

Archives Hub Online Survey Summary 2021

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User Satisfaction



Chart showing results of 2021 survey of researchers

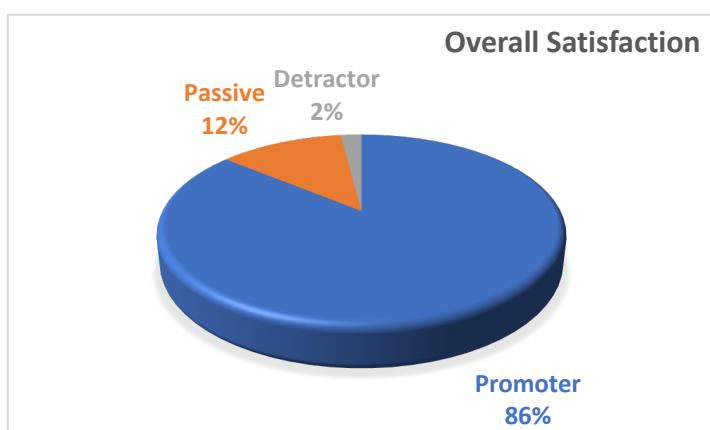
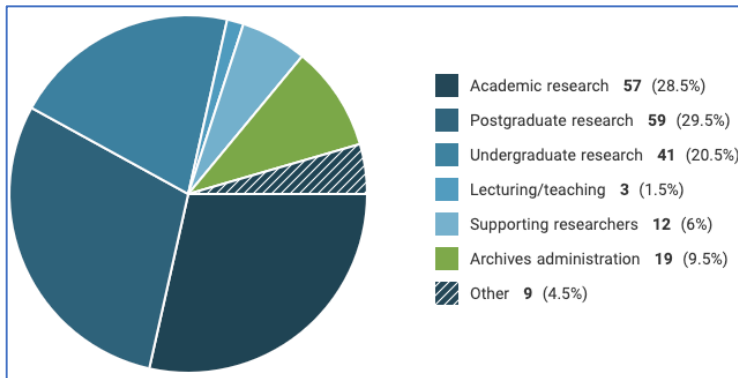


Chart showing combined results of 2021 surveys (research and personal use)

We ran two surveys, one for those using the service for work/research, the other for personal use. This was done partly to get a better understanding of our core audience and also because personal use is often for family history and leisure interests and these users may have different requirements from scholarly researchers and in general are less experienced in using archives.

Using the Archives Hub for work and research

Number of responses: 200

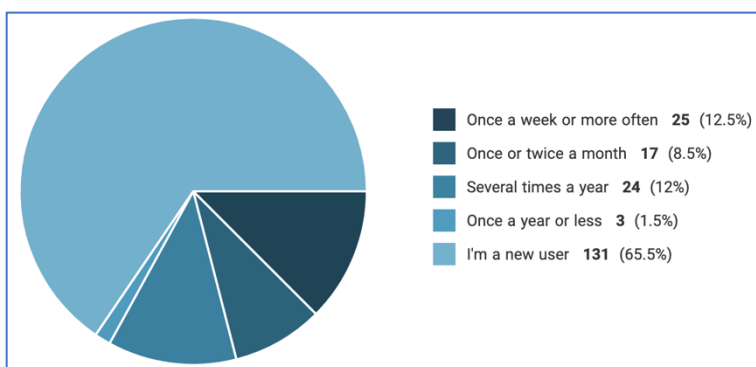


The majority of respondents (78%) are using the Hub for scholarly research

Primary reason for use

A small number are using the service for lecturing or teaching, or otherwise supporting researchers. Some respondents are using it for administration - they are likely to be contributors.

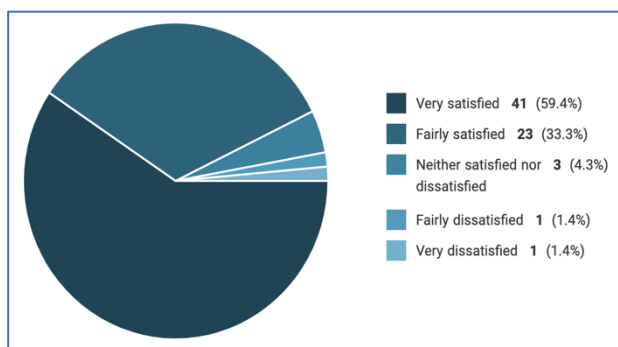
Of those who specified 'other' there were a variety of responses including freelance research and business research.



21% of respondents use the service at least every month (on average). A large proportion (65%) are new users

How often do you use the Archives Hub?

All surveys that we carry out attract a large proportion of new users. This may be because the Hub is easy to find when searching for archival material (e.g., via Google). It may indicate that successful use of the Hub can mean using it just once to find archives relevant to a research question. It is a measure of the success of the service if a researcher finds relevant material quickly and efficiently.



92.7% of respondents are very or fairly satisfied with the service

How satisfied are you with the Archives Hub?

We asked for more information on this question. Responses include:

easy to use/navigate (this was the most common comment)

- easier to search than our own catalogue
- a way to find an archive that is dispersed
- a way to find archives would not otherwise know about
- easy to check holdings of other archives
- finding obscure archives
- a quick way to find out whether there are archives that might help researchers
- like the display, and the tree structure (for navigating hierarchy)
- comprehensive
- digitised documents
- helpful staff, timely service
- clear advice and realistic requirements for small institutions

Two respondents out of 200 are not satisfied and referred to difficulty using the search interface, but the overwhelming feedback we get is that the interface is easy to use.

One respondent complained about the hit list not showing the reference or repository name. This respondent clearly wasn't aware that it is possible to switch the view to show this information. We may re-visit how we label this function, to make it more visible. One respondent asked for more archives and more detail (though acknowledging that this is down to the contributors).

One respondent uses it on their phone and felt it didn't show all the hierarchical information. This may be down to them not realising that some descriptions are not hierarchical, but it could also be that they aren't aware of how the information is organised on a phone (where the tree structure is on a separate tab).

New features

We listed a series of potential new features to gauge interest.

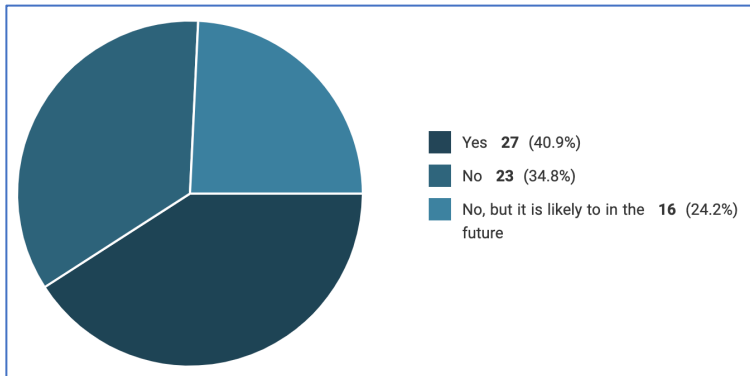
	Very	Sometimes	Not
Download and save/print a description	42	20	3
Filter results by country/region	31	23	10
Topic based routes into Archives Hub	27	26	12
Access the Archives Hub dataset for research purposes	29	20	15
Crop, zoom and compare images	20	31	14
Filter results by language	20	30	14

How useful would you find these features? (actual numbers given rather than percentages)

The results are fairly even for all these developments. The preference for downloading a description stands out, and it is something we've been asked for several times.

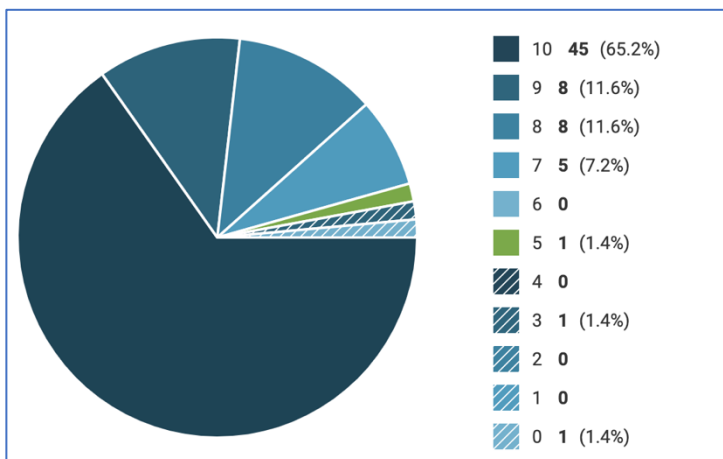
It is interesting to note that using the Hub as a dataset is clearly of interest. Only a few years ago it is unlikely this would have scored so highly. We do have an API, but we have not focussed on how to potentially make the data available more readily available for analysis.

One respondent asked to be able to view the results by repository. This is possible with the filters, although it is not possible to order the results list by repository – it would be difficult to know how to do this effectively.



Has your use of Hub led to a visit to a repository?

It is important that our contributors clearly see the benefits of contributing, and the responses indicate that a significant percentage of people visit a repository as a result of using the Hub.



95.6% are likely or highly likely to recommend the Hub to a colleague

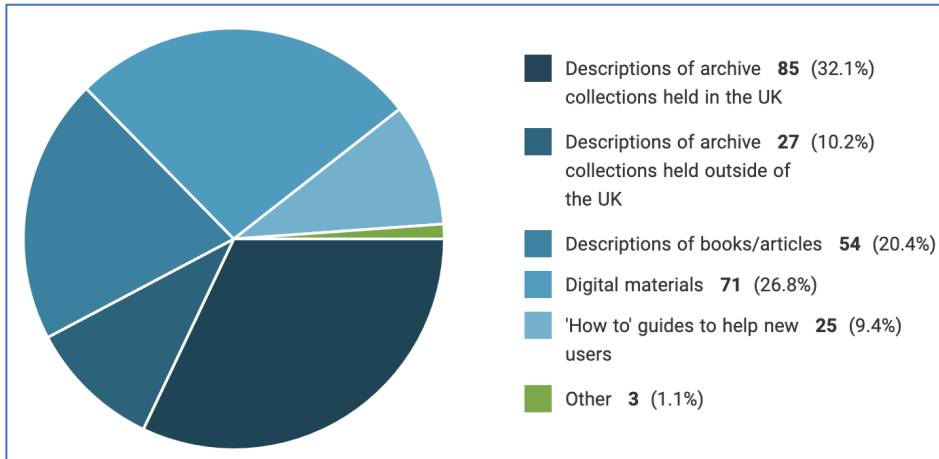
This is a key metric for us.

How likely are you to recommend the Archives Hub to a peer/colleague?

We asked for any additional comments people would like to make. These were generally very appreciative, especially of the staff. One respondent said that they were 'a bit lost with it all' and referenced the changes to the interface. However, we have not fundamentally changed the interface for 5 years now, and we have only had two major changes in the last 10 years. Most of the comments overall emphasise ease of use, so to understand the difficulties a few people have, we would need to talk to them individually.

First use (work/research)

We directed people who said this was their first use to just a few questions, as it does not make sense to ask them to assess the interface before they have used it.



What did you expect to see on the Archives Hub?

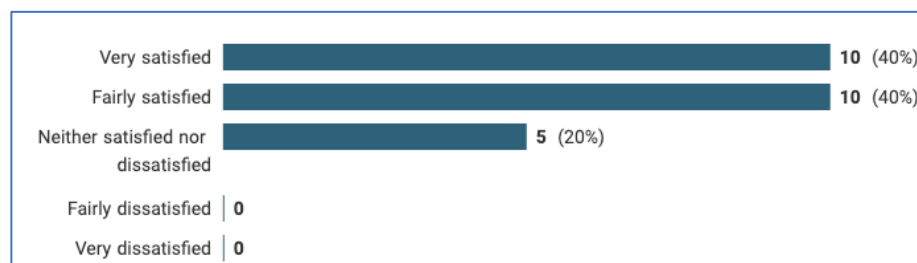
It is worth asking new users what they expected to see, as it is easy to assume that people understand what the Archives Hub is. The answers show that plenty of users expect to see descriptions of books and articles. Also, a fair number of people thought the service would cover archives held outside of the UK.

We have consciously tried to clearly set out what the Archives Hub is, but it is very difficult to do this on every page (as a user may come to any page on the Hub from a search engine). Fundamentally, not everyone understands what 'archives' mean – and indeed the term is used in different ways outside of the archives domain. It may be worth another assessment of our site to see if we can make the aims and contents of the service as clear as possible. Certainly, it is worth continuing to take into account that 'archives' is a term that is ambiguous for some people, and we cannot suppose all visitors to the site know what it represents.

Using the Archives Hub for personal research

Number of responses: 195

87% of the respondents to this survey were new users, so it will not give us much information from the point of view of people assessing the service. Most of the questions were directed to the 25 respondents who had used the service already.



80% were satisfied with the service, with 20% neutral

How satisfied are you with the Archives Hub?

Comments included:

- not relevant to my family history
- useful, clear resource
- excellent information, found resources not found elsewhere
- hard to navigate and confusing

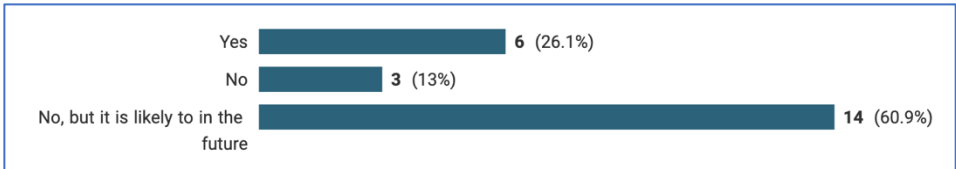
We tend to find that one or two people struggle with the site, but the vast majority report that it is easy to use. It is hard to know how to address the few who struggle. It is important to ensure that we do not 'dumb down', as the service must address the needs of our members. In the past we have found that people who don't understand archival structure and organisation can find the navigation confusing, but for most researchers the respect for the original order and structure is important.

We listed a series of potential new features to gauge interest.

	Very	Sometimes	Not
Filter results by country/region	15	6	0
Download and save/print a description	14	8	0
Topic based routes into Archives Hub	13	9	0
Crop, zoom and compare images	10	9	2
Filter results by language	8	11	2
Access the Archives Hub dataset for research purposes	6	14	2

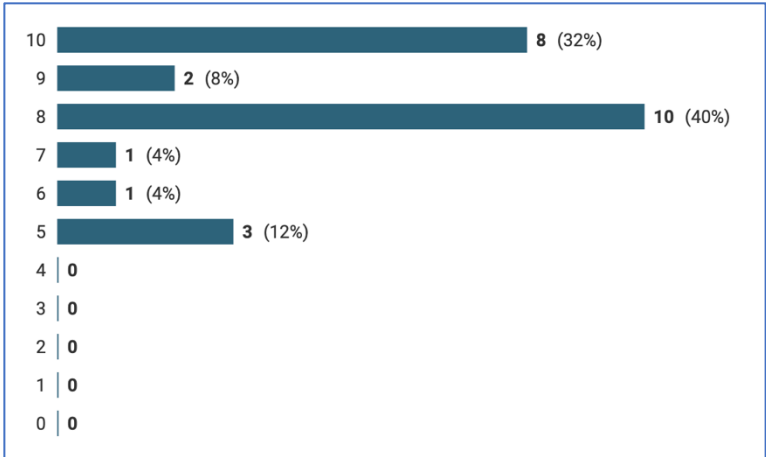
New features (actual numbers given rather than percentages)

As with the survey for researchers, those using the Hub for personal research felt that all the proposed features would be useful. Using the Hub as a dataset was of less interest.



Nearly 90% have visited or expect to visit a repository

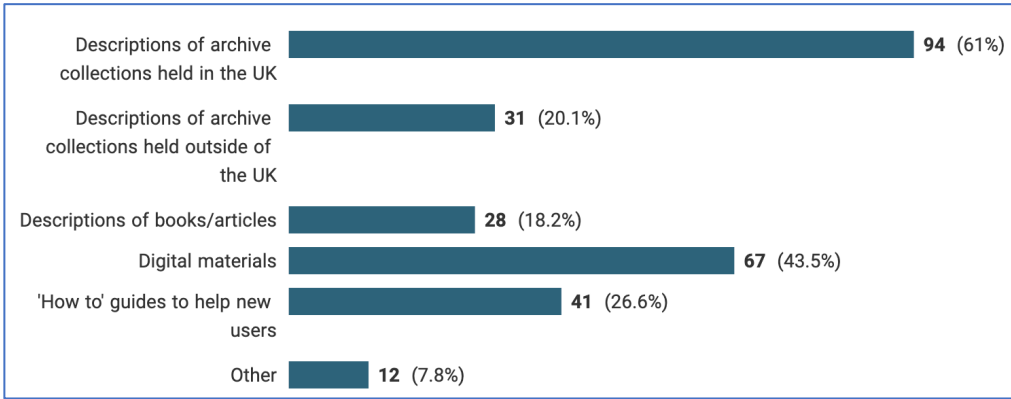
Has your use of Hub led to a visit to a repository?



All respondents would recommend the service, with 80% very likely to do so

How likely are you to recommend the Archives Hub to a peer/colleague?

First use (personal/leisure)



What did you expect to see?

We asked respondents using the Hub for the first time what they thought they would see on the Hub. As with researchers, many thought that they would get archives outside of the UK, and books/articles. This underlies the importance of clearly conveying the purpose and scope of the service.

Conclusions

Our satisfaction scores from both online surveys and general user feedback remain high and give us confidence that we are providing a valued and effective service.

There is no doubt that researchers and students within higher education value a comprehensive service. This has always been demonstrated by our surveys. To provide this, we need to attract as many new contributors as we can, and to represent them as well as we can.

Being open and free allows us to position the service as a very attractive proposition for new contributors. We offer a very effective way to promote their archives. University archives also see the immense value in the Hub representing all archives in the UK.

The survey and other feedback confirm that we are developing the service in line with what users want. The requirement to download and print descriptions alongside the interest in using the Hub descriptions as a dataset demonstrates that we need to carefully combine traditional approaches and 'non-technical' methods with innovation and new technologies. End users are very diverse and have different requirements. But they are generally agreed about the need for wide and detailed coverage, an easy-to-use interface, access to digital content and name/subject routes into the content.