

Academic library user survey: Faculty of Education Library in Osijek

Študija uporabnikov visokošolske knjižnice: Knjižnica Pedagoške fakultete v Osijeku

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Abstract

The paper presents some results of the user study, conducted in 1998, among the users of the Osijek Faculty of Education Library. The objective of the study was to determine the scope of library usage, the degree of users' dis/satisfaction with library services, holdings and the staff. The results indicate that there are differences in library usage between two main user groups – students and teachers. They differ, among other things, in the objectives of library visits, the scope of library usage, the degree of satisfaction with the library and its services, the familiarisation and the level of usage of information technology.

Differences in behaviour between these two groups indicate the necessity of a different approach by the library personnel, e.g. intensified work on students' education.

The analysis of the questionnaire leads to the following conclusions:

1. Two main user groups of the Faculty of Education Library differ in their requests and needs.
2. The degree of dis/satisfaction depends on the group the user belongs to.
3. Library users from the fields of arts and humanities, and natural sciences, use information technology to the same degree.

Key words: academic libraries, performance measurement, user surveys, user satisfaction

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Izveleček

V prispevku so predstavljeni rezultati raziskave, ki je bila izvedena leta 1998 med uporabniki Knjižnice Pedagoške fakultete v Osijeku, Hrvaška. Cilj raziskave je bil ugotoviti stopnjo zadovoljstva oziroma nezadovoljstva uporabnikov s storitvami knjižnice, njenim fondom in zaposlenimi.

Dobljeni rezultati kažejo, da obstajajo pri uporabi knjižnice razlike med dvema največjima skupinama uporabnikov t.j. med študenti in pedagoškim osebjem. Omenjeni skupini se razlikujeta, med drugim, po vzroku obiskovanja knjižnice in stopnji zadovoljstva z obiskom knjižnice, kot tudi po stopnji poznavanja in uporabe informacijske tehnologije. Knjižnično osebje mora omenjene razlike upoštevati pri delu z različnimi skupinami uporabnikov ter posebno pozornost nameniti izobraževanju študentov.

Na osnovi analize rezultatov ankete avtorica zaključuje, da:

1. se osnovni skupini uporabnikov razlikujeta po svojih željah in zahtevah, ki jih naslavljata na knjižnico,
2. stopnja (ne)zadovoljstva uporabnikov je odvisna od tega, kateri skupini pripadajo in
3. uporabniki s področja naravoslovja oziroma družbeno-humanističnih ved v enaki meri uporabljajo informacijsko tehnologijo.

Ključne besede: Pedagoška fakulteta Osijek, visokošolske knjižnice, merjenje uspešnosti, uporabniki, evalvacija

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1 Introduction

User studies, both throughout the world and in Croatia, are numerous and frequent, but, nevertheless, necessary and have to be conducted repeatedly. The emergence of new techniques and technologies, as well as new media require that libraries monitor their users closely and record all the changes in their needs and the possible emergence of new ones. The driving force that motivates libraries to do that is the danger of losing their users unless they keep up with progress in their environment.

With the emergence of new information technology, librarians started examining user reactions to this novelty, the new knowledge and skills users have to possess in order to use the new technology properly, whether or not the new technology exerts influence on the increase of library usage and the degree of user satisfaction (Martinez-Arellano, 1998; Jokić, 1997). However, new information technology represents an obstacle for those users lacking the necessary knowledge and skills. The anxiety observed in American libraries (Jiao, Onwuegbuzie and Lichtenstein, 1996; Jiao and Onwuegbuzie, 1997), connected with the lack of necessary information skills, may represent a serious psychological barrier for the academic success of students. The requirements for information literacy and library skills have increased through time: Ellen R. Paterson determined, during the late 1970s, that freshmen have limited library skills - they have a low level of skills in using the online catalogue, the printed indexes, and CD-ROMs, and have trouble locating materials. A similar study at John Hopkins University (USA) found, in 1991, that the users were familiar with the access points for searching the card and online catalogues, but were much less familiar with Boolean operators, database searching, and locating information in periodicals.

The research conducted at Washington State University (Bancroft et al., 1998) is, in its goals, similar to our research. The purpose of the authors was to collect the information about current library usage, to determine the degree of user familiarization with library services and holdings, and to detect the possible user interest for potential services and materials.

This paper analyses the results of the user study conducted at the Faculty of Education Library in Osijek. The purpose of the user study was:

- a) To gather information about the current usage of the library and its services

b) to determine the level of user (dis)satisfaction with library services, holdings and staff

c) To detect user interest for services and/or materials currently unavailable at the library

The end goal of the study would be to correct possible irregularities and shortcomings of library services and possibly improve them. Special attention was given to IT and electronic resources and the study tried to determine to what degree were library users familiar with, and were prepared to use, new media in order to satisfy their information needs.

An attempt was made to confirm the following zero-hypotheses:

1. Students and teachers - two main user groups - do not differ in their information needs,
2. The level of (dis)satisfaction with library services is not connected to user groups,
3. All library users are familiar with IT to the same degree, no matter which discipline they come from.

To confirm these statements, besides the research methods, literature review, comparison with other libraries, the descriptive method will be used as well.

2 Method

2.1 Instruments

We wanted to include as many library users as possible, so we used a questionnaire as a most efficient instrument for gathering data. It was developed with the help of a psychologist [1]. Prior to the actual questioning, we tested the questionnaire on ten users to detect and correct any possible mistakes or shortcomings.

The questionnaire consisted of three sets of questions:

- a) personal data (gender, age, foreign languages, year of study, study field),
- b) library usage (frequency of library visits, reasons for visits, consultation of catalogues, consultation with librarians, library usage skills etc.),
- c) computer and electronic sources usage experience (work with CD-ROM, familiarization with the Internet and CARNet, with CROLIST¹ and computer applications).

The questionnaire comprised 6 pages and consisted of 29 questions (multiple choice and open questions i.e. their combination.)

The results were processed by SPSS/PC+ software. In addition to descriptive statistics, data were presented by means of correlations and the nonparametric χ -square test.

¹ Croatian Integrated Library and Information System.

2.2 Subjects and procedure

Subjects comprised 131 users of the Faculty of Education Library. A significant part of the sample consisted of female users (87,7%). The sample consisted of 107 students, and 24 members of the teaching staff [2]. Further on they will be referred to as 'Students' and 'Teachers'. Student participants were taking undergraduate courses from different disciplinary areas, such as English and German language and literature (41%), Croatian language and literature (28%), biology and chemistry (19%), teacher training college (primary school teachers - 8%, and kindergarten teachers - 1%), physics and polytechnic (3%), mathematics and computer studies (3%), mathematics and physics (2%), Croatian language and literature and history (2%). Teachers came from the fields of: English and German language (25%), English language and literature (20,8%), biology (20,8%), German language (16,7%), Croatian language (12,5%), physics (4,2%). Since the subjects participating in the study were chosen randomly, not all study groups of the Faculty of Education were included.

Participants were questioned over a period of three months (February to April 1998). Questionnaires were distributed among library users who had visited the library/used the reading room during that period.

The ages of the respondents ranged from 19 to 41 and above, the 19-24 group being the most numerous one (81,7%).

Teacher profiles of subjects included in the research were: research assistant, assistant lecturer, lecturer, senior lecturer, reader and professor as well as external associate and a primary school teacher (Table 1).

Table 1: Teacher profiles

FACULTY AND EXTERNAL ASSOCIATES	
Research assistant	4 (16,7%)
Assistant lecturer	6 (25%)
Lecturer	4 (16,7%)
Senior lecturer	2 (8,3%)
Reader	1 (4,2%)
Professor	1 (4,2%)
External associate	3 (12,5%)
Primary school teacher	3 (12,5%)
<i>Total</i>	24 (100%)

3 Results

3.1 Reasons for library visit

The most frequent reasons for a library visit are: study, preparation for lectures, work on a seminar or diploma paper (16,2%), work on master's or doctoral thesis (3,8%) and scientific research (3,8%). $M_e = 2,5$ (master's, doctoral thesis) $M_o = 1$ (study).

Table 2: Reasons for library visit according to students and teachers

REASON	STUDENTS	TEACHERS	TOTAL
Study	58 (54,7%)	1 (2,3%)	59 (45,4%)
Seminar/diploma paper	29 (27,4%)		29 (22,3%)
Master's/doctoral thesis		5 (20,8%)	5 (3,8%)
Preparation for lectures	29 (27,4%)	14 (58,3%)	43 (33,1%)
Scientific research	1 (0,9%)	4 (16,7%)	5 (3,8%)
Search and obtain information	1 (0,9%)		1 (0,8%)
Reading journals and relaxing	2 (1,9%)		2 (1,5%)
Reading books on a reading list	1 (0,9%)	1 (4,2%)	2 (1,5%)
Long break between classes	1 (0,9%)		1 (0,8%)

Missing: 1 (0,8%)

The most popular reasons for a library visit among students are: study, preparation for classes, and work on a seminar or diploma paper. Teachers usually come to the library to work on their theses, to do their research or to study and prepare for lectures.

At the time of questioning, users came to the library mostly to check out one or more books in Croatian (36,9%), to use the reference collection (31,5%), to check out one or more books in a foreign language (25,4%), to consult a librarian (22,3%), to read foreign (13,1%) and Croatian journals (9,2%).

Table 3: Library activities

ACTIVITIES	TEACHERS	STUDENTS
Check out – Croatian	20,80%	40%
Check out - foreign language	50%	20%
Reference collection	8%	37,10%
Consulting a librarian	58,30%	14,30%
Foreign journals	16,70%	12,40%
Croatian journals	8,30%	9,50%

3.2 Level of satisfaction

The library users were satisfied with the service provided by the library (65,4%: 70,5% students and 41,7% teachers) i.e. very satisfied (30,8%: 24,8% students and 58,3% teachers). Only 4,7% students and 3,8% teachers were dissatisfied. The reasons for their dissatisfaction were: the desired book was not available (1,5%), reference collection and books were in bad shape (1,5%), not enough literature for a specific topic (0,8%). One part of the users who visited the library in order to study, to work on their seminar or diploma paper and to prepare for classes was extremely dissatisfied with the library service.

Table 4: Level of satisfaction according to the reason of library visit

REASON	VERY SATISFIED	PARTLY SATISFIED	NOT AT ALL	TOTAL
study	11 (18,6%)	46 (78%)	2 (3,4%)	59 (45,7%)
sem/dipl. paper	5 (17,2%)	23 (79,3%)	1 (3,4%)	29 (22,5%)
mas/doc.thesis	1 (20%)	4 (80%)		5 (3,9%)
classes prep.	18 (42,9%)	22 (52,4%)	2 (4,8%)	42 (32,6%)
research	4 (80%)	1 (20%)		5 (3,9%)

Missing: 2 (1,5%)

One part of the library users who visited the library in order to use the material from the fields of Croatian and German language and literature, biology and polytechnic were not satisfied at all. The rest of the sample was satisfied or very satisfied with their visit.

3.3 Success in retrieving the material

Slightly more than half the sample (53,5%: 51,4% students and 65,2 % teachers) was completely successful in retrieving the needed material, and 45% (46,7% students and 34,8%

teachers) was partly successful. Only 1,6% (1,9% students) was completely unsuccessful and had to visit some other library.

Table 5: Success in retrieving the material

SUCCESS	STUDENTS	TEACHERS	TOTAL
Completely successful	54	15	69
Partly successful	50	8	58
Not at all successful	2		2

$\chi^2=1,7$ (no statistically significant difference at the significance level 5%)

Missing: 2 (1,5)

$M_e = 1$, $M_o = 1$ (completely successful)

Mean = 1,48, SD = 0,53

The library managed to satisfy almost all its users - those users who were unsuccessful in finding the relevant material came to the library in order to study or to work on their seminar/diploma paper.

Table 6: Success in retrieving the material in relation to the reason of library visit

REASON	COMPLETELY SUCCESSFUL	PARTLY SUCCESSFUL	NOT AT ALL SUCCESSFUL
Study	48,30%	50%	1,70%
Seminar/diploma paper	44,80%	51,70%	3,40%
Master's/doctoral thesis	20%	80%	
Lectures	61,90%	38,10%	
Research	60%	40%	

The next table shows the level of success of students who experienced certain problems when visiting the library:

Table 7: Success in retrieving the material in relation to the problems in using the library

PROBLEM	COMPLETELY SUCCESSFUL	PARTLY SUCCESSFUL	NOT AT ALL SUCCESSFUL	TOTAL
cannot be checked out	5 (31,3%)	11 (68,8%)		16 (12,5%)
crowded/noisy	2 (50%)	2 (50%)		4 (3,1%)
library does not have it		7 (77,8%)	2 (22,2%)	9 (7%)
on loan		6 (100%)		6 (4,7%)

Missing: 3 (2,3%)

In most cases the users managed to find the necessary material. Only few users who needed the material from the field of Croatian literature/language and mathematics were unsuccessful in retrieving it.

3.4 Usability of material obtained in the library

The majority of users (62% - 67,6% students, 37,5% teachers) thinks the material obtained in the Faculty of Education Library to be useful, while 36,4% (30,5% students and 62,5% teachers) consider it to be even completely useful for their task. Only 1,6% (1,9% students) of users were dissatisfied and had to turn to some other library.

Table 8: Usability of the obtained material

USABILITY	STUDENTS	TEACHERS	TOTAL
Completely useful	32	15	47
Useful	71	9	80
Little useful	2		2

$\chi^2=8,61^*$ (statistically significant difference on the significance level 5%)

Missing: 2 (1,5%)

$M_e = 2$, $M_o = 2$ (useful)

Mean = 1,65, SD = 0,51

Table 9: Usability according to the reason of library visit

REASON	COMPLETELY USEFUL	USEFUL	LITTLE USEFUL
Study	26,30%	73,70%	
Seminar/diploma paper	24,10%	69%	6,90%
Master's/doctoral thesis	20%	80%	
Lectures	46,50%	53,50%	
Research	80%	20%	

3.5 Asking librarian for assistance

Over half of the sample knew exactly what they wanted on coming to the library. 63,3% (89,3% students and 40,9% teachers) did not need any librarian assistance. However, there were still a significant percentage of those (37,5%) who had asked for help (59,1% teachers and 32,7% students).

Table 10: Librarian assistance

ASSISTANCE	STUDENTS	TEACHERS	TOTAL
No	67	9	76
Yes	32	13	45

$\chi^2=5,35^*$ (statistically significant difference on the significance level 5%)

Missing: 10 (7,6%)

$M_e = 0$, $M_o = 0$ (no)

Mean= 0,37, SD = 0,49

Users asked for assistance for the following reasons: help in finding the literature for a specific task, access to collections, additional literature, finding the material on shelves, finding data, help with translation, consulting a reference collection, inter-library loan.

Table 11: Reasons for asking for librarian assistance

REASON	STUDENTS	TEACHERS	TOTAL
Choice of literature	2 (2%)		2 (1,7%)
Additional literature	7 (7,1%)	2 (9,1%)	9 (7,5%)
Retrieving the material	21 (21,4%)	6 (27,3%)	27 (22,5%)
Finding data	1 (1%)	1 (4,5%)	2 (1,7%)
Translation	1 (1%)	1 (4,5%)	2 (1,7%)
Collection access		1 (4,5%)	1 (0,8%)
Reference collection		1 (4,5%)	1 (0,8%)
ILL		1 (4,5%)	1 (0,8%)

Missing: 10 (7,6%)

$M_e = 1$, $M_o = 1$ (no)

3.6 Problems with library services

Library users generally had no problems with library services (teachers had no problems at all, while students experienced problems in 25,7% of situations). Problems arose when the desired items could not be checked out of the library (6,2%), when the library did not have the desired titles, or these had already been checked out (8,4%), and the reading room was too crowded and noisy (3,1%) [3].

Table 12: Problems with library services

PROBLEM	STUDENTS	TEACHERS	TOTAL
No	78	24	102
Yes	27		27

$\chi^2=7,81$ (not a statistically significant difference on the significance level 5%)

$M_e = 1, M_o = 1$ (no)

Missing: 2 (1,5%)

We were also interested in how satisfied (if at all) were those users who had certain problems with library services.

Table 13: Degree of satisfaction in relation to problem

PROBLEM	VERY SATISFIED	SATISFIED	NOT AT ALL SAT.	TOTAL
cannot be checked out	3 (18,8%)	12 (75%)	1 (6,3%)	16 (12,4%)
crowd/noise	1 (25%)	3 (75%)		4 (3,1%)
does not possess	1 (11,1%)	7 (77,8%)	1 (11,1%)	9 (7%)
already checked out		5 (83,3%)	1 (16,7%)	6 (4,7%)

Missing: 2 (1,5%)

3.7 Searches of CD-ROM databases

Extremely high percentage of users (89,1%: 92,5% students and 72,7 teachers) did not search any CD-ROM databases at all. Only 11,6% users (8,4% students, 27,3% teachers) had the experience of searching CD-ROMs.

Table 14: Searches of CD-ROM databases

	STUDENTS	TEACHERS	TOTAL
No	98	16	114
Yes	9	6	15

$\chi^2 = 6,32$ (statistically significant difference on the significance level 5%)

Missing: 2 (1,5%)

$M_e = 0, M_o = 0$ (no)

Our users performed the searches of CD-ROM databases in the following institutions: Public and University Library Osijek, National and University Library Zagreb, Ruđer Bošković Institute

Zagreb, bookshop Tamaris Osijek, bookshop in Graz, library in Berlin, Faculty of Education Osijek [4]. Only 3,1% users searched at home.

3.8 Computer skills

According to our users' own assessment, they did not possess the adequate knowledge and skills to use computer applications. Even 69% (77,1% students and 33,3% teachers) thought their knowledge to be poor, 24,8% satisfactory (19% students, 50% teachers) and only 6,2% were satisfied with their knowledge and skills and thought they were very good at it.

Table 15: Computer skills

SKILLS	STUDENTS	TEACHERS	TOTAL
Poor	81	8	89
Satisfactory	20	12	32
Very good	4	4	8

$\chi^2=18,8$ (statistically significant difference on the significance level 5%)

Missing: 2 (1,5%)

$M_e = 1$, $M_o = 1$ (poor)

Mean = 1,37; SD = 0,60

4 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence and reasons for students' library usage. This is the first study of its kind in the history of the Faculty of Education Library. That is why we have attempted to be as comprehensive as possible in determining our users' habits, degree of satisfaction with library services and possible problem areas that need to be looked at. We made a distinction between two groups of users - students and teachers and we tried to determine whether there existed differences in their habits, conceptions of the library and degrees of satisfaction.

We noticed statistically significant differences between those two groups of users in regard to: reasons for library visit, activities in the library (checking out books in foreign language, consultation of reference collection, consultation of a librarian), degree of satisfaction with library services, usability of information/material obtained in the library, asking librarian for help,

searching the CD-ROM databases, computer skills. No significant difference between the two groups was found in the variable - problems in library usage.

With regard to how the library is utilized, this study suggests that the library is being used for a wide variety of purposes. The most important reason for visiting the library seems to be to study, and the most frequent activity there is checking out books in Croatian. Furthermore, the reasons for visits and activities seem to be highly dependent on study-course assignments.

The two groups of library users behave differently in most situations, which explains the necessity to approach them differently. Students (especially younger ones) demonstrate a certain level of anxiety. This questionnaire tried to determine its presence, but implicitly. Students consult and/or ask a librarian for help very rarely (especially if we compare them with teachers, who do so often), which may lead to the conclusion that this problem is present. Jiao et al. (1996) had arrived at similar finds and noted that younger college students typically have higher levels of anxiety than do their older counterparts.

The analysis of the questionnaire answers made it necessary to dismiss the first two hypotheses and to accept the third one. We might conclude the following:

- a. Two main user groups of the Faculty of Education Library differ in their information needs and requests toward the library.
- b. The degree of (dis)satisfaction with library services depends on which user group they come from.
- c. The library users from both the area of arts and humanities and natural sciences use IT to the same degree.

We might conclude that users are, in general, satisfied with library services. The teachers' level of user satisfaction is a little higher, but that might be the result of the fact that they have privileges granted by the library staff, or that the library staff tries harder to please them than they do the users from the student population.

One of their biggest problems with the library was an insufficient number of titles i.e. copies of textbooks. The library could try to remedy this by buying additional necessary textbooks, but due to its limited funds, this would not suffice. One of the possible solutions, in the time when the library budget increasingly grows smaller, is to create a digital collection of exam literature. Authors would be consulted and those textbooks and articles whose authors gave their

permission would be included in the collection. This might be done in co-operation with the Student Association and students might be the ones to contact the authors and ask for their permission.

The study showed a surprisingly low knowledge and skills of using the information technology in both user groups. In our opinion the lack of necessary information skills reflects the fact that IT is undervalued at the faculty. There is only one computer lab at the Faculty of Education, but that is obviously insufficient for all the students' needs. What is even more alarming, a significantly high percent of students from technical and natural sciences (such as those who study mathematics and physics, or mathematics and polytechnic) thought their level of familiarization with IT was poor. In our opinion, putting more computers in the library reading room might improve the present situation, since our users can access the reading room much more easily than they can the computer lab, which is reserved mostly for teaching purposes [5]. Until this happens, the library might use a computer lab as a classroom where the librarians could work with users on library skills instruction [6]. The library does not have a Web site - creating one and implementing an OPAC might increase the usage of the library, make it more transparent to its users and further promote the library and its services. If the library puts more emphasis on IT, it is highly likely that its users will become more familiar with it.

In order to improve the quality of library services, it is necessary to constantly monitor user needs and interest and therefore this survey should not be the only one in a series of future surveys and studies.

Information technology is becoming increasingly a part of our everyday life. Some Croatian libraries have gone far in the automation of their activities. It must not be forgotten that we must not only keep pace with other libraries in Croatia and the world, but being a part of an academic institution that, among other profiles, educates future librarians as well, and as such provides important information crucial for education and research, we are preparing future teachers for life and work in the 'information age', which, according to some, has already begun.

NOTES:

1. We made our own questionnaire but we based it upon Maja Jokić's (National and University Library Zagreb) questionnaire in 1995. She created it together with her supervisor Tefko Saracevic while she was working on her doctoral thesis, which she defended at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb in 1995.

2. The Faculty of Education employed at that time 107 members of faculty and there were 1326 students. The prevailing gender in both groups was female.
3. At the time there were extremely noisy road works in front of the building.
4. There's a computer lab with Internet access at the Faculty. Also, the Institute for physics has Internet access.
5. In the meantime, one computer with Internet access was placed into the reading room. The fact that it is overbooked only confirms our thesis.
6. Today, there is a computer with Internet access in the reading room. The library also has a PC Pentium and since 1999 has been processing its holdings using CROLIST. However, it does not have OPAC yet.

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