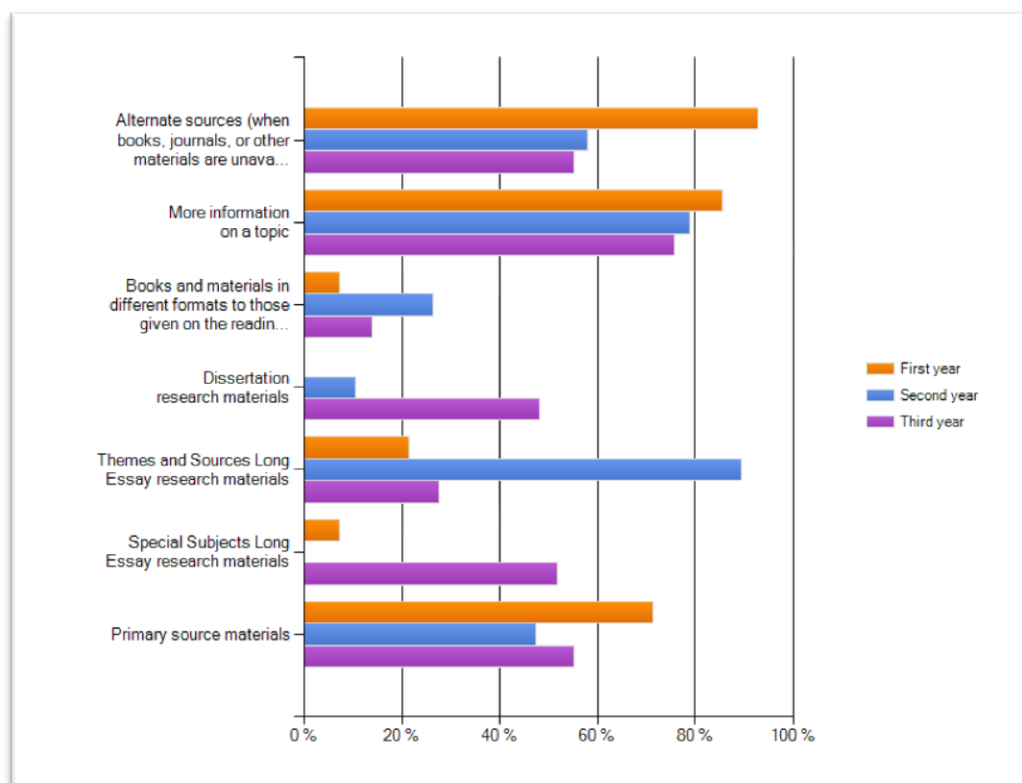


Chart 13.2: Independent information needs, broken down by year group

It was surprising that going beyond reading lists was not an activity primarily focused on specific projects, but was most often needed for finding alternate sources and reading beyond what was given on a reading list. While the prominence of those two activities remained throughout year groups, second and third years did highlight their coursework activities. First years, surprisingly, were the ones seeking out additional primary source materials. For the percentages in Chart 13.2, n=14 for first years, n= 19 for second years, n=29 for third years.

Respondents were then asked about their satisfaction and desire to improve their ability to find information sources independently. Respondents were offered Likert-scale answer choices. Percentages in Table 13.3 are calculated with n=63; for percentages in Table 13.4, n=62.

I am satisfied with my ability to find relevant sources that are NOT given on my reading lists.

Answer Options	Percentage	Response Count
Strongly agree	19.0%	12
Agree	52.4%	33
Neither agree nor disagree	19.0%	12
Disagree	9.5%	6
Strongly disagree	0.0%	0

Table 13.3: Satisfaction with ability to find sources not given on reading lists

I would like to improve my ability to find relevant sources that are NOT given on my reading lists.

Answer Options	Percentage	Response Count
Strongly agree	21.0%	13
Agree	41.9%	26
Neither agree nor disagree	32.3%	20
Disagree	4.8%	3
Strongly disagree	0.0%	0

Table 13.4: Desire to improve ability to find sources not on reading lists

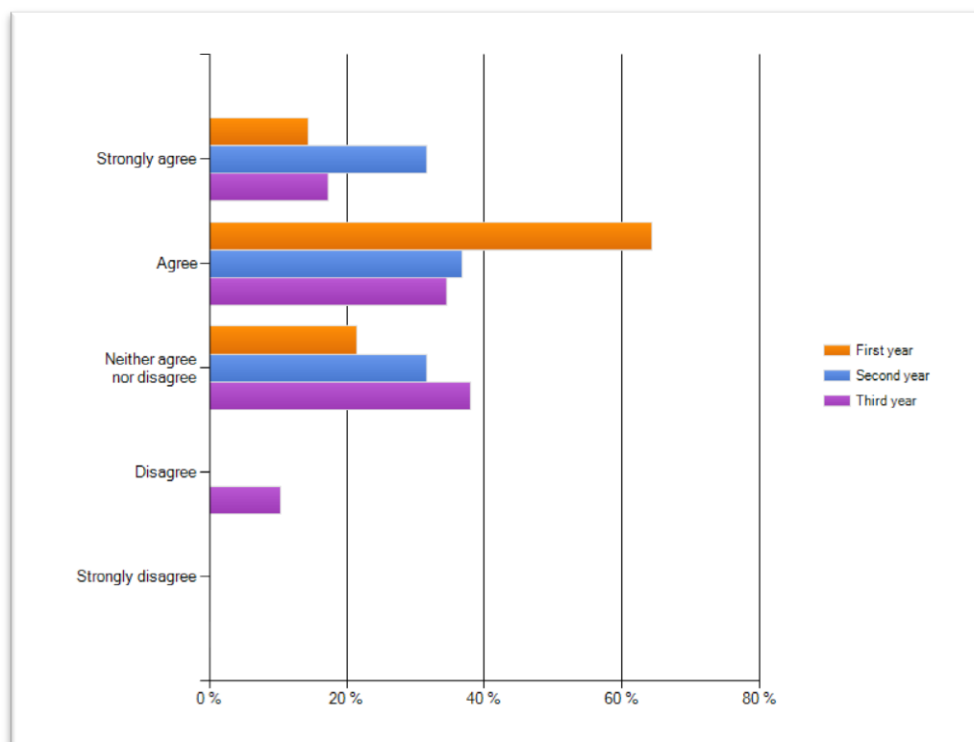


Chart 13.3: Desire to improve ability to find resources not on reading lists, broken down by year group

While over 70% responded that they were satisfied with their ability to some degree, over 60% wanted to improve. This latter response was most prominent in first years.

As a large percentage of survey respondents reported ambivalence about their need to find resources not given on their reading lists, focus group participants were asked to explain when, if ever, they had to find resources not on their reading list. The discussions within the focus groups echoed the sentiments expressed in the free text question on use of reading lists (see section 11.2). Participants confirmed that their use of reading lists varied by Paper and by supervisor and reported that, while the expectations of supervisors vary, many ask students not to go beyond the given reading. Students felt that supervisors generally gave sufficient reading for their week, and so they did not have to seek sources beyond their recommendations.

Most of my supervisors have told me it is best not to...to stick to their reading list. And if they ever see a book that isn't mentioned by them, they will say "you don't need to do this, stick to the reading list".

3rd year undergraduate

And I think when you are talking about a weekly essay, if you have got a week, it is really frustrating to spend the first chunk of that week trying to find what you are supposed to be reading rather than just getting on with reading.

3rd year undergraduate

Focus group participants expressed that they need to find substitute readings when popular books were taken out of libraries, and that sometimes they will find books independently when reading out of term, or when they have finished all their reading.

The situation that arises from that [dependence on reading lists] links back to the problem of the shortage of key texts, because my faithfulness to the reading list is often affected by the shortage of the core texts, which links back to the availability of them being so important.

3rd year undergraduate

It does feel slightly more satisfying, especially if there's a debate that the supervisor has led you towards and then you read some books which are more involved in that debate than the first one that he gave you. Then that can be a little bit more interesting, because then you know that you are on the track, but you also know that you are doing something a bit more detailed.

1st year undergraduate

Focus group discussions also turned to dissertations and Themes and Sources Long Essays. There were mixed reactions from focus group participants about the more independent research components of the degree. A minority felt well-equipped; the majority had apprehensions or expressed difficulties writing Themes and Sources Long Essays and starting dissertations. Themes and Sources Long Essays were particularly felt to be independent projects, due to the fact that they are generally written over the vacations. Concerns mentioned in the focus groups were finding primary sources, discerning the reputability of sources, managing references, and feeling unprepared to find sources on their own.

I know for my Themes and Sources, I spent the summer reading a bunch of books, and when I got back, I decided that all of my reading had been completely irrelevant. My supervisor, I don't think, directed me in the best possible way towards my reading.

3rd year undergraduate

So for that I just read whatever I could find in the UL, but it might have been useful to have some way of knowing which publishers to trust.[...] You need to, like: this is how you should go about analysing and making careful judgments about who you are going to use.

3rd year undergraduate

I do now [feel able to research independently], but at first it was awful. I had no idea, really no idea. And I think did waste quite a lot of my time at the beginning just getting my head around where I needed to go looking for things.

3rd year undergraduate

Strategies for finding resources were mainly following footnotes and references in books and browsing. As also discovered in the IRIS project (2009, p. 10) browsing seems to be a key information seeking strategy for some students, and online browsing was mentioned as a desired resource in unprompted discussions of library services (see section 16.2). No one mentioned using databases or bibliographies online, although many students mentioned wanting more information on finding resources to be available online. A number of students asked more advanced students for advice or wished that there could be such a forum to connect students doing the same Paper or writing dissertations.

That is the advantage of a library. Sometimes the one you have gone to get...the one next to it has, like, your essay title. Or something that strikes you as more immediately relevant. That is a real advantage, being able to...especially when things are categorized into subject sections. Otherwise, it can be a bit of a nightmare.

3rd year undergraduate

So I think, because the idea with the dissertation is that you have to find your own supervisor as well, so although they do kind of lead you in some ways, I think you just have to ask people [talked about asking a Research Fellow] what is the best thing to read and then if you like something, pursue it. Because obviously in the books themselves, they will have further reading, so you just have to kind of go.

2nd year undergraduate

13. 2. Faculty Perspectives on Teaching Students to Find Resources

The findings of the survey and focus groups—that students rely on their supervisors for direction on their reading and rarely have to go beyond the reading lists—was validated by faculty comments. Their emphasis was on teaching students how to use sources.

So as undergraduates...when you are using sources, it is much more how to use them, more than how to find them.

Cambridge Faculty

Weekly reading is highly directed, due to the large amount of information students are expected to absorb each week. While students are allowed to go beyond the set readings, the readings are carefully selected by the supervisor. Many faculty mentioned that the selected readings are to develop students' sense of context and awareness of historical issues.

So that, although one doesn't actively discourage people from going beyond one's reading list, you certainly doesn't encourage them to go beyond, and on occasions when you find people going in certain particular directions beyond one's reading list, one will suggest actually that is fine to go beyond the reading list, but they had better read the reading list first. So characteristically I give them a reading list, I gloss it. I list my reading list in the order

in which I think it is sensible for them to read it in. And I will then sometimes further gloss it in the supervision immediately before they tackle it.

Cambridge Faculty

Some faculty set readings for their supervisees from the official Faculty reading lists and others created their own reading lists, reflecting the variation expressed in the focus group discussions and free text comments.

And I update my questions and I update my reading lists whenever I think of something else that should go on. So I do a targeted reading list, so I don't work from the Faculty reading list, I work from my own...and after a while I guess they are going to start diverging quite substantially.

Cambridge Faculty

Again, it depends a lot, depending on the topic and depending on the paper...and generally with Paper [Number], I type up my own reading list to change the organization and the layout of the list, the way it is structured. I might put in some more primary sources and occasionally do put in some things that I particularly like, but I don't have to mess with it that much. For Paper [Number], well the [Country] topics are just way out of date, and so I have to target my own reading list for that...so, it varies. It really varies a lot how far you can go with the faculty list and how far you have to go beyond it.

Cambridge Faculty

For independent projects, guidance styles vary. Almost all faculty indicated that they would start students off with a reading list, and then expect students to branch out from that. Some faculty members spoke of assisting students with finding primary sources to work with; others felt this was more of the student's responsibility. Faculty also gave information skills advice to dissertation students, encouraging them to follow up references as well as directing them to portals and bibliographic databases. When giving examples of bibliographic databases, faculty members cited a wide variety of resources, noting that because the subject of "History" is so broad, the resources relevant to a particular topic may be very narrow.

[Dissertation students' research] is directed in a sense that you will often start them off with a reading list which is quite similar to the way you would start off an undergraduate doing a weekly essay. And then they will, there is a little responsibility on them to find primary sources themselves, but obviously you have got to monitor that and talk to them about what they are doing with that.

Cambridge Faculty

In the case of dissertation students, I point them in an initial direction. I will suggest a few things they ought to read. When I see a draft, it will become apparent that actually they are touching on areas that I hadn't necessarily anticipated and I'll offer some supplementary information. I do make more explicit suggestion to them that they need a) to follow up bibliography that is mentioned in the things that they have gone and read, which is fairly, one hopes, obvious, and b) that they might actually use various electronic searches to just see what is out there.

Cambridge Faculty

The exception to that [weekly reading] would be [...] the Themes and Sources, where again they are doing a more independent piece of work. And you help construct an individual reading list, but again I always talk to them about Brepolis and other bibliographical aids.

Cambridge Faculty

13.3. Summary

Faculty members stress the carefully directed nature of reading during the History undergraduate course, so it is unsurprising that students rarely have to search for information not given on a reading list. When students do need to find information independently, it is usually to gather more information on a topic of interest, or to find alternate sources when books or journals are unavailable. While most respondents to the online survey were satisfied with their ability to work independently, most would also like to improve. In the focus groups, second years highlighted their Themes and Sources Long Essay as a project where they have to work very independently, due to the time frame of the project and the fact that they are only allowed one supervision for the project. Some dissertation students had trouble finding primary sources for their dissertation. Faculty members' mentoring of dissertation students varies, although the Faculty interviewed for this project were generally involved in helping students find resources and guiding them through the dissertation process.

14. Library Use

The importance of monographs in the History undergraduate course was consistently emphasized throughout this project, and with this came a high valuation of libraries. In the Faculty interviews, academic staff commented on the continued relevance of the library for History in the digital age.

Although, again, I really think we need libraries since students still absolutely want the book in the library, and it is not all about the [digital resources]...it is about what additional benefits this has. You switch between the different usages.

Cambridge Faculty

I hope that people don't have the idea that somehow the library has become defunct in History. It hasn't. And it won't become defunct until every single piece of work that anybody might read has been put online and even then it won't become defunct because people really aren't going to want to spend all their time either reading online or printing stuff out. Books just are absolutely integral to the way we work.

Cambridge Faculty

Focus group participants also discussed their library use. It is illustrative of the general focus on physical resources that when focus group participants were asked to list something that they liked about library services, something that made their work much easier to do—keeping in mind a broad definition of libraries and library services—75% mentioned physical libraries, citing positives from opening hours and the subject categorization of books to the availability of multiple copies of books and the provision of attractive spaces for study.

I do like libraries in Cambridge. I think from a customer's standpoint, they are great... just about anything is available somewhere, so the fact that there are so many of them is great.

3rd year undergraduate

This idea of the library as a space for working and collaborating was a theme throughout the focus groups. Students mentioned that reading and writing can be isolating, and they appreciate having the library as a place for communicating and sharing with other students.

And I think libraries are really important as a working environment, not just a source for information. I think sometimes you need to be able to go into a space that is just about having information around it, and you can access it if you need to, but if not...also just sit there and work and be in that space.

3rd year undergraduate

I think it would be terrible to make the library obsolete. I mean I don't know how you would do that. But I think it would be awful if people could, I mean, if you were going to put all of the lectures on youtube and all of this, and people, if they wanted to, wouldn't have to come in, because I think it is very important to have, to have like essentially something to do that you can't do, in a sense, living at home. We should have to come be actively involved.

3rd year undergraduate

The physical library is, then, a key space for the undergraduate History course. To evaluate which libraries students are using, participants were asked to select the one library, or none, that provided them with the majority of the sources that they use for their course. Respondents were given the opportunity to register other main sources of information in a free text box. n=249 is used to calculate the percentages in Table 14.1.

In the current academic year, which library (if any) has provided you with the majority of the sources that you use for your course?

Answer Options	Percentage	Response Count
University Library	25.3%	63
College Library	23.7%	59
Seeley Historical Library	45.8%	114
None	0.0%	0
Other	5.2%	13

Table 14.1: Libraries providing the majority of sources

24 respondents (more than chose “Other”) specified a library in the free text. Participants registered that they used a combination of the University Library, their College Library, and the History Faculty Library. 14 other Cambridge Faculty libraries were mentioned, some multiple times, reflecting the broad range of resources that historians use. One third year student wrote that the internet was providing most of his/her sources, but, on the whole, participants perceive themselves as using brick and mortar libraries for their resources.

By year group, the History Faculty Library remained the top source, although use of the University Library, unsurprisingly, was higher in the third year. To calculate the percentages in Chart 14.1, n=75 for first years, n=95 for second years, n=79 for third years.

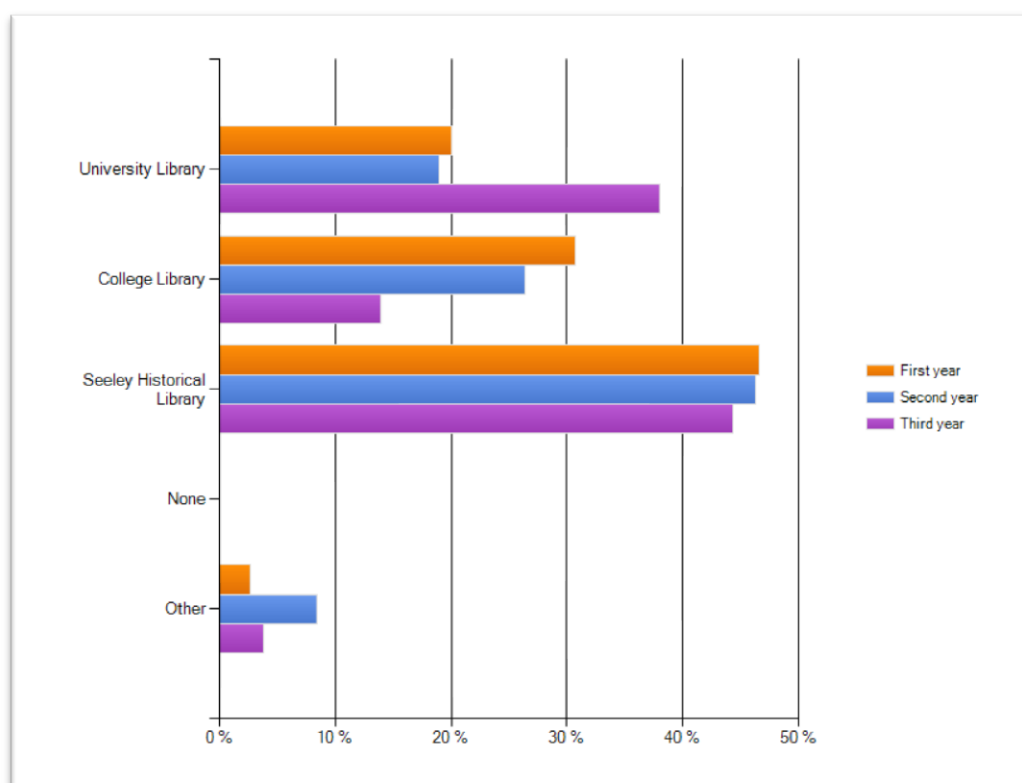


Chart 14.1: Libraries providing the majority of sources, broken down by year group

Use of the University Library was another theme in the focus groups. Across the year groups, students regularly mentioned going to the University Library, if sometimes finding it intimidating. The survey data above also shows students across year groups making use of the University Library.

There were mixed feelings about the University Library allowing Part I students to borrow. The faculty members sometimes echoed these concerns and argued that key books were now taken out of the University Library and were not able to be recalled in time for students to have access to them for their weekly essays. Second and third years were generally very negative about the decrease in access to key texts, although first years, understandably, were not.

One of the things I really like about our library system is the fact that I have a choice between libraries, so I can go to my college library or the UL and I use the UL quite a lot.

1st year undergraduate

But it [borrowing at the University Library] is really a problem for an essay or paper where you have got quite a lot of people needing exactly the same book at exactly the same time.

3rd year undergraduates

14. 1. Receiving Information from Libraries

Survey respondents were asked how they preferred to receive information from the library. A list of options was provided, and respondents were given an opportunity to list others in a free-text box. n=250 is used to calculate the percentages shown in Table 14.2.

What is your preferred mode of receiving information about library support and resources?

Answer Options	Percentage	Response Count
Faculty website	10.0%	25
College website	2.0%	5
University Library website	5.6%	14
Email	66.4%	166
CamTools	3.2%	8
Posters	0.4%	1
social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	0.4%	1
through lectures and supervisions	12.0%	30

Table 14.2 How students wish to receive information from the library

One participant who selected “email” took the opportunity to say that they would not want to be bombarded with information by email. Another would like information in the Faculty newsletter, and a third respondent said that they would like library information on CamTools.

It was interesting that while librarians would see supervisors as students’ primary source for information literacy, students either do not see the recommendations and mentoring done in supervising situations in the same way, or they could prefer that information on library support and resources come from outside the teaching structure.

14.2. Summary

Libraries are still important for many undergraduate historians, both as a provider of the resources they need for their course and as a space for working and sharing with other students.

Undergraduates in Cambridge use the History Faculty Library, the University Library, and their College Libraries the most, but are positive about the diversity of libraries in Cambridge and use resources from other Faculty and departmental collections. Respondents selected that they would like to receive information from the library by email.

15. CamTools Use

The circulation of Special Subject primary source packets has dropped, and it was hypothesized this may be due to the increased use of CamTools for the provision of digitized sources. The use of CamTools across the Faculty was of interest to the History Faculty Library, especially in determining how the Library could use this platform for resource provision. The History Faculty Library currently has no presence on CamTools.

15. 1. Faculty Use of CamTools

Four of the six faculty members interviewed were using CamTools with the Papers they were involved in. Some organized or contributed to a site for a Paper, while others had sites only for their supervisees. While CamTools was not seen as the ideal interface, its benefits for students—in terms of highlighting electronic resources, providing extra readings or popular chapters and sections of key resources, and having a single site for readings, lecture hand-outs, essay questions, and other materials relating to the course—were recognized. Faculty members generally feel that CamTools is an under-utilized tool across the History Faculty, although they think it is beginning to be more widely adopted.

I use CamTools a lot for my undergraduate teaching, and I feel as though I've been amongst one of the first supervisors to really do that. So both of the major papers that I teach on, in fact all three of the papers that I teach on, but especially the Part I papers and I am in charge of all these students and I am their sole supervisor, I put, not all the readings, but all the journal articles that have electronic access, I have put links up, and I know that they go home in the holidays and they read those journal articles because they are easy to get to. I mean, I have made it dead easy for them to get the readings. I also sometimes photocopy chapters of books and put those chapters up where I think, I know for some of them, that there is only one copy in the UL and it will be hard for them to get them.

Cambridge Faculty

One of the key advantages of CamTools for teaching is the ability to quickly amend the reading and resources provided. Faculty also feel able to enhance students' experiences by pointing them to websites and databases for primary sources.

I often put up book reviews, I mean, I keep it changing all the time. And I update my questions and I update my reading lists whenever I think of something else that should go on.

Cambridge Faculty

The interviews also revealed downsides to the use of CamTools. Faculty particularly mentioned that CamTools was difficult to use and was not integrated with other University systems (like CamCORS), creating difficulties for organizing and adding students. Faculty members also indicated that students had mixed reactions to resources being on CamTools and had difficulties finding the sites available to them. One faculty experience was that students do not use CamTools as a resource unless their weekly reading can be found there.

And they [CamTools sites] have to become easier as well. There is no point in having them function only if you know how to make them work—which is the way most things seem to operate, frankly, in this University. It is there somewhere but you need to be a techno to do it. It has to be very easy.

Cambridge Faculty

... and that is the first hurdle that they don't go on CamTools unless you say, "that is where your reading is, you have to go onto CamTools"...

Cambridge Faculty

Since faculty members primarily used CamTools to share resources with their students, there was variation in what they perceived as the library's role in this virtual learning environment. Most faculty members, given their experiences, do not see students using library resources on CamTools unless they have some explicit relevance and links with a Paper. One mentioned that it would be useful for libraries to help create dynamic reading lists, although he recognized that there would be some difficulty in knowing who would administer them and how they would be modified. Other academics mentioned it would be useful for libraries to be involved in scanning and overseeing copyright issues for chapters and articles that could then be placed centrally or on sites for individual Papers.

I think they would probably only use it if it was linked through from the Papers they are studying. So it would have to be very integrated.

Cambridge Faculty

15.2. Student Use of CamTools

Respondents to the online survey were asked whether they were currently using CamTools for their course; n=250 is used to calculate the percentages show in Table 15.1

Are you currently using CamTools in connection with one or more of your Papers?

Answer Options	Percentage	Response Count
Yes	56.4%	141
No	37.6%	94
I don't know	6.0%	15

Table 15.1 Current use of CamTools

From comments made in the faculty interviews and focus groups, these figures should be taken to include CamTools sites providing resources to all students taking a Paper as well as individual supervisors' sites for their supervisees. When the survey was created, it was not known that supervisors were making use of CamTools, so there is no provision made in the survey for this distinction.

I have had experience of both really, I was following a course [a CamTools site] that was just for my supervisor, and for three other people he was supervising, which had the essay questions for the week and all of the reading lists, and some advice on how to do the essay. And I am also part of a group which is available to the 20 other people on my course. And that has the supervision times for the week and all of the reading. So I use it quite a lot really.

2nd year undergraduate

By year group, third years were most often using CamTools sites in connection with their course. n= 75 for third years, n=95 for second years, n=80 for third years.

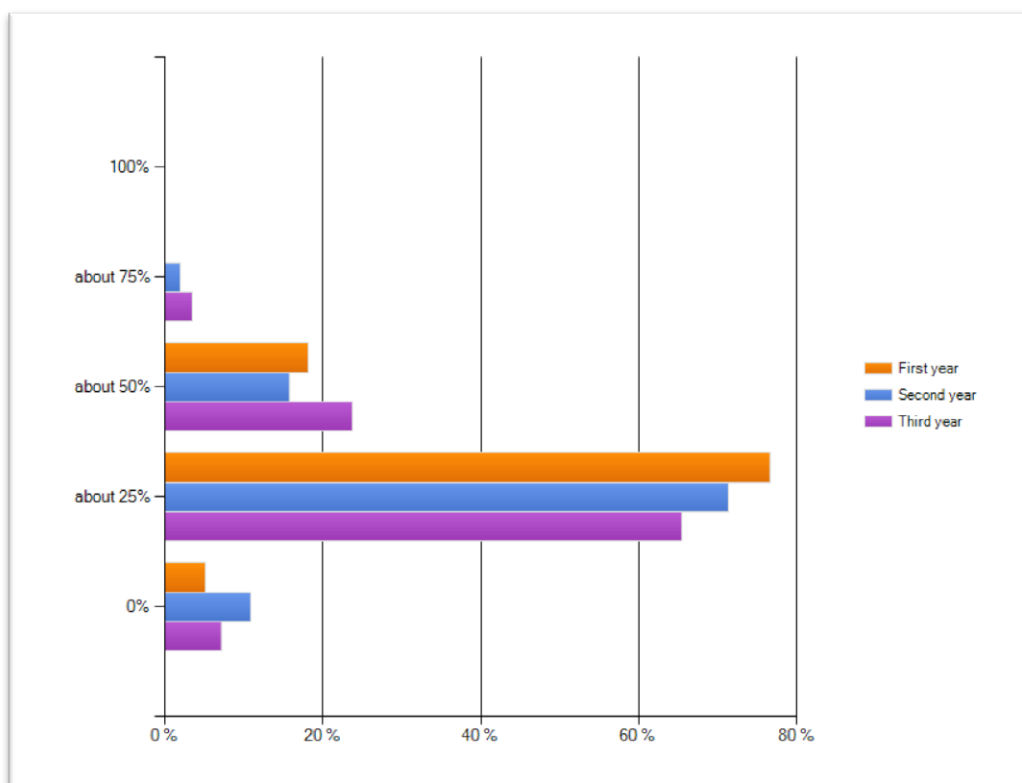


Chart 15.1: Current use of CamTools, broken down by year group.

This data on current use can be compared with the data on use of digitized readings, in Table 4.3 (section 4), which showed that while only about a quarter of the respondents use CamTools regularly for their readings, a total of 67.2% have used sources provided on CamTools this term or last term, and third years more regularly use CamTools than other year group.

Focus group participants reflected the variety of opinions on CamTools: the majority have used it, and some students use it regularly, although most use it sporadically. A few participants had never heard of CamTools. Most people used it just to download readings, rather than as a place for communication or sharing. Participants who had used CamTools generally felt it was useful and that they could access their readings and resources more easily.

I used it for Themes and Sources last year, and Paper 17, which I'm doing this year, actually puts all the lecture notes up on there and there are links for articles and stuff, so theirs' is actually quite good.

2nd year undergraduate

I only use it when I know something new has been uploaded because of the weekly class or something like that.

1st year undergraduate

CamTools is theoretically where people go to put shared resources online, but like three historians do.

2nd year historian, explaining CamTools to another participant who had not heard of it

Focus group participants generally wanted electronic resources to be highlighted to them in a way that mirrored the Paper structure, or, at least were organized by subject. While participants thought

that placing digitized resources on CamTools was a good idea, they also suggested making these resources available through Newton and other websites, so that all students, regardless of their respective Papers, would have access to a wider range of popular resources.

Ideally, as a historian you would just be added to the CamTools of every Paper, and it shouldn't just be lecture notes or designated resources, but it should be general articles of interest.

3rd year undergraduate

15. 3. Summary

While many of the faculty members interviewed were heavily using CamTools, the survey responses were more mixed on whether their Papers or supervisors' used CamTools or not. In the focus groups, participants also expressed divided opinions on whether they used CamTools regularly, if they did have access to a CamTools site. It was clear that if the Paper or supervisor's site had key readings and regularly updated resources, students appreciated and used the site. Otherwise, they used CamTools to download readings, but it was not a main part of their information environment. Faculty and students were positive about more digitized resources and links placed in an integrated place like CamTools; however, students were concerned about access to resources being limited to CamTools. Both faculty members and students agreed that unless the resources were linked to a Paper in some way, they would not be utilized.

Part C: Future Planning

16. Undergraduate Support Preferences

At the end of each focus group, participants were asked to do a future planning exercise. Participants were first asked to give their own suggestions for library services, and then were given a list of examples of library services and resource provision, developed using the responses from the survey and the faculty interviews (Appendix B). Participants were asked to rank the proposed services in order of those making the highest impact on them, and were also asked to cross out resources that they did not see as useful. Participants tended to discuss the merits of their own ideas and the proposed services instead of writing them on the list, and their key ideas are discussed here.

16.1. Peer Support

Most focus groups proposed the idea of more peer support for sharing key resources and experiences they had with finding or using resources. Peer support was seen as especially useful for those undertaking independent projects, but was also proposed by students and one faculty member for sharing and discussing regular course readings.

I think that would be really good [to have an online community structured around Papers]. You could say this book is really key or this author is really key, in a kind of collaborative way. I think often history students are kind of independent thinking and, in a sense, it will always have to be because it is your own work. And yet there is a way to make it much more collaborative.

3rd year undergraduate

[At College] we have a dissertation evening where second and third years meet in the evening with a glass of wine, to discuss ideas. They write a short paragraph about what their dissertation was on, if they did one, and if they didn't, why they didn't. And then you just read them, instead of having someone stand up and speak, you read them and then you can find a person to talk to about research. That would be nice at the faculty level, and much more useful.

3rd year undergraduate

[CamTools] needs to be more interactive. The drop boxes are okay, but it would be much better if they could really think through more imaginative ways in which students can talk to each other. I tend to have to be involved in too much of that, getting things out of drop boxes and putting it into communal spaces, and that doesn't work. So you want communal spaces, not policed by the tutor, but that is not contaminated with your own work, so they can see the difference.

Cambridge Faculty

While many students expressed a desire to share comments on their readings with others students, there were some who felt that supervisors would not like students sharing tips on readings. While the students' perspective here is contradicted by one faculty member (see quote directly above), a complete survey of supervisor perspectives was not undertaken as part of this research.

I think some supervisors deliberately don't point students in the direction of books that they know have kind of a direct answer to the question. I think they might have some objections to...if suddenly it is really easy to find the obvious answer books, if they want to kind of, direct their students, to kind of make that conclusion themselves.

2nd year undergraduate

16.2. Online Support

The ideas presented for library classes—on finding things on your reading list, on reference management, finding primary sources online, and finding electronic resources (see Appendix B)—were generally seen as useful topics, although the majority of students said they probably would not come to a library class. There was also generally a low level of awareness of the currently offered classes and library services, with a few students asking for information classes that already exist, at the times they already exist. If the current classes were mentioned, students suggested PowerPoints or some pathway online as well, available on an on-demand basis. Focus group participants overwhelming wanted more information online about finding and using resources.

Probably the library training stuff, I probably wouldn't attend, but the online databases...and stuff at the moment, it is kind of an indistinguishable mass to me at the moment. But kind of an individual description or a guide would be good, what these are for, that would be great.

1st year undergraduate

Perhaps because of the emphasis in their course on reading lists, focus group participants often wanted a list of electronic resources, usually organized by Paper or, at least by topic. Creating online pathways could also enhance supervisors' ability to point their students to resources.

Just like tell us what Cambridge subscribes to and what we can have access to in some bullet points or something. And then we can go away and look at whatever we want.

2nd year undergraduate

It would be useful to have an appendix on the hard copy of the reading list to popular ebooks, journals, resources.

1st year undergraduate

Finding online content by browsing was another focus group-generated suggestion. Browsing, both in the library and on Amazon, was a common information-gathering strategy. While students appreciate subject classification in libraries, they would like browsing and recommending to be online as well.

...another thing I like about libraries is that I will browse, and then, as is often the case in the UL or the Seeley, if it is not there, then I will have a look and see what else is on the shelf. And then just read blurbs or just read bits, whereas I wouldn't ever really do that on JSTOR or online, but if you could that would be interesting.

3rd year undergraduate

And what I like to do when I go to get books out is I look at the books on either side on that shelf, or on the shelf in general. And you can find some really fantastic things that aren't on the reading list. [...] But, when I do that on JSTOR or Newton, it doesn't give me that suggestion—"there is another book on 1780s politics that..."—you know, it would be really helpful. And I am sure if Amazon could manage it...well, it is just... in an ideal world, I mean, that would be really helpful.

1st year undergraduate

While ebooks are, overall, not seen as useful for reading, students mentioned that they would like to be able to search contents, or at least more informative keywords, in Newton, in order to get a sense of whether the item is relevant.

What I don't like...because I am doing my dissertation at the moment, and things keep happening where I search a title of a book and it seems perfect and I will come all the way to the UL, get it and then it is completely irrelevant and it is such a wasted journey.

3rd year undergraduate

Although it might not be possible to do this, if it is, I don't know how. But, like, so when you search in the thing [Newton], you get titles come up, but sometimes the title of a book doesn't actually reflect what is inside it. So I would quite like to be able to search contents or what is actually in the book.

1st year undergraduate

16.3. Year Group-Specific Support

In the focus groups, students highlighted that they needed different types of assistance at different point during their course. Many first years, in particular, were still overwhelmed. Librarians, and perhaps faculty members, may overestimate their ability to find information, even to understand their reading lists. First years do not seem to have attended, or do not seem to remember, the introductory talk given by the library, on electronic resources. For those that do not attend, or perhaps for people to read before they come up to Cambridge, short videos or at least some information online for how to find things on your reading list and a refresher on the more basic electronic resources would be useful. First years were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about dynamic reading lists.

... it would be a godsend.

1st year undergraduate, on dynamic reading lists

I don't know how I learned about the journals, but I certainly knew nothing about them my very first term, and so I didn't use any at all. I think someone just randomly told me.

3rd year undergraduate, who also explained (off recording) that she ignored them on the reading list, print or online

Second year students also wanted advice, or a list, of electronic resources, although one directed towards their Themes and Sources Long Essay assignment. While many Themes and Sources photocopy packets appear to have been digitized by the course directors, students regularly mentioned, with reference to the timing of the essay, the need for the remainder to be digitized.

I think that Themes and Sources photocopies to be digitized, I think that is one of the most vital things on this list because we have to our photocopies back at the end of Michaelmas and then we write our Themes and Sources Long Essays over the Christmas holidays.

3rd year undergraduate

My Themes and Sources essay, the supervision that we have beforehand, I was given one book and told, look at the bibliography for that and then just look at any books that you think are interesting. That literally was what I was told. And I had no idea. And most of the books were not relevant to the topic I was doing anyway, so I ended up spending about 3-4 weeks researching my own books before I could start the research. It was a bit of a nightmare.

2nd year undergraduate

Third years mentioned peer support the most, especially for sharing dissertation advice. They were also enthusiastic about there being more information on locating primary sources and reference management, for their dissertations.

Wow, I have never heard of those [reference management software programs]. I really wish I had heard about those last term.

3rd year undergraduate

16.4. Summary

This section is intended to help libraries think about some of the concerns felt by students. While current students do not usually need to find information independently, they are interested in peer support, more direction to electronic resources, and year-group specific help.

17. Recommendations & Suggestions for Further Research

17. 1. Reading Lists and Resource Provision

One of the main themes was issues with access, especially access to “key texts”. Faculty interviews, survey free-text, and focus group discussions confirmed that undergraduates were concerned about competition over core resources.

Can you use that [key texts] to reflect which books you digitize? Or order more of? Because that might be the most sensible way...or if it goes above a certain number [of loans], make it a reference-only copy, something drastic like that.

2nd year undergraduate

Libraries serving historians generally do not usually know what the “key texts” are. The vast majority of the Faculty reading lists do not differentiate qualitatively between resources, and, although supervisors *are* differentiating qualitatively, their recommendations are rarely received by the library. In order to solve the provision problems, libraries and academic staff should work together to identify the key resources for individual Papers. While it may be impossible to collate all supervisors’ recommendations, reorganization of the Faculty reading lists would be useful for students, supervisors, and libraries.

Are there ways of capturing individual reading lists? Well, I think really, it is probably a case of the Faculty reading list being regularly updated, and possibly different subject groups thinking about how they organize the information on that. So one thing could be to have a separation between books and articles which are essential and then some further reading, perhaps, listed somewhere. I mean it needn’t be on the Faculty list, but somewhere...

Cambridge Faculty

17. 2. Electronic Resource Provision

While most undergraduate History students reported that they preferred resources in hard copy, they recognized that certain activities and types of resources were best suited for electronic provision. Libraries and information services need to be sensitive to the differences between the types of resources undergraduate historians are using and the types of reading they are required to do. Resources that History undergraduates are regularly using and that they would prefer to be delivered online include articles, book reviews, essays, chapters, and some primary sources.

Monographs are still vital for the undergraduate History course, and, overall, books were viewed as difficult to read online. In the survey, however, participants reported reading chapters or sections of books regularly, much more regularly than reading entire books. While focus group participants did not agree on whether skimming and note-taking was as easy to do online as in printed, almost all participants reported that accessing shorter resources was ideal. The importance of chapters and sections in weekly reading could influence library provision, and focus group data confirmed both the importance of chapters and the utility of having more available digitally.

But the only thing that I don’t really like is when if we are specified an essay rather than a whole book, I think it would probably be quite easy to put that essay online rather than having to pay for photocopying costs. It does get really expensive. If it is like a very, very popular essay that I know the...I mean, some journals are online, there is quite a lot, but the popular essays could really be online, to save on photocopying.

2nd year undergraduate

Faculty members were, on the whole, enthusiastic about electronic resources, especially their ability to enhance their undergraduates' experience with more digital primary sources. Academic staff identified the need for more primary sources online.

So that is one obvious thing, and there is an issue here which is that we are, as a University, really behind the times [with digital resources]. So I have a couple of students at the moment, graduate students, who have been used to using digital resources, particularly the press, in their university, come to work in Cambridge because it is the place to do this sort of thing and actually can't believe that we don't have them.

Cambridge Faculty

17. 3. CamTools Use

CamTools is being used in many diverse ways by course directors and supervisors in the History Faculty. Without any centralization, there are a variety of potential problems which may arise, such as a) the needless repetition of work and resources on the sites for respective Papers b) students who are paying the same fees and working on the same degree receiving widely different provision between supervisors and between Papers c) the loss of institutional knowledge accompanying the retirement of a Paper or departure of a supervisor.

From the perspective of the Faculty library, there is the same potential problem with supervisors' CamTools sites as there is with supervisors' reading lists: the main resource-providing body is almost entirely unaware of resources that are being regularly recommended to students.

It is certainly not the intention to argue for centralization and the organization of CamTools sites via the Library, but simply to highlight some of the potential issues on which the Library and teaching staff might work together on, in order to provide the best possible resource provision for all students. The History Faculty Library is keen to assist with both the digitization of resources and the provision and promotion of existing digital resources. In the absence of a standard Faculty policy on CamTools usage, the Faculty Library should seek to mirror the resources provided on CamTools on the library website, in order to enable students' access to these key resources.

17. 4 . Marketing of Library Resources

Because students' reading is highly directed by their supervisors, libraries should focus on the information needs of supervisors and promote subscription resources through teaching staff, rather than solely concentrating on the needs of undergraduates. Faculty members highlighted the need for more subject-specific awareness of the electronic resources and primary source databases currently available through the University. The University Library, as well as Faculty Libraries, should market digitized primary sources more effectively and make electronic resources easier to find by subject.

I think it [awareness] needs to be subject specific because there is quite a lot out there. I certainly feel that I don't know enough about what's available...and I don't look at those [general e-resource] bulletins very often. So, I'd say, if annually you could make a presentation at each subject group...and stagger it so that it is manageable for the librarians...and just say, "we would really like people to use these sources more, so here they are." I'd love that.

Cambridge Faculty

Like Faculty members, undergraduate historians also suggested that because they drew on a wide range of material and periods for their course, determining which electronic resources were relevant

was difficult. In the focus groups, participants expressed their desire for differentiation of electronic resources by Paper or, at least, by topic and time period.

[Organized] by Paper, that would be great...because that is the way I think, I think: Paper reading list.

1st year undergraduate

While many students were able to find the electronic resources that they needed, their search techniques relied heavily on Google and JSTOR. To enable students to take advantage of the resources to which the University subscribes, details of the current provision of electronic resources should be easier to find. In the focus groups, awareness of integrated search engines like LibrarySearch was low, and the Cambridge eresources page was often seen as confusing.

Faculty members stress the directed nature of reading during the History undergraduate course, so it is unsurprising that students rarely have to discover resources—print or electronic—that are not given to them on a reading lists. Directed reading is a result of the 1-to-1 supervision, and, if there are changes made to the supervision system, students will need different pathways for determining how to approach their reading. Faculty-based library and information services should be very aware of changes in the Faculty teaching structure, in order to best respond to students' changing needs.

Which is a lot of work for me, but again I don't think anyone else can do that better. [...] So, but what I was going to say is that obviously if that actually happened and the University is trying to reduce the amount of 1-to-1 input, then there would be questions about whether you needed a different type of mentoring of how you use resources in the library. But I think that most supervisors take that very seriously. [...] It is a sort of ten minutes at the end of a supervision, often, talking through the next essay and what you should be read and what the points of it are. And I think the students probably value that a lot. They seem to be very, very irate about any suggestion that the 1-to-1 supervision might be taken away.

Cambridge Faculty

Primary Source Awareness

Students often expressed a desire to see original primary sources, especially for their dissertation research. While the best format for a primary source is usually determined not by preference but by the nature of the source itself and what kind of research the individual wants to perform, libraries across Cambridge could encourage the use of their collections and advertise resources more effectively to second year students who are starting their search for a dissertation topic. Other students would prefer to work with digitized sources, but find it difficult to find the subscriptions held by the University. In the focus group future planning exercise (Appendix B), more than half of the participants said they would like either a class or (preferably) some online pathways to finding primary sources.

I think I was interested in seeing originals because I suppose the whole thing with a dissertation is the hope that you will find something new. So going to the original is important. But more than anything, just to know that they [any primary source collections] exist, because there is no point embarking on a dissertation topic if there aren't any primary sources.

3rd year undergraduate

17.6 Suggestions for further research

Throughout this project, the importance of the supervisor was emphasized. Supervisors are the determining factor in what resources History undergraduates use and are, in many ways, the linchpins for students' success at Cambridge. Supervisors create topics for students, direct their readings, and set their weekly essay questions. Supervisors' recommendations are also influential in exam preparation and independent coursework projects.

This project revealed that supervisors vary widely in their expectations and methods. In History, supervisors can be anyone from senior faculty members to new postgraduates, and supervisors could have done their degree at Cambridge or have come from another university, with different methods of teaching and different resources. More research would be welcome on the information needs of supervisors and better ways libraries could approach the support of supervisory teaching.

Appendix A: Digital resources and historical research

Faculty members were asked to comment on the effects of digital tools on their own research, in order to gain a more complete idea of how senior faculty currently approached their subject.

All six faculty members interviewed spoke about the major changes electronic resources had affected on how research was conducted and the research questions that could be asked, whether or not they concluded that digital resources had revolutionized the field. As mentioned in the Methodology section, faculty expressed hesitations about speaking for History, even for their subject group, because different research questions require different sources and, for some of these areas and sources, digital tools have not yet made an impact.

The kinds of changes that were identified were convenience and ease of accessing electronic materials, the ability to work more closely with sources due to the availability of digitized copies, and the availability of sources that would have been otherwise been difficult if not impossible to access. As anticipated, all faculty members mentioned the changes brought about by increased power in searching, both searching for keywords within materials and also the searching and discovery of new materials.

Well, I mean, it is changing because...simply the power that is available by using, searching digital resources.

Cambridge Faculty

Well it has changed, obviously, Google Books, Google Scholar...I mean it changes both the way I prepare my teaching and how I find out what is new and what I should actually be setting and what is in these books...and of course the way that I find out information for myself.

Cambridge Faculty

[Talking about changes from printed word indexes to digital]..and so although there certainly is a difference in terms of the speed and ease with which people can access texts and word search them, if that is what they need to do, it is not different in kind. It is just different in quality. Whereas I think for many later bodies of data, there were no such word searching facilities previously and so it has completely revolutionized them.

Cambridge Faculty

I work a lot with images, so for me it has been great to have manuscripts put online, and I use those in teaching as well as for my own research. So that just means really fewer research trips....and because you work more consistently with them, it is like, you check them more ongoingly. You use them in a greater way.

Cambridge Faculty

Most faculty members discussed some perceived lack of provision; two mentioned specific lacks in Cambridge's subscription to resources, while others did not find the sources they needed to use available digitally.

There seems to be less of a demand for that [sources in their particular area] than for European history and for earlier history and for things like political thought and philosophy. So there aren't that many proper edited sources for me which are online.

Cambridge Faculty

While the vast majority of comments were very positive about changes in History that were brought about by digital sources, there were some caveats. Many explained that digital tools had created a different set of issues and problems for researchers and students. The problems mentioned were difficulties in reading, research being too focused on the digitized resources instead of the wider scope of evidence, and the issues with keyword searches.

I certainly prefer to get books and to be able to kind of just flick through and just feel—you don't have, on the electronic ones, you never have a feel for which is the central chapter in terms of length, which is the really long one, because you don't know when it is going to begin and end, do you know what I mean? Somehow you can't assess a book...

Cambridge Faculty

The thing that one always worries about is that you don't know what the gaps are... you have no idea whether what is turned up has been a complete set, a random sample, how consistent anybody has been in putting any of this in has been, and this is the problem. It is like the problem of using anybody else's database for any historical thing. It is sort of unusable to you because you never quite know the limits. Which is why you still have to establish your own database, not because it is necessarily better but because then you have a pretty shrewd idea of what the limits are. But as a first approximation, we can get somewhere quite fast quite often with appropriate keyword searches.

Cambridge Faculty

The only problem is, of course, because history is everything that survives, most of it won't be digitized. As more is digitized, there is a danger that more of the research gets focused on only those things which are available in the easiest format.

Cambridge Faculty

The drawbacks are...people looking for something and failing to see the things on either side. I think that there is more danger of that now because electronic word searches lead you to land on a text seeing absolutely nothing else, except what is either side, whereas at least when you had to turn to the page, you saw a bit more. So there is plenty of scope for silly and bad work and that has been increased. But equally these are not sort of subtle and difficult, sophisticated difficulties, these are very straightforward difficulties which are at least relatively easy to make people aware of and to solve.

Cambridge Faculty

Whether faculty saw digital resources as revolutionizing their field or not, they recognized the enduring value of print resources, did not want to see digital copies replacing the original sources, and many focused, directly or indirectly, on the ways history has remained the same: that, while finding sources and accessing them more easily is useful, the real skills and challenges for historians remain unchanged.

So I think that when it is possible to digitize and reproduce the contexts from which a text or an image comes....then that is worth doing. But I think digitization should never be at the expense of preservation. Ideally the two should go together really.

Cambridge Faculty

It ought, I suppose, to be the case that because access to particular bits of data can now be fast and you can always check things with a straightforward Google search for most sort of factual things, that people ought to be able to devote a bit more time to thinking about the bigger picture. I am not sure we have succeeded in that quite. And I think people find it quite hard—I mean it always has been—the difficult skill of the historian has been the right degree of abstraction....And I don't think that has got more difficult but I don't think it has got less difficult either.

Cambridge Faculty

Appendix B: Focus Group Future Planning Exercise

Resources:

- a separate library CamTools site with links and digitized resources
- a “resources” page on your Faculty Camtools page with links and digitized resources specifically for your Paper
- Special Subjects photocopies digitized
- Themes and Sources photocopies digitized
- dissertation advice in forms of [anyone comment on current class?]
 - “generally specific” resource classes
 - dissertation “fair” with local archives/special collections presenting
 - online pathways
- Themes and Sources Long Essay advice: in forms of??
- dynamic Faculty reading lists
- Library training:
 - When?
 - How? (library classes, within lectures/supervisions, online?)
 - What?
 - Reference management
 - Using/interpreting reading list
 - Finding primary sources online
 - Finding other electronic resources

Comments:

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