Jisc

Archives Hub User Survey 2015

A summary of the results of the online user survey run in February 2015

Contents
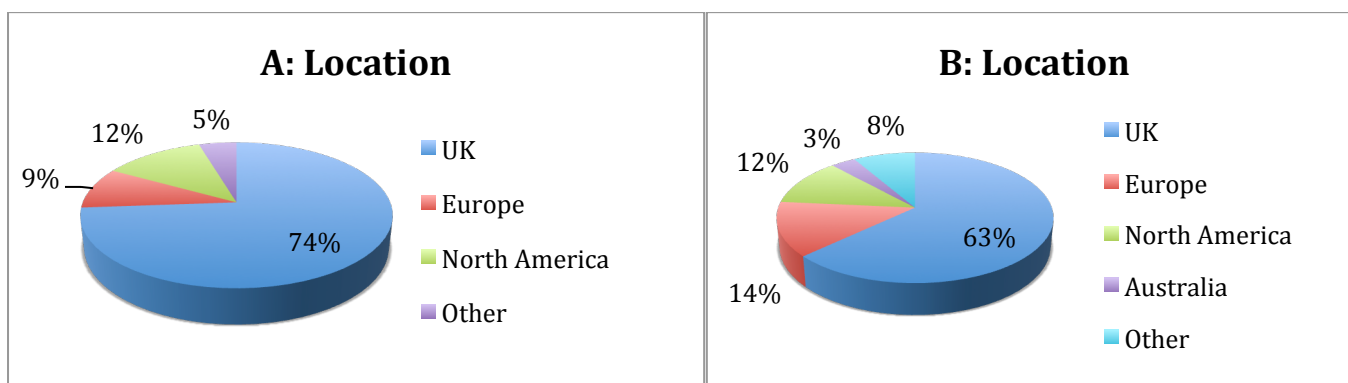
We ran two surveys for two different types of respondents:
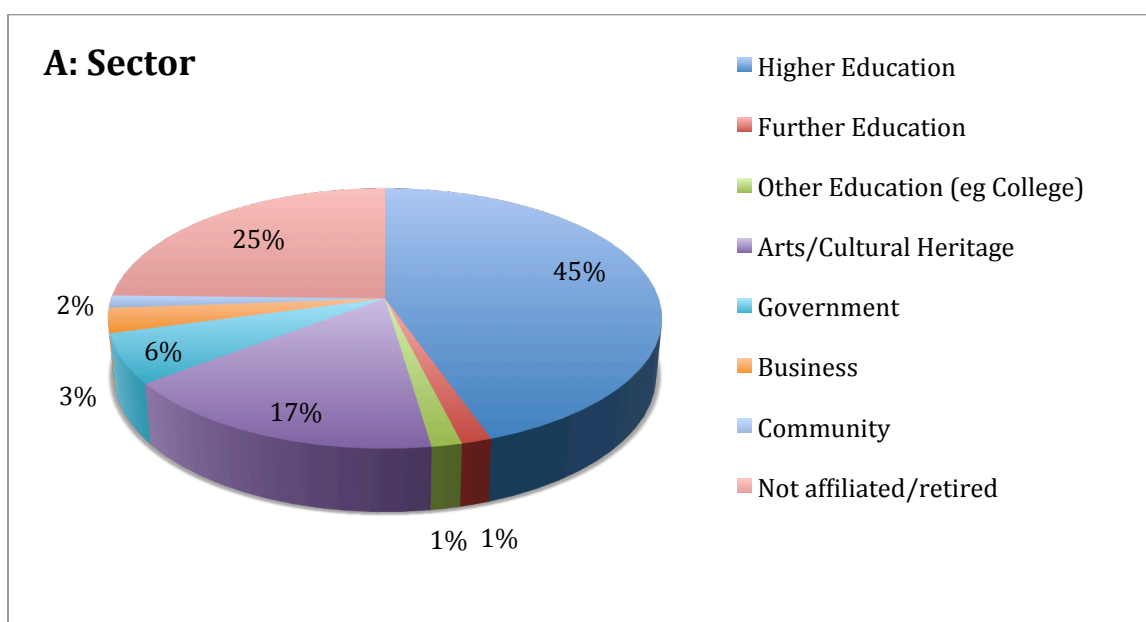
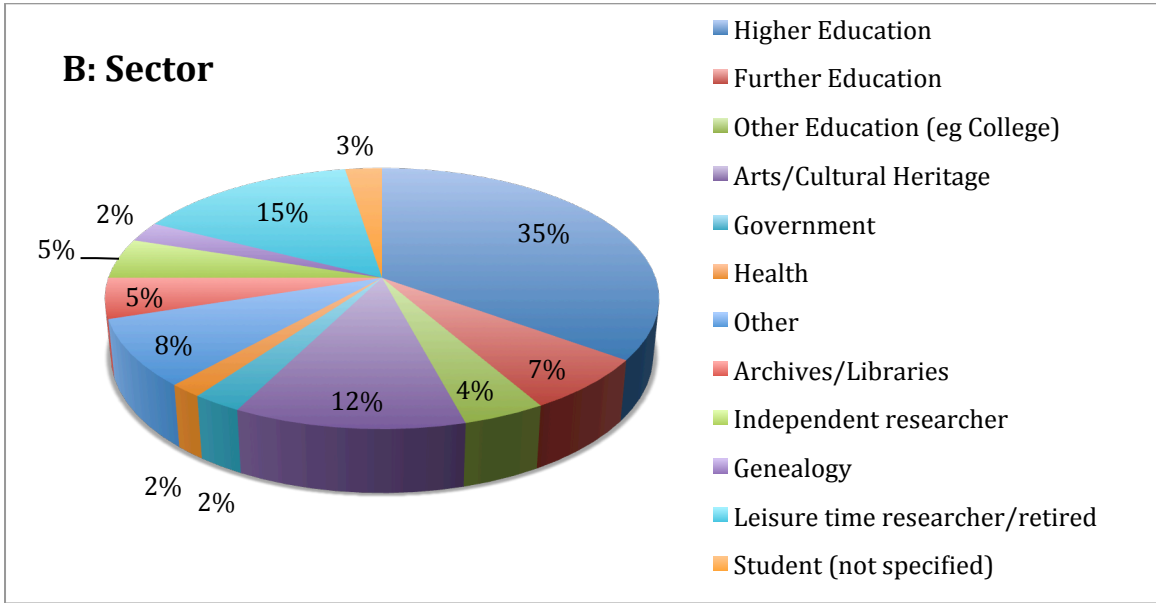**A**: Survey for those who had used the service previously. **65 Respondents**.
B: Survey for those who had not used the service. **119 Respondents**.
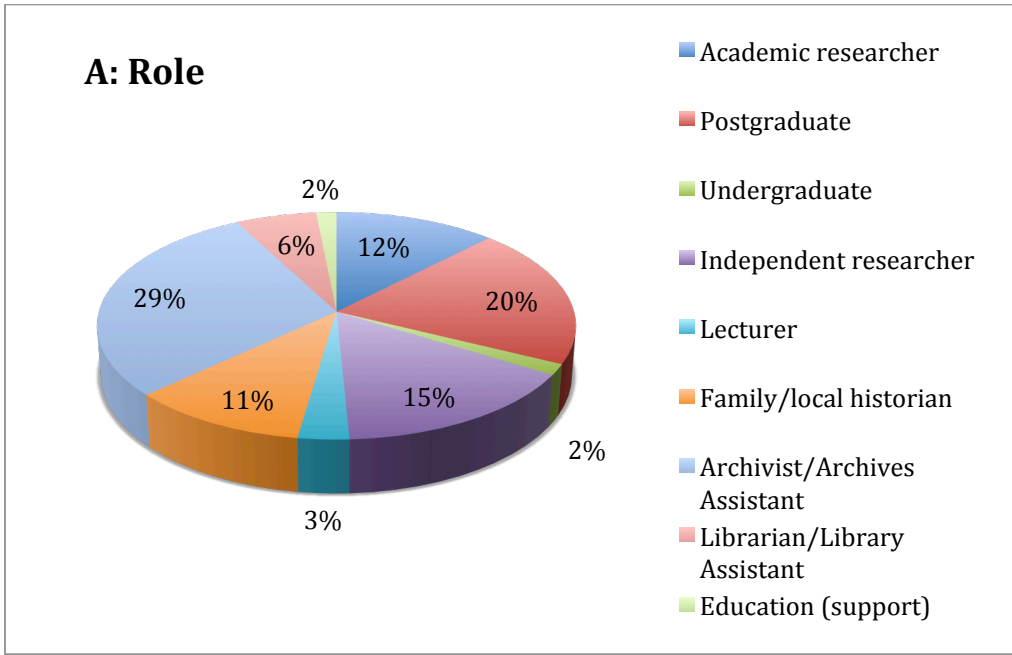
About the Respondents

The vast majority of users are from the UK, but more first time users are from elsewhere, particularly other parts of Europe and North America. This is consistent with previous surveys.

B: Sector

- Higher Education
- Further Education
- Other Education (eg College)
- Arts/Cultural Heritage
- Government
- Health
- Other
- Archives/Libraries
- Independent researcher
- Genealogy
- Leisure time researcher/retired
- Student (not specified)

3% 2% 5% 2% 15% 35% 5% 8% 12% 4% 7% 2% 2%

About half of regular users are from HE/FE or other education. This is slightly higher than for first time users, but lower than the 2014 survey, which put HE users at 63%. Use within FE is still very low, probably because the service is of particular value for original research, which is a focus within HE.

42% of first time users are in HE or FE. Others come from a range of backgrounds, in particular arts and cultural heritage.

A: Role

- Academic researcher
- Postgraduate
- Undergraduate
- Independent researcher
- Lecturer
- Family/local historian
- Archivist/Archives Assistant
- Librarian/Library Assistant
- Education (support)

2% 6% 12% 29% 20% 11% 15% 3% 2%

B: Role

Legend:
- Academic researcher
- Postgraduate
- Undergraduate
- Independent researcher
- Lecturer
- Family/local historian
- Archivist/Archives Assistant
- Librarian/Library Assistant
- Leisure time researcher
- Other

Pie chart values: 12%, 18%, 12%, 20%, 1%, 22%, 5%, 4%, 2%, 4%

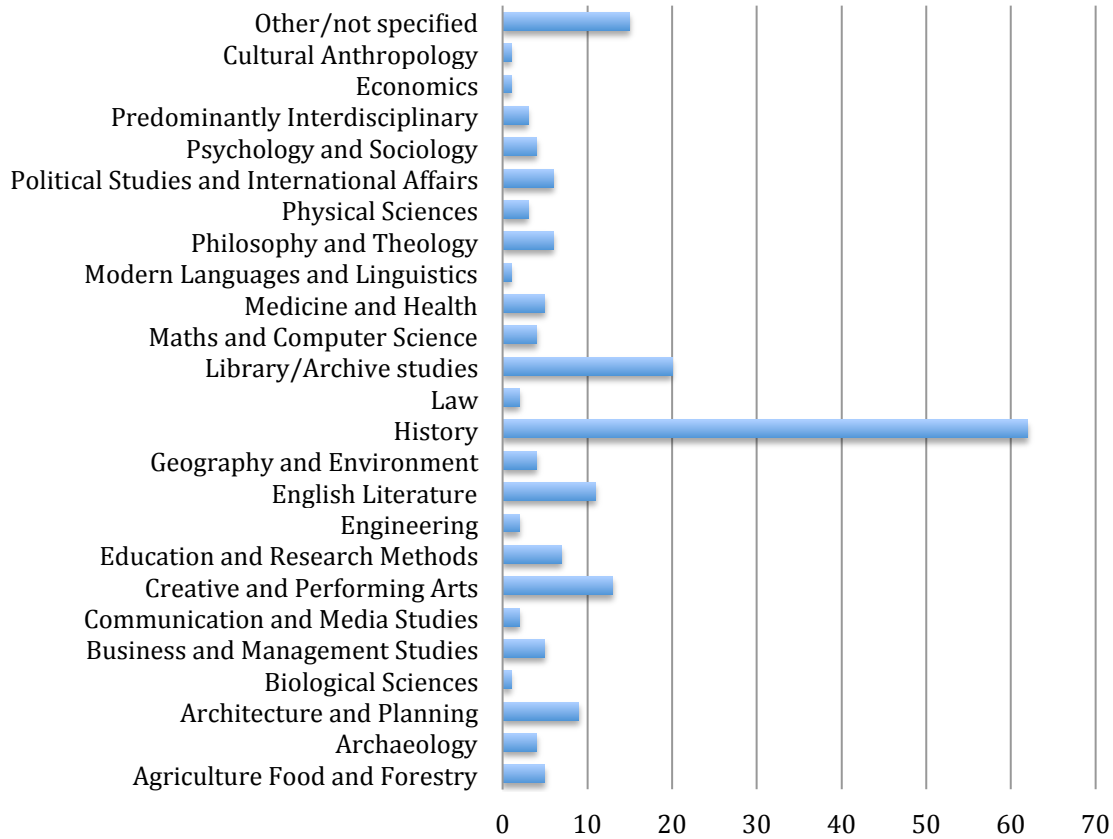37% of regular users and 43% of first time users class themselves as academic researchers, postgrads, undergrads or lecturers. A large proportion of regular users (35%) are archivists or librarians, often using the service to support researchers. Far more first time users are family historians or independent researchers, who are less likely to use the service regularly.

A: Subject Area

Horizontal bar chart (x-axis: 0 to 50):

- Predominantly Interdisciplinary: ~6
- Psychology and Sociology: ~4
- Political Studies and International Affairs: ~5
- Physical Sciences: 0
- Philosophy and Theology: ~3
- Modern Languages and Linguistics: ~1
- Medicine and Health: ~6
- Maths and Computer Science: ~1
- Library/Archive studies: ~13
- Law: ~1
- History: ~45
- Geography and Environment: ~2
- English Literature: ~4
- Engineering: ~1
- Education and Research Methods: ~6
- Creative and Performing Arts: ~11
- Communication and Media Studies: ~2
- Business and Management Studies: ~2
- Biological Sciences: ~2
- Architecture and Planning: ~3
- Archaeology: ~2
- Agriculture Food and Forestry: ~3

B: Subject area

Other/not specified
Cultural Anthropology
Economics
Predominantly Interdisciplinary
Psychology and Sociology
Political Studies and International Affairs
Physical Sciences
Philosophy and Theology
Modern Languages and Linguistics
Medicine and Health
Maths and Computer Science
Library/Archive studies
Law
History
Geography and Environment
English Literature
Engineering
Education and Research Methods
Creative and Performing Arts
Communication and Media Studies
Business and Management Studies
Biological Sciences
Architecture and Planning
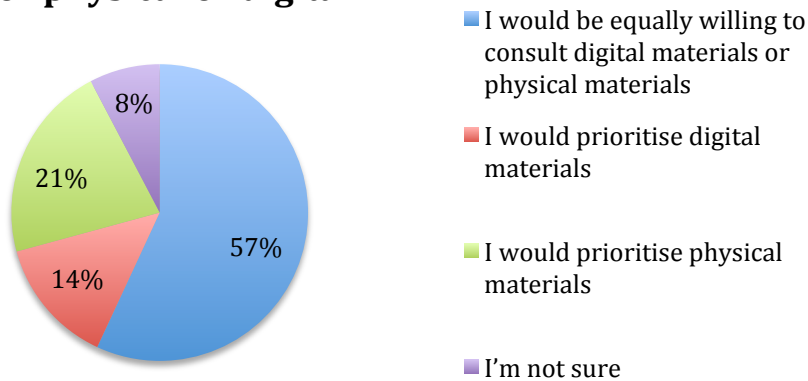Archaeology
Agriculture Food and Forestry
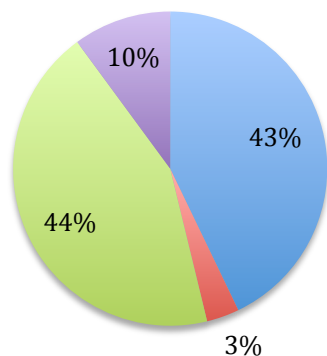
0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70

There is a very strong emphasis on history with our respondents, followed by other arts and humanities, but, as with previous surveys, the spread of disciplines is wide, showing the value of the Hub for many areas of research.

Using Archives

### A: Do you have a preference for physical or digital?

8%
21%
57%
14%

- I would be equally willing to consult digital materials or physical materials
- I would prioritise digital materials
- I would prioritise physical materials
- I'm not sure

**B: Do you have a preference
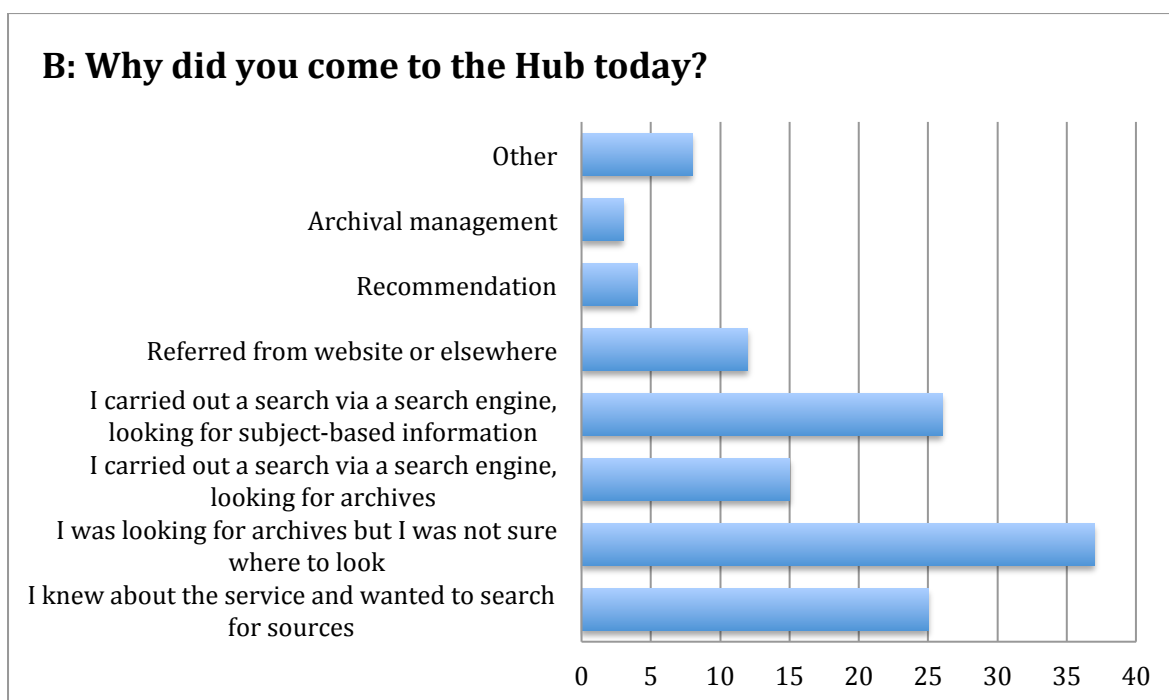for physical or digital?**

- ■ I would be equally willing to consult digital materials or physical materials
- ■ I would prioritise digital materials
- ■ I would prioritise physical materials
- ■ I'm not sure

This survey confirms that for many researchers, digital materials are *not* a priority, and in fact, a substantial proportion (21% and 44% respectively) would *prioritise physical materials.*

First time users of the service

B: Will you use the service regularly?

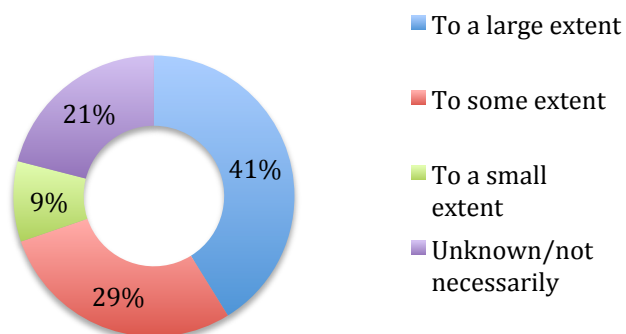- Regularly 10%
- Occasionally 26%
- Not sure yet 64%
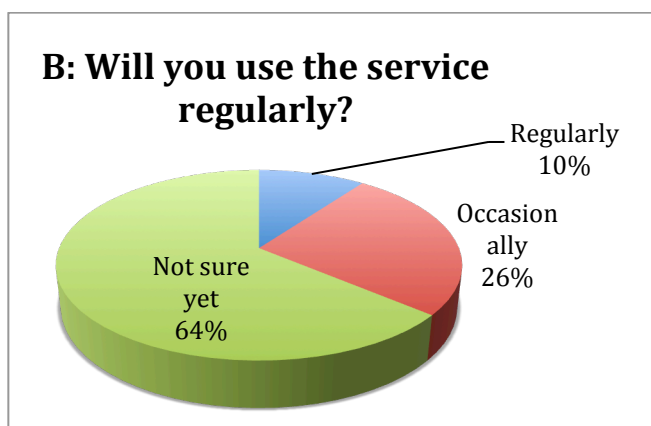
It is clear from the answers to this question that the large majority of first time users are not yet sure of the value of the service to them, although 36% are confident they will use the service again, which indicates that they can immediately see that the Hub is something that will be of value to them.

B: Why did you come to the Hub today?

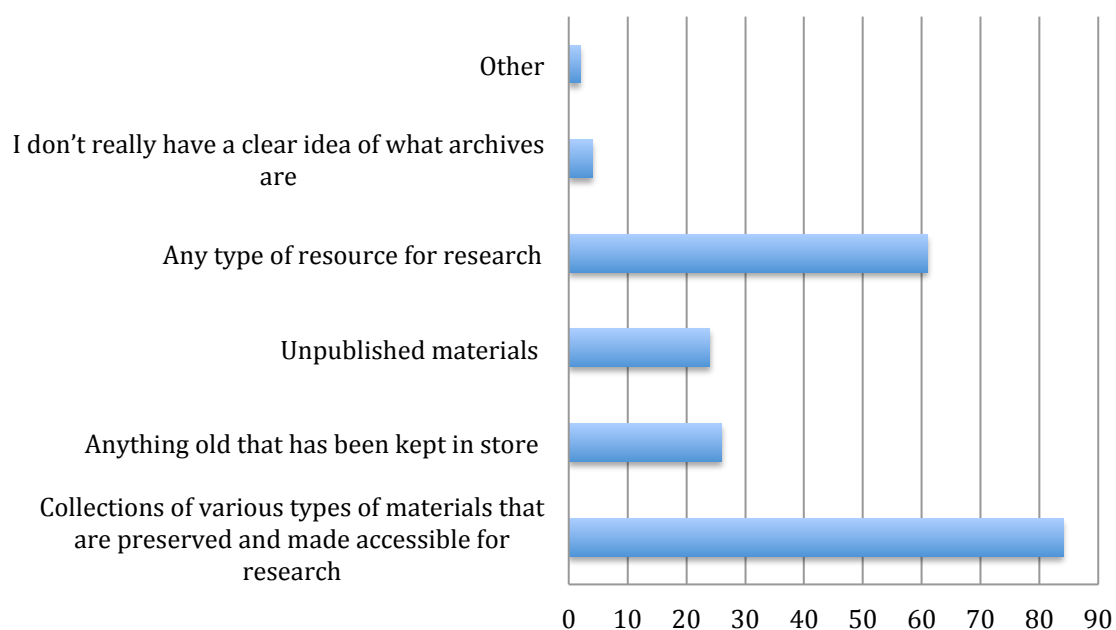| Category	Value
Other	8
Archival management	3
Recommendation	4
Referred from website or elsewhere	12
I carried out a search via a search engine, looking for subject-based information	26
I carried out a search via a search engine, looking for archives	15
I was looking for archives but I was not sure where to look	37
I knew about the service and wanted to search for sources	25

We asked the first time users why they came to the service. It is worth noting that many were looking for archives but were not sure where to start. In terms of those who came to the service via a search engine, most were undertaking a subject-based search, not specifically an archives search. These results are consistent with the 2014 survey, and maybe indicate that a more subject-based approach within the site would be valuable to our users. A substantial number (25 people) had heard of the service already, which is a good indication that the service is reasonably well-known.

B: My work involves using primary sources:

- To a large extent — 41%
- To some extent — 29%
- To a small extent — 9%
- Unknown/not necessarily — 21%

Many of the people who responded to the first time users survey use archives regularly, or to some extent. Many of these may be those people who were looking for archives, but were not sure where to look, or who had the site recommended to them.
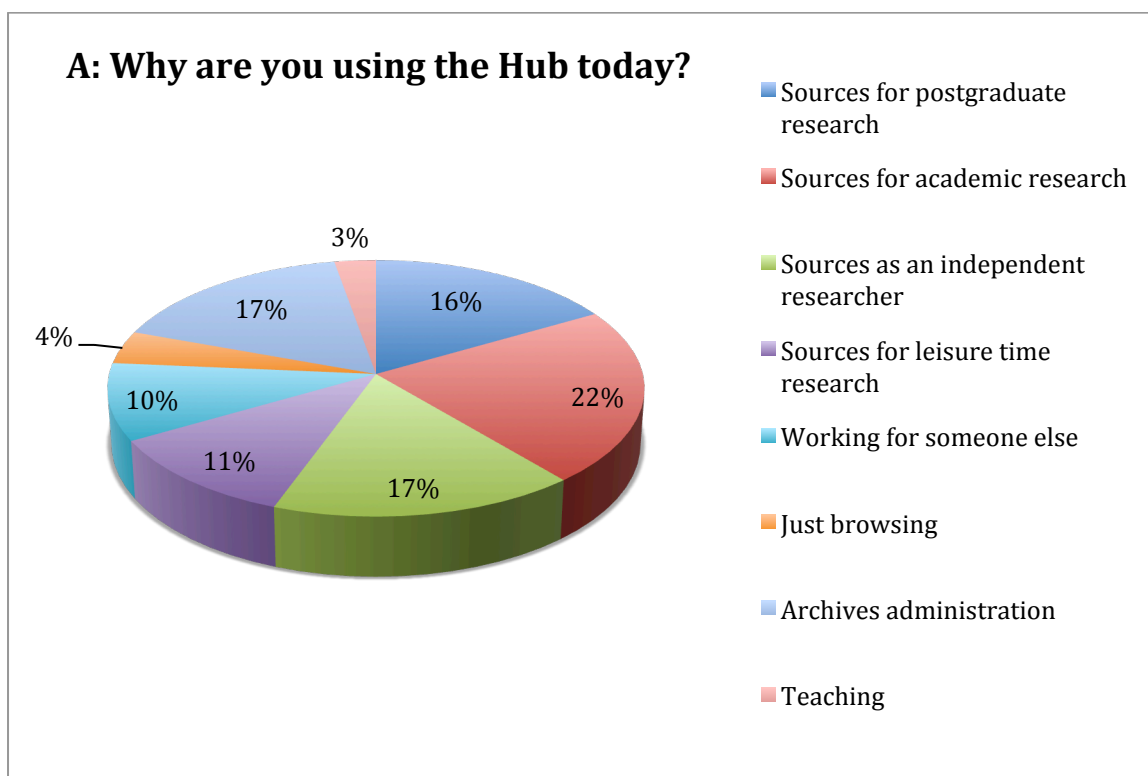
B: When I think of archives I think of:

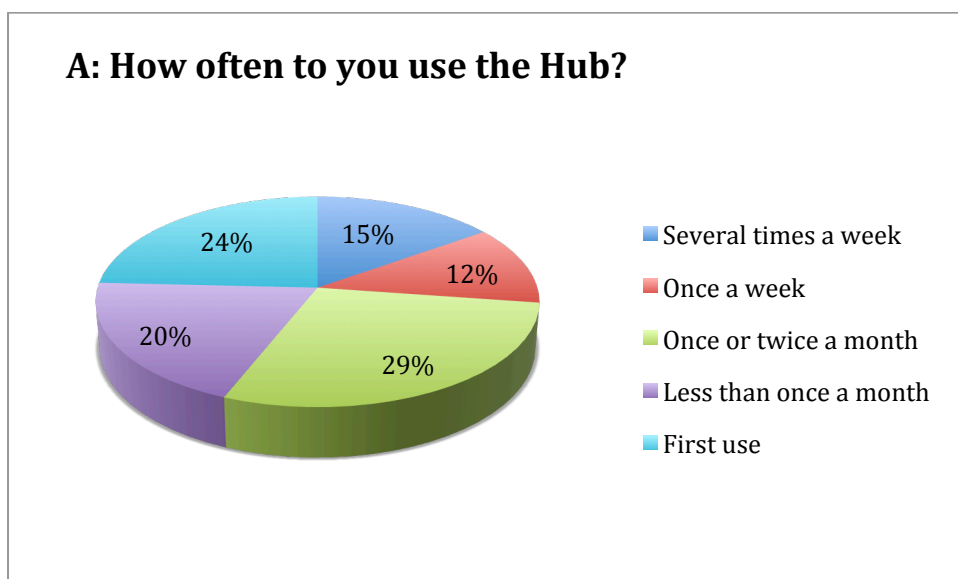| Category	Value
Other	~2
I don't really have a clear idea of what archives are	~4
Any type of resource for research	~61
Unpublished materials	~24
Anything old that has been kept in store	~26
Collections of various types of materials that are preserved and made accessible for research	~84

Many respondents had a good idea of what archives are (in terms of what archives professionals define as archives), but a substantial number thought they might be defined as any type of resource for research. This is in line with previous surveys, and highlights one of the challenges for a service like the Hub: to define the scope and manage expectations.
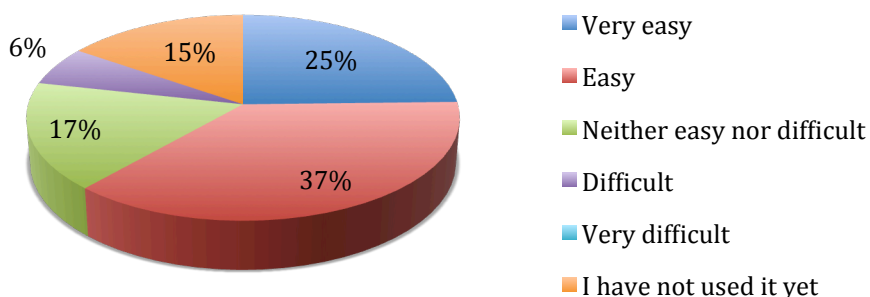
Regular users of the service

A: Why are you using the Hub today?

- Sources for postgraduate research
- Sources for academic research
- Sources as an independent researcher
- Sources for leisure time research
- Working for someone else
- Just browsing
- Archives administration
- Teaching

3%
17%
4%
10%
11%
17%
22%
16%

38% of respondents were using the Hub to search for sources for postgraduate and academic research.

A: How often to you use the Hub?

- Several times a week
- Once a week
- Once or twice a month
- Less than once a month
- First use

24%
15%
12%
29%
20%

Regular use (i.e. more than once a month) is quite high with respondents, at 56%. It was 61% in the previous survey. A substantial proportion (24%) are first time users, despite us offering a survey specifically for first time users.

Use of the Archives Hub Interface

A: How do you find using the Hub?

▪ Very easy	25%
▪ Easy	37%
▪ Neither easy nor difficult	17%
▪ Difficult	6%
▪ Very difficult	
▪ I have not used it yet	15%

This year's survey is the first time we have asked this question about ease of use. 60% confirm that they find the Hub very easy or easy to use. However, 6% (4 people) do say that they find it difficult. With a substantial number of first time users, it may be that this represents those who have not yet familiarised themselves with service and what it offers.

We also asked more detailed questions about the interface, around visual design, navigation, readability and quality of content. These all scored positively, with the navigation receiving the most negative response, at 28% 'OK' and 6% 'poor'. This may be to do with the hierarchical descriptions, which are often quite complex in reality, and may not be clear to those who are not used to the way archives are traditionally arranged.
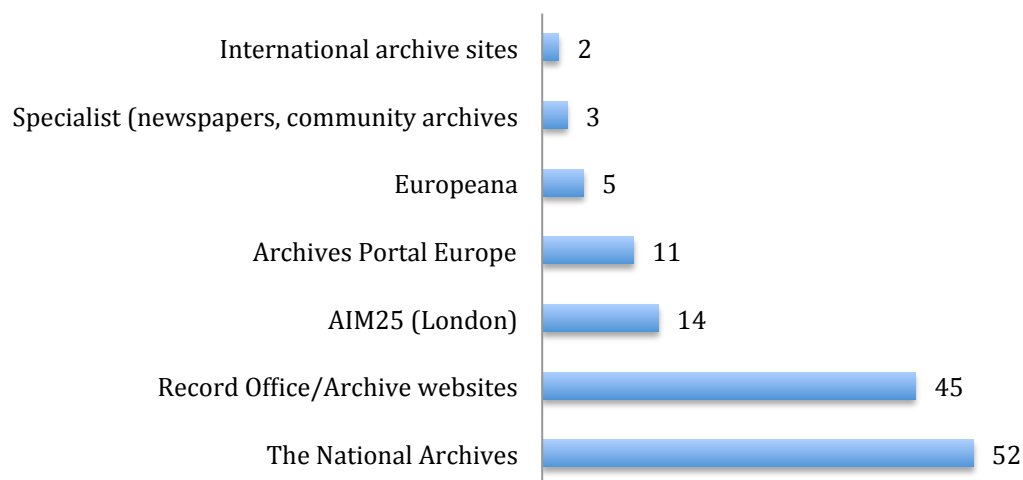
A: Overall satisfaction

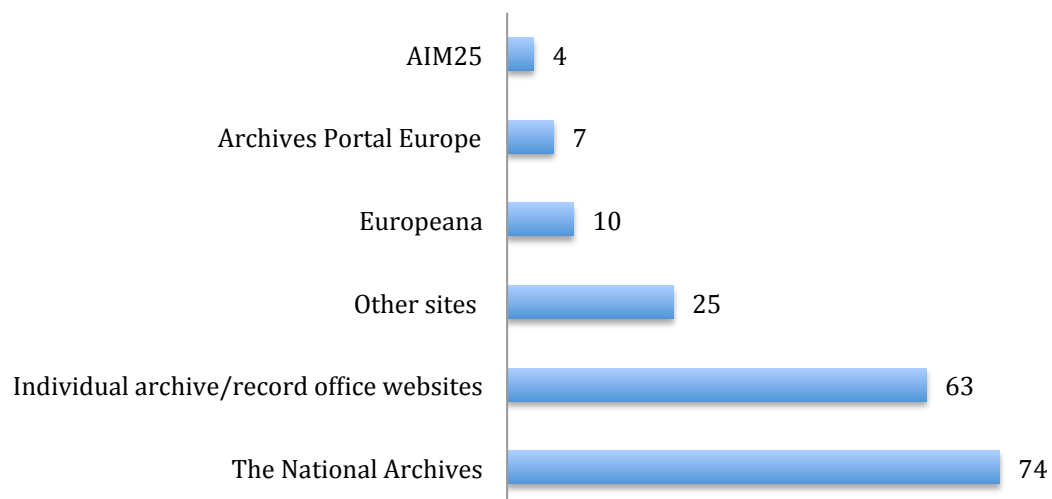|	
▪ Very good	31%
▪ Good	43%
▪ OK	11%
▪ Poor	3%
▪ Very poor	
▪ Don't know	12%
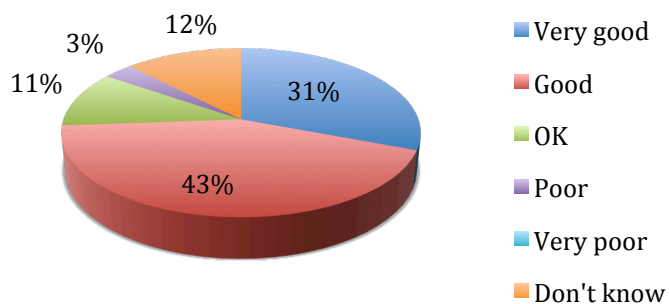
The overall satisfaction survey shows 74% rating the service very good or good, but a 3% score for 'poor' which represents 2 participants in the survey.

Other Websites/Services used
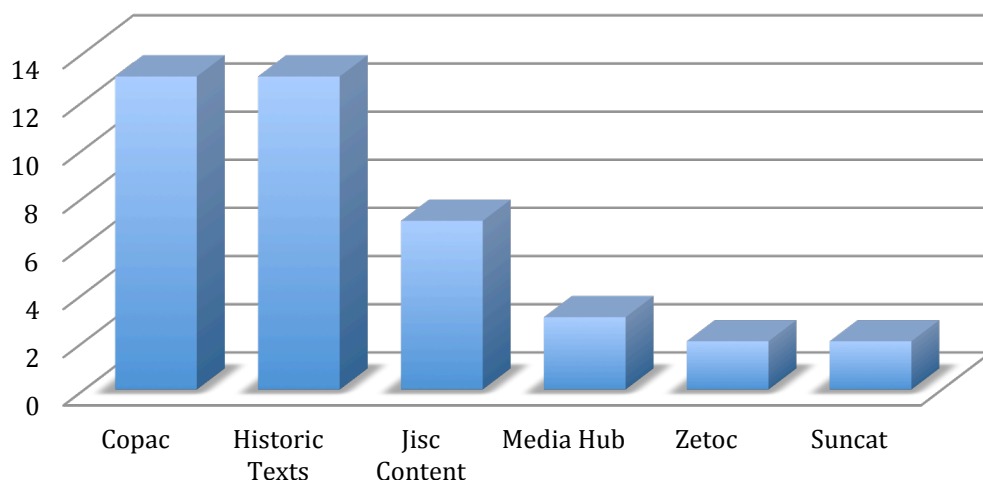
A: Websites used

Website	Value
International archive sites	2
Specialist (newspapers, community archives	3
Europeana	5
Archives Portal Europe	11
AIM25 (London)	14
Record Office/Archive websites	45
The National Archives	52

B: Websites used

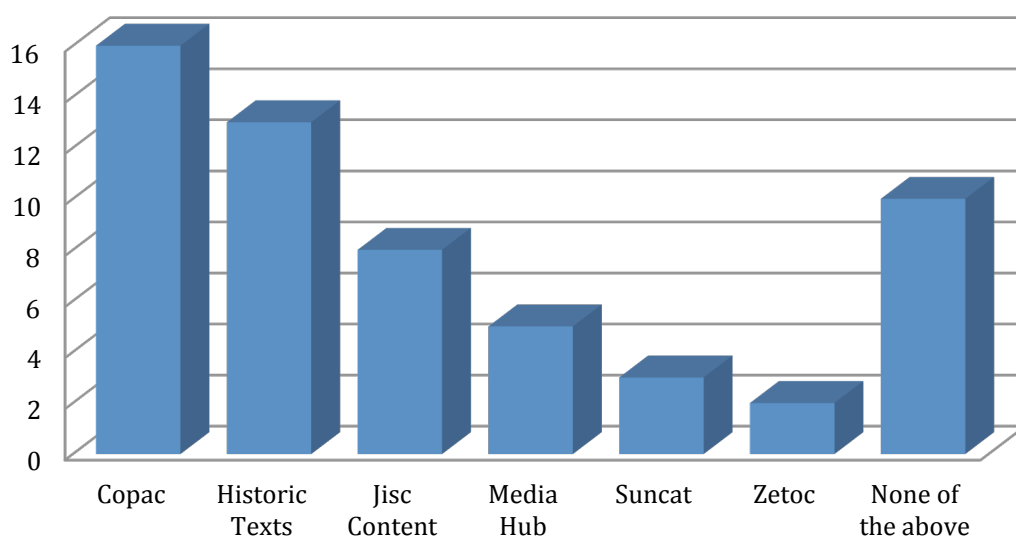| Website	Value
AIM25	4
Archives Portal Europe	7
Europeana	10
Other sites	25
Individual archive/record office websites	63
The National Archives	74

The majority of our respondents use The National Archives and the websites of individual archives and record offices. Slightly more than in 2014 use Europeana and the Archives Portal Europe, as they become more embedded in the discovery landscape. The Archives Hub now contributes to APE, and the representation of UK archives may account for the increased use.
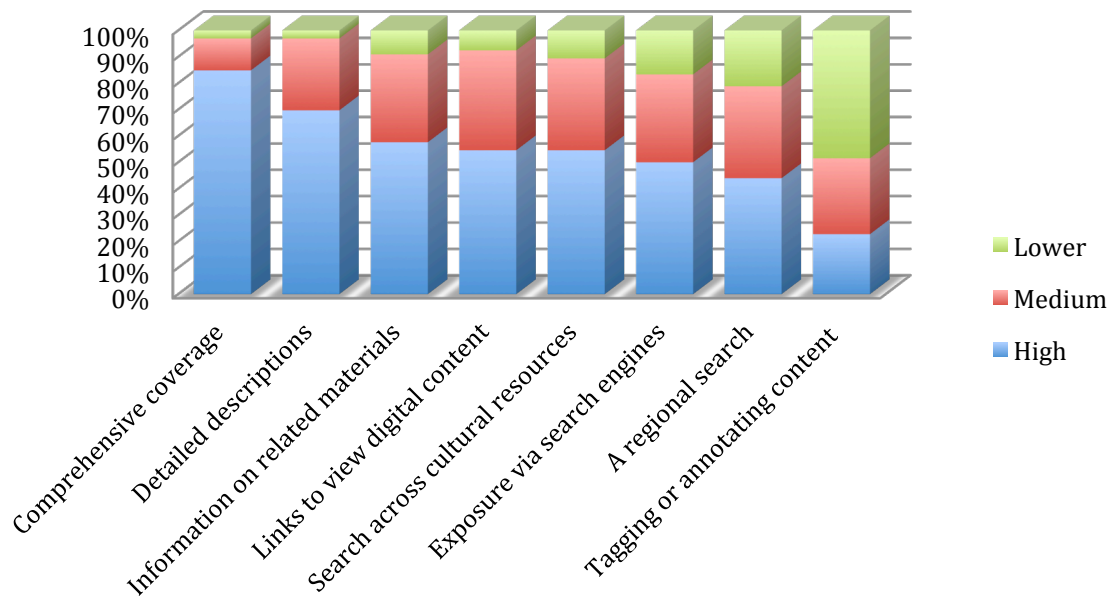
A: Jisc services used

A bar chart titled "A: Jisc services used" with a y-axis ranging from 0 to 14. The bars are:
- Copac: approximately 13.5
- Historic Texts: approximately 13.5
- Jisc Content: approximately 7.5
- Media Hub: approximately 3
- Zetoc: approximately 2
- Suncat: approximately 2

B: Jisc services used

A bar chart titled "B: Jisc services used" with a y-axis ranging from 0 to 16. The bars are:
- Copac: approximately 16
- Historic Texts: approximately 13
- Jisc Content: approximately 8
- Media Hub: approximately 5
- Suncat: approximately 3
- Zetoc: approximately 2
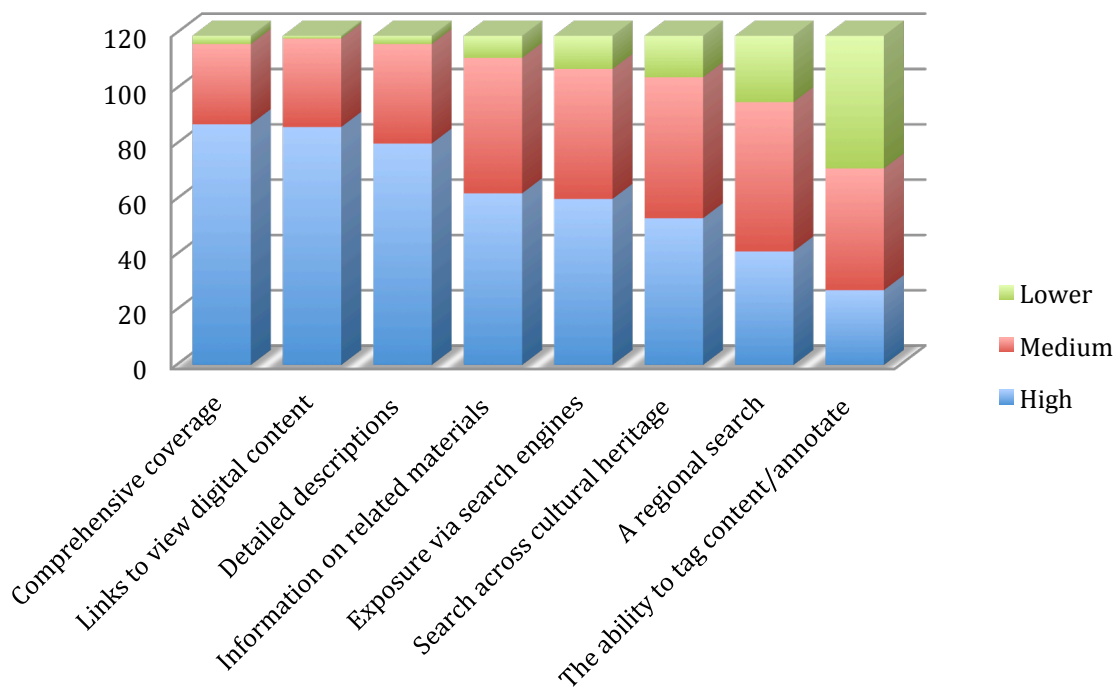- None of the above: approximately 10

For the first time in our annual survey we asked about use of other Jisc services. Clearly most respondents who do use other Jisc services use Copac and Historic Texts. Jisc Content is also well used, although it is not clear whether respondents are referring to jisc-content.ac.uk or content generally provided by Jisc.

A: What is most valuable to you?

Chart A categories (left to right):
Comprehensive coverage, Detailed descriptions, Information on related materials, Links to view digital content, Search across cultural resources, Exposure via search engines, A regional search, Tagging or annotating content

Legend: Lower, Medium, High

B: What is most valuable to you?

Chart B categories (left to right):
Comprehensive coverage, Links to view digital content, Detailed descriptions, Information on related materials, Exposure via search engines, Search across cultural heritage, A regional search, The ability to tag content/annotate

Legend: Lower, Medium, High
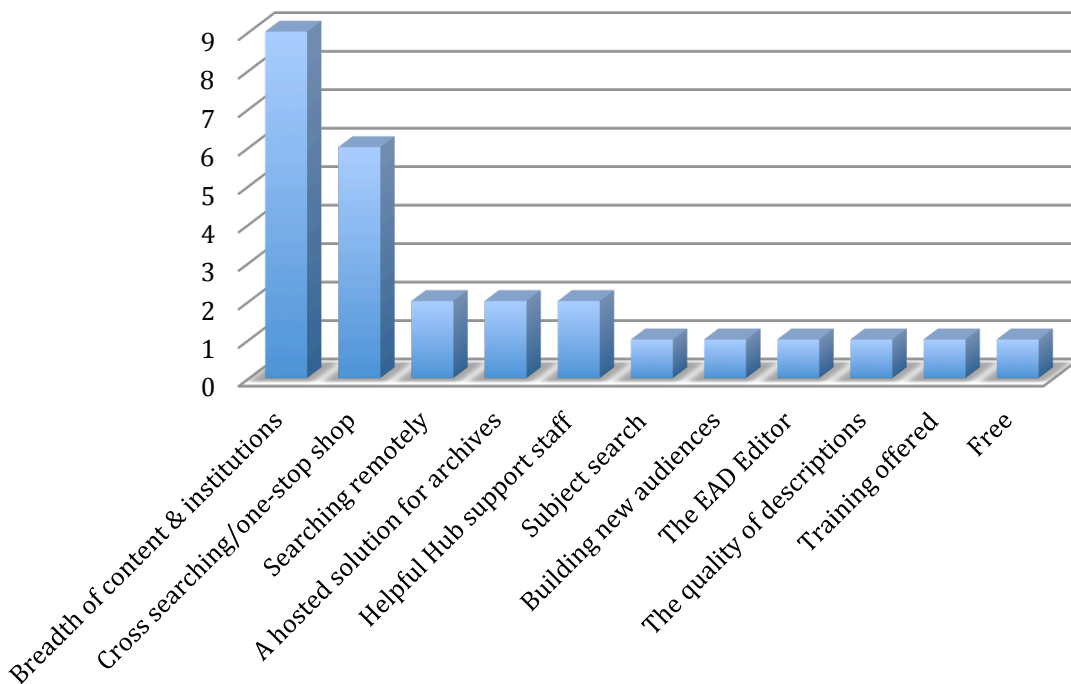
In every survey that we have carried out, the number one priority for users of the Hub has been *comprehensive coverage*, followed by detailed descriptions. Links to digital content get a higher rating with new users. The lowest rating is for tagging or annotation. It may be that this is seen as valuable by many, but simply less of a priority than a comprehensive service.

A: What do you most value about the Hub?

Chart (bar chart) with vertical axis labelled 0 to 9 and the following categories:

- Breadth of content & institutions: 9
- Cross searching/one-stop shop: 6
- Searching remotely: 2
- A hosted solution for archives: 2
- Helpful Hub support staff: 2
- Subject search: 1
- Building new audiences: 1
- The EAD Editor: 1
- The quality of descriptions: 1
- Training offered: 1
- Free: 1

When we asked about what respondents find most valuable in terms of Hub features, the importance of a comprehensive service was confirmed, with breadth of coverage standing out as well as the principle of cross-searching the holdings of many different institutions. The importance of the Hub to many archive repositories is confirmed by the fact that the 'hosted solution' is seen as highly valuable.
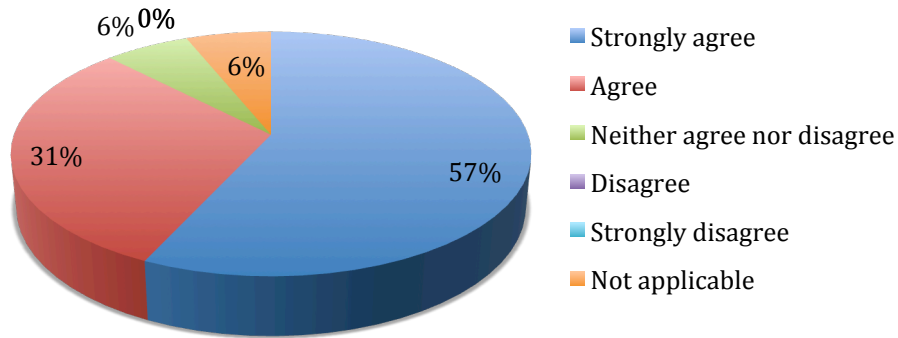
Measures of Overall Value

A: My work would take longer without the Hub

Pie chart:
- Strongly agree: 44%
- Agree: 31%
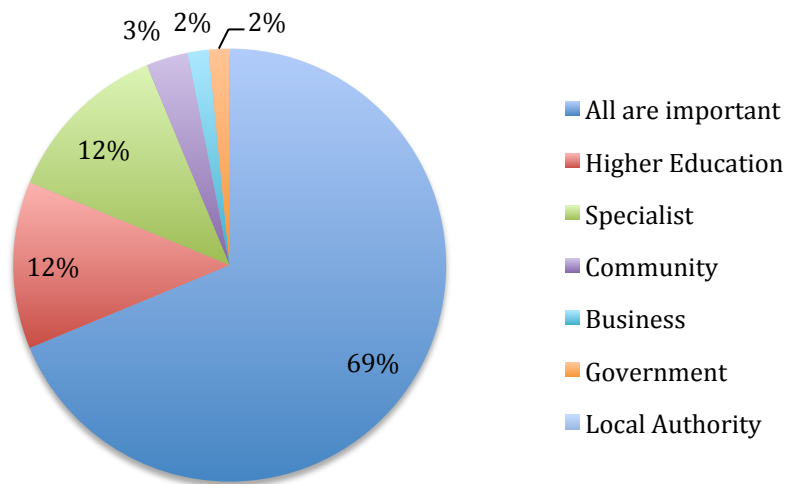- Neither agree nor disagree: 25%
- Disagree: 0%
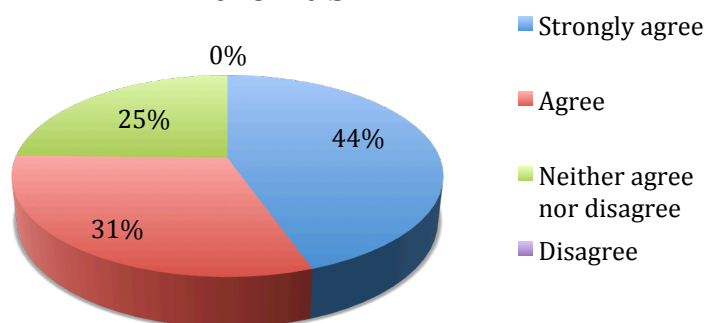
We have asked the question about time saved every year, as a baseline for the value of the service. In the 2015 survey 75% say that their work would take longer without the Hub. This is comparable to other years (74% in 2014).

A: I would recommend the Hub to others

Legend:
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not applicable

6% 0%
6%
31%
57%

Recommendation is a good indication of the value of a service such as the Hub. 89% say they would recommend the service, the same amount as in the 2014 survey.

A: Institutions on the Hub

Legend:
- All are important
- Higher Education
- Specialist
- Community
- Business
- Government
- Local Authority

3% 2% 2%
12%
12%
69%

Not surprisingly, respondents generally see the value of the Hub as a means to search across archives held in a variety of institutions, supporting the idea of a comprehensive service. The Archives Hub would be substantially less valuable if it was limited to certain types of repositories.

Improvements

A: What could be improved?
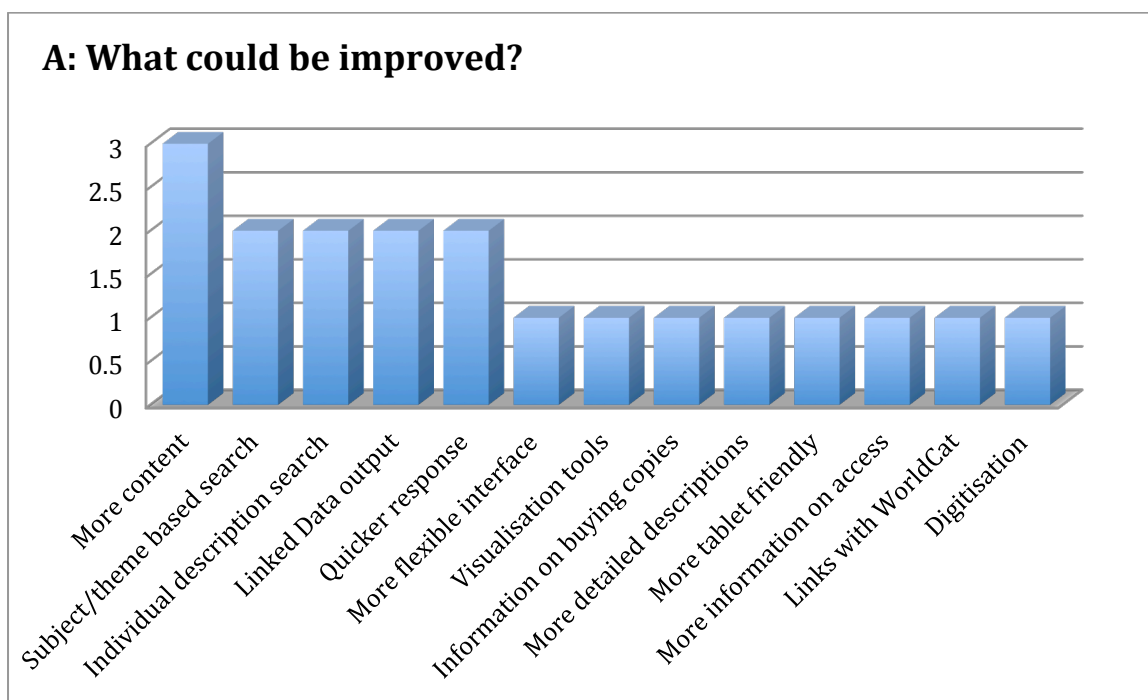
The value of a comprehensive service was emphasised by the top request – for more content to be represented on the Hub. However, this was only specifically requested by 3 respondents. Following this, requirements were for different types of searches, and quicker retrieval, and also for linked data output, maybe reflecting the high profile of our Linked Data work with the Locah project. But there was no clear message about what could be improved, as suggestions were made by between 1 and 3 people. Possibly, a pre-populated list of suggestions would gather more responses.

Follow on Activities

A: Has your use of the Hub led to a visit to an archive?
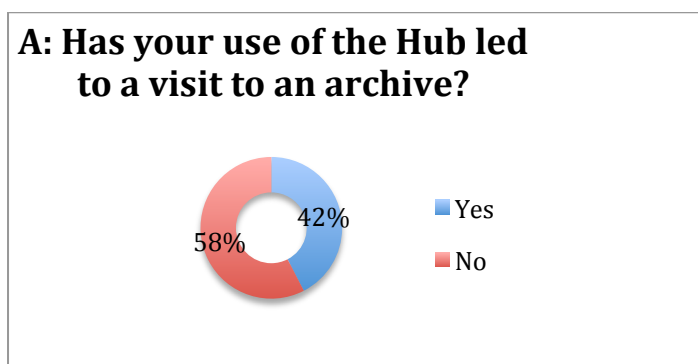
It is good to see that 42% of users of the service visit an archive as a result. This shows that the Hub has a direct impact value in terms of visitor numbers to archive repositories.