ARE WE THERE YET?

An investigation of existing information services for international students in the McClay Library, Queen's University Belfast

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Abstract

The presented study was concerned with the quality of existing services at the McClay Library for the growing number of international students at Queen's University Belfast. The research aimed to investigate the library's preparation (regarding resources, services and staff awareness) to meet the information requirements of those students. The researcher was particularly interested in expectations and experiences of students from non-UK, non-English speaking countries. The study was performed during the 2009/10 academic year.

A thorough literature review outlined the main challenges international students encounter in their academic journey. It revealed that in addition to the culture shock and language barrier, different teaching styles and previous library experience may also influence students' adjustment to an unfamiliar library environment. The literature review further examined various guidelines issued by governmental and professional bodies, and actions taken by different universities worldwide to accommodate international students.

The study used a mixed-method approach to examine different viewpoints on the research topic. As a result, a large amount of quantitative and qualitative data was collected. The opinions of 185 undergraduate and postgraduate international students were obtained using paper and web-based surveys. Semi-structured personal interviews with 25 members of staff were employed to survey their perception of international students' support. Additionally, the library websites of five Irish universities were evaluated in terms of preparation for international students.

The findings exposed various students' experiences and expectations of different information materials and services, which are consistent with outcomes from other similar studies. The results suggested general satisfaction of resources, services and staff skills amongst surveyed students.

The research indicated that the library staff is generally aware of the challenges international students face. However, the study revealed several weaknesses in the information support, such as a lack of clearly presented action plan or appointed International Student Library Adviser. The findings suggested lack of consideration for the diverse needs or experiences of those students, e.g. deficiency of library orientation and information literacy training courses designed especially for international students. All these issues need to be addressed in future.

The study concludes with a number of recommendations for improvement of existing services for international students. This would develop the information services to global standards, making QUB more competitive in the race to attract international students.

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed .... (candidate)

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STATEMENT 1

This work is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where ***correction services** have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s).
Other sources are acknowledged (e.g. by footnotes giving explicit references).
A bibliography is appended.

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I hereby give consent for my work, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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Date ....

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List of abbreviations

ACRL   - Association of College and Research Libraries
ALA   - American Library Association
CIHE   - Council for Industry and Higher Education
CILIP   - Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
DEL   - Department of Employment and Learning
DIS   - Department of Information Studies
DPA'98   - Data Protection Act 1998
ELAS   - English Language for Academic Study
ERIC   - Educational Resources Information Center
IEAA   - International Education Appeal Authority
IELTS   - International English Language Testing System
ISB   - International Student Barometer
ISSO   - International Student Support Office
LISA   - Library and Information Science Abstracts
LISTA   - Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts
MLA   - Modern Language Association
NI   - Northern Ireland
NUIG   - National University of Ireland, Galway
OPAC   - Online Public Access Catalogue
PASW   - Predictive Analytics Software
PG1   - Postgraduate taught
PG2   - Postgraduate research
QUB   - Queen's University Belfast
RoI   - Republic of Ireland
SCONUL   - Society of College, National and University Libraries
SPSS   - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
STAR   - Student Transition and Retention
TCD   - Trinity College Dublin
UCC   - University College Cork
UCD   - University College Dublin
UG   - Undergraduate
UK   - United Kingdom
UKCISA   - UK Council for International Student Affairs
UNESCO   - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA   - United States of America
UU   - University of Ulster

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the research

A rapid increase in the global exchange of students is being reported by various information sources. In a series of reports in March 2011, the BBC News education correspondent Sean Coughlan, referring to UNESCO's Institute for Statistics data, indicates a 12% annual growth of scholars studying abroad ("Record numbers of international students"). Driven by the demand for high quality degrees and pressured to possess an internationally accredited qualification for the competitive job market, students from China are dominating this academic movement. A seminar report from the 2009 'Universities Europe' meeting in Bath anticipates "a doubling in the number of Asian students in Europe over the next decade, with English-speaking courses in the Netherlands, Scandinavia and Germany providing a wider range of options for international students" (Ryan 12). This will intensify the competition for attraction of potential international students, which will increase the importance of universities' reputation. Official publications such as 'International Higher Education'[1] and 'Global Education Digest'[2] (UNESCO), disseminating reports and statistics on current issues in Higher Education worldwide, also confirm these theories.

The number of international students enrolled in higher education courses in the UK is also increasing. The above statistical sources reveal that currently UK is the second biggest destination for overseas studies, after USA. Unfortunately, as UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) states, it is difficult to obtain exact

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[1] The 'International Higher Education' is a quarterly publication of the Center for International Higher Education (CIHE)
[2] The 'Global Education Digest' is an annual publication of the UNESCO's Institute for Statistics

statistics for the UK as they depend on various definitions for 'international students' and

> "there is no single source of centrally collected data for example, good data is available for the higher education (HE) sector 12-18 month time-lag; the data for the further education (FE) sector is patchy, and there is little data on private sector colleges and independent schools. Data is available on student visas issued and those given Leave to Enter, but neither of these accurately counts the numbers of students currently in the UK on a visa, and they do not include EU students who do not need visas" ("Impact of International Students")

A UKCISA report from September 2010 clearly outlines the considerable impact of the internationalisation of education on the UK economy and academic success ("International Students in the UK"):

- Estimated £2.5 billion spent by the international students and their relatives on commodities;

- Significant fee income for the UK academia;

- Prosperity of private colleges by offering wide range of licensed, less expensive courses;

- Expansion of study facilities and the range of courses to benefit international and local students, which otherwise would not be developed;

- Additional jobs for academic and administrative staff;

- Global connections with the countries of origin of those students.

The library is often a main 'port of call' in international students' academic career (Pritchard 36). The scope and accessibility of information does not only contribute to their positive or negative experience in the UK, but also may be an

influencing factor in their choice of university. Many UK academic libraries have developed online support for current and to attract prospective international students ("International Students Welcome"; "International Students Welcome to Durham University!"; "International Students Welcome to Newman University College Library!"). However, to allow those students to benefit fully from the available resources and services, libraries must also take into account international students' information needs and distinctive challenges. This emphasises the need for investigation of overseas students' expectations from the library to maintain a high quality service.

Statistics show that the number of international students attending courses at the Queen's University Belfast (QUB) has increased by 33% in the last 6 years, with a total number of 1454 students for 2009/10 academic year (Wright). Additionally, according to the university website, tuition fees for these students vary between £9418 and £24066 for the same academic year, which is 3-8 times higher than the fees for home students ("International Tuition Fees"). Consequently, the QUB (and its library in particular) should guarantee the provision of value for money higher education to the international students. However, in the University Corporate plan for 2006-2011 the phrase 'international students' is used 6 times in total and only with respect to the plans to increase their number and the benefits for the University. Therefore, if QUB pursues to attract more overseas students, it needs to develop a comprehensive Action Plan to also incorporate the library's responsibilities in the academic life of those students.

In February 2009 the library conducted a brief online survey to assess the international students' satisfaction of library facilities and services. The outcome of

the 82 responses was that students were concerned mainly with access to materials outside library opening hours and the confined study areas. Only a few students commented specifically on library services - for example, efficiency of Inter-library loan service, (McCurry). In the summer of 2009 several library branches were merged and moved to a new modern and specious building, forming the present McClay Library with extensive computing and quiet study areas, extended evening and weekend opening hours.

1.2 Purpose of the research

After a period of adjustment to the reconstructed branch (the McClay Library) at the QUB library, a comprehensive follow-up to the previous investigation of the quality of library services for international students was necessary. This research proposes to further examine the international students' needs and expectations from information services at QUB. Additionally, the researcher intends to explore the attitude and experiences of library staff at McClay Library. This will illustrate the preparation of staff to recognise the necessity for and further develop library services specifically for those students. In addition, the researcher plans to observe other academic libraries' achievements in international student's support, which may provide suggestions for service improvement at McClay Library.

The results from this study and any suggestions to overcome difficulties experienced by those students will be reported to the Library Management Team to assist in their current decision-making procedure to improve information support for international students.

1.3 Scope of the research

The term 'international students' may include a wide range of scholars studying abroad. Thus, for QUB for example, students from the Republic of Ireland (RoI) are considered international students, although English is their first language. This research bears in mind the fact that the language barrier is an additional challenge to those faced by all overseas students. Therefore, the study investigates only the experiences of students from non-UK, non-English speaking countries.

The researcher recognises the difference in information needs and support for different levels of university study. The investigation therefore includes samples of both undergraduate and postgraduate (taught and research) students.

In order to build a realistic picture of the current situation and to present various angles of the research question, this study surveys only frontline library staff, directly involved in the international students' support.

1.4 Research aim and objectives

1.4.1 Research aim

The aim of this study is to answer the following research question: "Is the McClay Library an International academic library?" By investigating the international students' information expectations and satisfaction from existing services, this research will illustrate whether the McClay Library is prepared for the increasing number of international students. The results from this study will identify any weak points in information resources and delivery of services for those students, requiring further development. Finally, the research will recommend a series of potential actions

to improve learning and research support for current and prospective international students.

1.4.2 Research objectives

✓ To investigate different factors influencing the study and information-seeking behavior of international students;

✓ To understand the information needs and expectations of those students by identifying the differences between the library services at QUB and their home countries;

✓ To determine the frequency of use of various services available at McClay Library and students' satisfaction with these;

✓ To identify the difficulties, if any, which library staff experience in supporting international students;

✓ To observe other academic libraries accomplishments in supporting those students;

✓ To recommend actions for improvement of the quality of information services in McClay Library.

1.5 Research structure

The research will exploit the joint benefits of quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches to accomplish its aims and objectives. A thorough literature review, presented in Chapter2, will reveal the main challenges international students encounter in their scholarly pursuits and the achievements of academic libraries worldwide regarding international students' welfare. Chapter3 will introduce

in detail the paper and online surveys, developed by the researcher to identify international students' needs and expectations from McClay Library. A stratified sampling method, reinforced by snowball sampling will be employed to represent the international students' population. To explore fully the research topic, personal semi-structured interviews with frontline library staff will be performed, examining staff attitude and experiences with international students.

The collected quantitative data will be coded and graphically displayed in Chapter4, while qualitative information will be transcribed and categorised into themes for further discussions. Other academic libraries' websites will be evaluated with respect to recognised criteria and the results will be compared in terms of their usefulness for international students.

The outcome from the research will be discussed in Chapter5, with respect to different hypotheses from the literature. The research aims to provide recommendations for future service improvement.

The Modern Language Association style guide will be used throughout this study. The planning and implementation of this research will follow the Aberystwyth University policies for Ethical Practice in Research and DIS Ethics Policy, which are based on the code of professional practice set out by the British Sociological Association ("Statement of Ethical Practice"), as well as on the Ethical Principles for Library and Information Professionals as stated by CILIP ("Ethical Principles").

Chapter 2: Literature review

All students endure new experiences and various adjustments during their academic pursuit. Enrolling in a foreign university introduces additional challenges. Students are expected to quickly learn a new language, accept other religions and beliefs, acclimatise to unfamiliar cultural traditions, education system and learning approaches, adapt to diverse academic policies and procedures.

This literature review will introduce in-depth the key factors shaping international students' academic skills, as emphasised in current literature. In addition, this chapter will highlight similar research and implementations in other countries.

2.1 Factors influencing international students' academic achievements

2.1.1 Language barrier

The language barrier is the first obstacle international students face. Proficiency in understanding and use of all four English language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) is important to the social adjustment and academic achievements of international students. In addition to verbal communication skills, students have to be confident in using an alphabet, sometimes greatly different from their native (e.g. Cyrillic, Arabic, Chinese logographs, Japanese syllabaries). The variation in regional accents and speed of speech of individual university staff may further contribute to students' confusion. It is not unusual to hear students sharing "People speak too fast. I don't have time to think about what has been said" or "It's easier to talk to other foreigners because they use similar vocabulary and no idioms" (Students qtd. in Stagg 5). Therefore, students with stronger language skills would have

a better capacity for managing academic demands (Wan, Chapman and Biggs 620). Natowitz (5) reviewing articles on trends and issues in international students' experience using U.S. libraries, concluded that most students speaking English as a second language have half the reading comprehension of U.S. students and even less oral understanding. This can slow down their academic progress, lower the assessment results and may even influence the study group dynamics. To minimise language difficulties, universities in the UK and USA require international students to achieve a minimum score in an English language test, such as IELTS test (International English Language Testing System), prior to course enrolment. Various universities arrange the pre-sessional ELAS (English Language for Academic Study) programme to prepare international students for the IELTS test (Rushton 17). For students who fall below these standards, some universities offer a modified curriculum comprising part-time studies combined with language skills development (Cownie and Addison 223). Another way to approach the language barrier is to appoint particular university and/or library staff to support international students, practice which has been established in the American academia (Mestre 26; Arthur 65).

As a major challenge, the language barrier should be addressed not only by university central policy, but also by its individual divisions. The library in particular, should consider this challenge when designing a library support network for international students, whether through trained staff or specialised resources.

2.1.2 Culture shock

> "My greatest fear was that I might die alone in my room and no one would know or care" (Student qtd. in "Introduction to cultural awareness")

Various authors, researching students' life transition in a foreign country, agree that culture shock is another major challenge young people encounter (Gilton 425; Ye 8; Rushton 15). What does this really mean? Hunter and Whitten (112) describe the culture shock as "a common psychological response to an unfamiliar culture". Whilst this highlights the psychological nature of this common phenomenon, Brown and Holloway (245) introduce a further complication by defining culture shock as an individual "adjustment journey" comprising several fluctuating phases. This emphasises the variability between individual's experiences, the influence of personal adaptability on students' response to the culture shock and the extent to which it would affect their academic performance. Apart from homesickness, culture shock involves adjustment to various factors, characterising the uniqueness of a nation, e.g. religion and festivity; moral and family values; meeting, greeting and dining etiquette; social relationships; non-verbal communication; cooking and diets. Disregard for any of these aspects may lead to anxiety, confusion or even negative learning achievements. Cultural differences influence students' interactions in an academic environment, e.g. involvement in study group discussions, interruptions, teamwork and leadership.

Thus, appreciation of cultural diversities, the stages of culture shock and their effect on individuals is an important objective for universities to facilitate the appropriate study environment for international students. Therefore, many universities are increasing the cultural awareness amongst their staff and students by providing self-directed materials and group training sessions ("Communication and Cultural Awareness"; "Communicating Across Cultures"; "Cultural Awareness Training"; "Cultural Awareness"; "International Students"). Additionally, some universities organise various cultural events, such as: the annual celebration of the

Hindu festival of light – Diwali (University of Ulster), Chinese New Year (Sheffield University), International food fair (Oxford University). These events not only welcome the international students, but also introduce other cultures and traditions to home students and staff, aiming to close the gap.

It is obvious that students' cultural diversity, together with the language barrier play an essential role in international students' academic achievements. Therefore, the cultural deviations in students' ethnicity, study attitude and community hierarchy should not be overlooked when developing information services for international students.

2.1.3 Teaching styles and learning approaches

For students coming from countries with different educational systems, the teaching, learning and assessing structure in the UK is another challenge to confront. Numerous authors describe the completely different teaching style in Far and Middle East countries from that in the UK (Stagg 6; Arden-Close 323; Pritchard 36). The teaching in those countries is didactic with passive learning process and emphasis on memory and repetition. Students "religiously note down every word of the lecture (or as much of it as they can) to faithfully reproduce it in examination" (Shamim 106). Being educated in Bulgaria myself, I can admit that this last statement summarises the teaching style in some Eastern European countries as well. The study process excludes group-study projects or other brainstorming activities. In seminars, students discuss various well-known hypotheses without having the opportunity to express personal views. Such teaching style discourages development of students' creativity, initiative and problem-solving skills. Cortazzi and Jin (78), for example, summarise the different

academic expectations between the British staff and those of Chinese students, resulting from the different teaching styles in these two countries (Table 2.1).

British academic expectations	Academic expectations held by Chinese and other groups
Individual orientation	Collective consciousness
Horizontal relations	Hierarchical relations
Active involvement	Passive participation
Verbal explicitness	Contextualised communication
Speaker/writer responsibility	Listener/reader responsibility
Independence of mind	Dependence on authority
Creativity, originality	Mastery, transmission
Discussion, argument, challenge	Agreement, harmony, face
Seeking alternatives	Single solution
Critical evaluation	Assumed acceptance

Table 2.1 Polarisation of expectations between British university staff and some groups of International students

Additionally, the information literacy is not considered a core competency for undergraduate (UG) students, as they are not required to perform study research. Consequently, postgraduate taught (PG1) students are expected to self-develop their research skills. In didactic teaching, the examination and marking processes are based on strict reproduction of the lecturers' or other scientists' opinion, covered during the course. This assessment method leads to a passive learning style and may result in copyright issues and potential plagiarism when scholars from these countries study abroad.

Some educational systems underestimate the importance of development of students' academic writing skills. As Vassileva points out "The Bulgarian educational system presupposes mainly reproductive writing and focuses rather more on the content than on the structure of the text" (99). This tendency results in exclusion of

the subject from the curriculum and lack of creative writing textbooks. Consequently, students from these countries have fewer or no skills in academic writing and referencing. As a response to increasing pressure from internationalisation of education, lately many Eastern European countries have been trying to introduce the 'Western' approach for interactive teaching (Dumetz par.5; Arden-Close 323). However, the non-interactive teaching style still greatly affects students individual learning approaches.

In their research, Manikutty, Anuradha and Hansen (79) examine the impact of different cultures and their generic attributes on the educational systems. They adopt the idea that the individual learning approaches are determined by the learner's personality as well as the learning environment shaped by different cultures. The latter would include:

- differences in students' admissions (based on national or institutional assessment),

- whether the grades awarded are praising repetition of scientific theories or students' originality and creativity,

- significance of obtained certificates for the individual and society,

- moral and ethical values of the society.

As a result, Manikutty, Anuradha and Hansen develop hypotheses relating the Hofstede's cultural dimensions (e.g. teacher-learner power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity) with the main Entwistle's learning approaches (deep, surface and strategic). The authors conclude that these hypotheses validated with empirical studies (Barmeyer 582; Keuchel, Neubauer and Anuradha qtd. in Manikutty et al. 85) would be beneficial for educational authorities to understand how

cultural inconsistency affects the learning approaches and to be able to guide students going into an unfamiliar learning environment.

There is a whole spectrum of factors, relating to teaching styles and learning approaches, which may significantly influence students' academic realisation. The differentiation in teaching and learning styles, however, could be very easily overlooked, particularly in academic libraries. Therefore, an awareness of these differences is essential for library staff in order to understand international students' learning behaviour and skills, and develop appropriate study support.

2.1.4 Previous library experience

Previous library experience is another challenge for the international student. The term 'library experience' here is associated with the various nations' academic library organisation, e.g. diverse policies and available services, collections management, marketing and access, as well as the individuals' information retrieval skills.

With the rapid expansion of the Internet and the development of integrated library systems, the online public access catalogues (OPACs) replaced complicated card catalogues in the last two decades more quickly in the West and some Eastern European countries (Dzurak 137) than in the rest of Europe, Middle and Far East. Nevertheless, some libraries still make use of the card catalogue either in conjunction with OPAC (essentially for Special Collections ("When to Use the Card Catalogue")), or for their entire collections. For example, during my visit in 2008, the Library at Technical University of Varna, Bulgaria, was still using a card catalogue for their full collection. Through my interview with the Librarian, Darina Dimitrova, it became clear

that the library is obliged to provide a full complement of textbooks for all UG and PG1 students. (Gale (37) describes a similar observation in a Russian university). This inexperience in simple use of the library OPAC would become an obstacle if students continue their further education abroad.

Furthermore, although the above-mentioned library had a subscription to a limited number of online databases, the access to them was available only on-campus and the comprehensive searches were conducted mainly by librarians on researcher's request. The OPAC and open access to online databases were only introduced in the last three years ("ABSearch"). This lack of familiarity and skills to utilise various electronic resources in addition to their lack of English proficiency, would seriously affect the adjustment of these students to the Western study environment (Bordonaro 273; Varga-Atkins and Ashcroft 41).

Zhang (7) points out that library organisation, diverse classification systems, and distinctive terminology and regulations may further contribute to the international students' uncertainty. Many international students are accustomed to small library collections, restricted borrowing rights or closed access to materials (Badke par.9). When studying in UK, those students have additionally to discover the Dewey, Library of Congress or in-house classifications used by different academic libraries. The library terminology itself may be a challenge for the students. Jiao et al. discovered through their survey that some library jargon may have a completely different meaning when translated into Chinese or Japanese, leading to misunderstanding of services (5). It is well-known that there are significant variations in library jargon even in English-speaking countries. For example, key terms, such as 'borrower', 'issue' 'discharge' or 'reservation' used in UK correspond to 'patron', 'check out', 'check in' and 'hold'

respectively in USA, e.g. University of Nebraska-Lincoln ("Circulation Policies"). This inconsistency confuses even more the international students from non-English speaking countries.

Although on a smaller scale, a previous encounter with staff knowledge and manners may also influence students' library experience. Ajileye-Laogun, for example, describes the unacknowledged, negative image of librarians in Nigeria. They "are regarded as rigid personalities who cannot be approached, either an authoritarian or a weakling, incompetent hideaways, doing no more than shelving or stamping books" (16). Mu adds to this the misconception of librarians' qualifications and required skills from some Asian students: "Librarians have low social status on campus, so master students consider themselves even more competent and more knowledgeable than library staff and regard it as unnecessary to approach a librarian for help" (577). This lack of understanding and appreciation of librarians' profession or negative experience could be a crucial barrier for students to use academic libraries. Therefore, library staff should be aware of such predispositions and work towards overcoming the challenge by creating a welcoming environment and developing good relationships with the international students.

The above examples illustrate the vast inconsistency in libraries' organisation, management and traditions worldwide, and the additional affect of library staff skills. It is obvious that each one of these aspects may influence considerably students' information literacy and library experience. All these issues can be easily overcome by exploring international students' library behaviour, research skills and experience, and designing appropriate learning environment and training sessions.

2.2 Global practice in library support for international students

This section illustrates the awareness of international students' challenges in countries containing some of the largest English-speaking populations. It examines how various governmental or professional bodies in these countries reflect the issue and indicates steps taken by different academic libraries to improve services and support for international students.

2.2.1 United Kingdom

The Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) recognises the particular attention needed to overcome language and cultural barriers, diversity in educational background and differences in information literacy of international students. An extensive research by SCONUL Access Group in 2007 led to development of 'SCONUL Guidelines on Library Services for International Students' (Senior and Bent). The guidelines highlight 17 key concepts to which UK academic libraries should pay special attention "to provide 'exclusive' services to achieve equity" for all library users. These include:

> "KC5   Provide glossaries of specialist terminology.
> …
> KC7   Provide regular staff development for library staff in cross cultural awareness and diversity training.
> KC8   An awareness of varying teaching and learning styles should underpin information literacy training.
> …
> KC13 Providing information on study skills support in the library can benefit all students.
> KC14 Library web pages specifically for international students can help create a welcoming impression and manage expectations.....
> KC15 Consider providing material in different languages.....
> …

KC17   Identify a named individual member of staff to be a contact point for international students...” (Senior and Bent 48)

In accordance with these guidelines, the University of Exeter Library evaluated existing services using the International Student Barometer (ISB) (“Tell us What You Think”). The ISB is an international students’ satisfaction survey, which allows more than 700 participating higher education institutions from 22 countries to seek feedback on overall student experience (“International Student Barometer™”). The survey could be run regularly to observe any changes in students’ expectations and to monitor the progress of any service developments. Thus, the ISB has assisted University of Exeter to discover weak areas in the library services, leading to the appointment of a Library International Officer, responsible for development of new and enhancement service for international students (Gale 27).

Furthermore, the University-of-Sunderland Library expanded its opening hours using a 24/7 model to accommodate international students who may not mark UK public holidays or religious festivals. Additionally, the library explored ways to improve services by using SMS as a communication tool (Pritchard 37).

The Library at University of Hertfordshire also acknowledged the importance of globalisation of higher education and the need for enhanced information services for international students. Thus, the Learning and Information Services Support Officer has developed and promoted support materials for international students. Additionally, guidelines have been prepared to direct library staff in their support for international students (Singer 66).

2.2.2 United States of America

The Policy of Diversity of the American Library Association (ALA) emphasises on "culturally competent Library and Information Services", a critical aspect for provision of fair services to internationals students (Mestre 132). Accordingly, ALA

> "urges library personnel to commit themselves to the following guidelines:
> 1. …training and ongoing education that promote awareness of and sensitivity to diversity must be stressed for all library personnel.
> 2. Care must be taken to acquire and provide materials that meet the educational, informational, and recreational needs of diverse communities.
> 3. Efforts to identify and eliminate cultural, literacy-related, linguistic,… barriers that limit access to the library and information resources must be prioritized and ongoing.
> …
> 5. A diverse workforce is essential to the provision of competent library services…" (133)

The practice of appointing designated staff to support international students in the library has been developed since the 1990s at the University of Arizona (Norlin 60). The library organised a Peer Information Counselling (PIC) programme, through which a number of international students were recruited and trained in information literacy, research and technology skills. These students then worked evenings and weekends as assistants at the Reference Desk.

Various American academic libraries have adopted different approaches for fair services to international students. For instance, the University of Tennessee recommends appointment of a Multicultural Librarian to support students and development of workshops and training materials in foreign languages for students (Puente, Gray and Agnew 42). The San José State University Library, in a partnership

with the Office of International Programmes and Services, provides online tutorials for students in English and Spanish (with further possibility of translation into other languages) (Jackson 206). Howze and Moore (64) recommend that libraries should encourage students to use the multilingual glossary of library terms developed by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL).

Other researchers suggest enhancing library staff cultural awareness and interpersonal skills. Based on research from linguistics and language-teaching authorities, workshops for library staff were designed to develop their active listening and effective communication skills, and comprehension of accented speech (Amsberry 17; Greenfield, Johnston and Williams 230).

2.2.3 Australia

In 2004 the Strategic Analysis and Evaluation Group of the Australian Department of Education, Science and Training has performed a primary investigation of the differences in "characteristics, attrition retention and progress rates" between domestic and international students in Australian higher education, using available statistical data for the period 1997-2002 ("Research Note No.2" 1). The Report from this study indicates that "the range of cultures [in Australian higher education] is highly diverse, and with this comes an equally diverse range of educational expectations and requirements" (par.32). The Report concludes that these dissimilarities need to be taken into consideration to facilitate quality education services and continue to attract international students. In line with these guidelines, some Australian academic libraries have examined their international students' preferences. As a result of such investigation, the Library at La Trobe University for example, recommends maintaining

"an awareness of the changing profile" of international students and subsequently development of preferred communication strategies (Sackers, Secomb and Hullett 44).

2.2.4 New Zealand

The New Zealand Ministry of Education is also concerned with the increasing number and diversity of students taking part in international education. Considering the worldwide changes in education and global human mobility, the Ministry encourages an open attitude to international education. Thus, the '2007-2012 International Education Agenda' institutes the course of government's engagement in international education, determining priority areas for action. A 'Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students' was revised in 2010 ("Code of Practice"). The Code is a guideline for educational institutions, providing key principles of care for international students in New Zealand and the organisational responsibilities for recruitment and support services for those students. Consequently, an International Education Appeal Authority (IEAA) has been established to regularly monitor and respond to any international students' comments and complains about misconduct of advice and services received from their educational institution.

2.2.5 Northern Ireland

The internationalisation of higher education is a relatively new phenomenon in Northern Ireland (NI). The political and religious troubles the country has experienced limited the number of foreigners for decades. Only after the progress of the NI peace process and the final stage of the St. Andrews Agreement in the last decade, more overseas visitors felt safer to travel to the country and the number of international

students started to grow rapidly. With this in mind, an understanding of the challenges discussed above is even more vital in order to attract international students to NI.

The STAR (Student Transition and Retention) Project was a step towards integration of NI into the global educational internationalisation (Rushton, B. S., A. Cook and K. A. Macintosh). STAR was funded in 2005 by the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning. The Project, based at the University of Ulster (in partnership with the Universities of Brighton, Liverpool, Manchester and Sunderland), aimed to identify, analyse and develop directions for international student support during the rapid transition in their study environment. Consequently, the Project suggested guidelines for social and academic integration of international students to facilitate efficient and effective learning (Devlin 44).

In this section, the researcher has emphasised on the problems faced by international students in English-speaking countries only, because of the similarity in the challenges those students may be expected to experience at McClay Library, e.g. language, culture. The cultural diversity, academic expectations and challenges of international students, however, have been acknowledged and examined in other countries around the world. Investigations of viability of library services were conducted and reported in France (Brisset et al.), Japan (Tanaka; Shigemasu and Ikeda; Boiger), China (Aihong; Jiao et al; Shao and Scherlen) and Nigeria (Marama; Ajileye-Laogun). Each of these investigations considers the affect of international students on their higher education, the students' experience with different aspects of university and/or library services and proposes various service improvements suitable for their educational environment.

2.3 Summary

The cases examined in this chapter illustrate that, universities, professional and governmental bodies worldwide are becoming increasingly aware of the growing number of international students and concerned about the academic success and wellbeing of those students. There are countless studies investigating the international students' expectations and experiences abroad. It is apparent, however, that there is a common misconception and generalisation of the term 'international students'. For many American authors, for example, this phrase embraces all foreign students in the USA, including those from UK or Canada. Thus, those researchers dismiss the importance of various non-Latin scripts or the different languages' grammar rules influencing students for whom English is a second (or third) language. Consequently, any comparison of academic expectations and achievements between English and non-English speaking students is meaningless. On the other hand, some Asian students do not categorise themselves as international students if they have lived in the UK for more than 3 years. If this is a cultural perception or tradition, how precise are the published results regarding international students in Asian universities?

This chapter presents a thorough examination of various challenges non-English speaking students face when enrolling to study abroad. It clearly reveals the importance for universities to be aware of the whole spectrum of cultural traditions and values, and to understand the variety of teaching and learning styles. The review also discusses the significance of different libraries' organisation, services and individual students' experience for their efficient use of academic libraries abroad.

Therefore, each one of examined factors needs to be taken into account when designing library services for international students.

As the topic of internationalisation in higher education is comparatively new for NI, this research intends to investigate and draw an academic library's attention to the exceptional needs and expectations of international students.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study uses a mixed-method research in order to explore fully both library staff awareness and the experiences of international students; with the aim of answering the research question: 'Is the McClay Library an International academic library?'

The research is divided into three empirical investigations, combining quantitative and qualitative research approaches. The study employs two types of questionnaires: (i) a paper format for UG and PG1 students; and (ii) an online survey for postgraduate research (PG2) students. Both surveys comprise of open and closed questions to investigate the complexity of the research topic. Personal semi-structured interviews with library staff are also performed to analyse their experience and awareness of international students' challenges. Additionally, the library websites of other Irish universities are observed to examine their achievements in online support for international students. Different methods are used to obtain representative samples for each of the data collection techniques.

This chapter will discuss in details the methodological approach and various data collection methods used in the study.

3.2 Methodological approach

The methodological approach used is determined by the diversity in qualifications, skills and experiences of the target populations. As this study aims to determine the quality of existing library services for international students, it is

important to investigate students' experiences and satisfaction from available resources and services. It is also essential to identify any discrepancies between students' expectations and library staff awareness. Thus, the research is concerned with the viewpoints of two very different population groups – students and staff. Hence, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data would complement the different aspects of the topic. Despite some arguments that the two methods are "not capable of integration" (Bryman, *Social research methods* 605), and the fact that a multimethod research requires time-consuming collection and analysis of extensive textual and numerical data (Creswell 210), the mixed-method approach in this case would provide a more comprehensive response to the research question.

International students are a heterogeneous group with various information needs, expectations and research skills. However, carrying out individual interviews with a representative sample of students would be a time-consuming and costly process. The most commonly adopted methodological approach to investigate students' satisfaction in the literature is the quantitative research (Howze and Moore; Sykes; Jackson). According to Beck and Manuel (195), it is the best method for "solving problems at the local level". This approach allows surveying a large proportion of the population in a short period of time (Howard, McGrath and Stratford 10). In agreement with this, various survey tools have been developed to assess different aspects of library services (e.g. LibQUAL+ (Matthews 82), ISB ("International Student Barometer™")).

There are 27 members of staff in the McClay Library directly involved in student support. Approaching this population group with a structured survey questionnaire would not allow for thorough exploration of staff experiences. Therefore, a qualitative

methodological approach is chosen as more appropriate to examine staff awareness of international students' academic challenges. As McNeill and Chapmen (26) indicate, this method demands more time for data collection, transcription, coding and analysis. It also requires prearranged appointments suitable for interviewer and respondents. However, semi-structured interviews with possibility for in-depth elaboration of individual questions would give a more comprehensive outlook about staff perceptions and experience with international students. As it was illustrated in the previous chapter, there are numerous publications concerned with international students' challenges or dedicated to surveying those students' satisfaction of various library services. However, hardly any published material employs a qualitative research approach to exhaustively investigate library staff experience in supporting international students, which could be used for further comparison.

Finally, this study uses the website usability comparison as another qualitative approach to examine other Irish academic libraries' online support for international students. In-depth investigations, involving surveying students and interviewing staff from these libraries (especially at University of Ulster (UU)) would significantly benefit further development of information services for those students in the McClay Library. The level, cost and time-constrains of this study, however, did not allow for more exhaustive exploration of the topic.

3.3 Methods

3.3.1 Literature review

Prior to data collection, the researcher participated in two workshops and one symposium devoted to international students' challenges and experience,

organised by CILIP ("Information services for international students"), by QUB ("Introduction to Cultural Awareness") and by UU ("Internationalisation in Higher Education"). Furthermore, the researcher arranged several meetings with staff from the International Office and International Student Support Office (ISSO) to examine their achievements and collect preliminary quantitative data. An extensive systematic literature review was performed, using bibliographical sources, such as:

- LISA, LISTA, Ariadne, ERIC, British Education Index, ProQuest, SCONUL Focus;

- Personal subscriptions to: Library & Information Update, College & Research Libraries, American Libraries: the magazine of the American Library Association;

- various official Governmental Education websites;

- and a range of research study handbooks.

The hypotheses and results discussed in this review were used further in analysis of the results.

3.3.2 Population and ethical considerations

The term 'international student' is often used to describe every overseas student regardless of his/her language, religion or ethnicity. However, as it was revealed in the previous chapter, the cultural, linguistic and educational barriers have a significant influence on students' academic achievements. As a former visiting research student from Eastern Europe, the researcher understands and closely relates to the international students' challenges. Therefore, this research is concerned with the quality of library services for students only from non-UK, non-English speaking countries.

The study is interested in library staff experiences with international students. Hence, the research includes only personnel directly involved in student support, i.e. frontline full- and part-time staff at the Borrower services Desk and Subject Librarians.

Prior to commencing the research, the International and Planning Offices at QUB were consulted, to attain access to university's statistical data regarding international students (Appendix A). Further approval was sought from the McClay Library's Manager to obtain consent for performing the research on library premises (Appendix B).

A brief cover letter or invitation e-mail was included in each survey, informing participants of the purpose and the ethical considerations of the research. While the paper and online surveys were completely anonymous, individual PG2 students were approached for consent to include their e-mail addresses in the online survey mailing list. The e-mail invitation was also forwarded to students by the International Office, without revealing students' identity to the researcher (Appendix D). In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA'98), any participants' personal information (names, e-mail and IP addresses) is kept confidential and used for the purpose of this investigation only. All records and personal data will be destroyed after the submission of this research.

3.3.3 Data collection

3.3.3.1 Paper survey for UG and PG1 international students

The UG and PG1 students are expected generally to have less library experience, thus requiring more time to adjust to existing services and resources. Furthermore, they are typically engaged in group-study projects and discussions, using

essentially high-demand core study materials. Thus, they use library facilities more often than other readers. In addition, the library is a common place for international students to socialise, exchange study notes or life experiences. Therefore, a paper survey distributed in the library appeared to be the best method for data collection.

The questionnaire incorporated two sections (Appendix C). In the first part personal information was collected (i.e. gender, geographical origin, age, duration of residency in NI, educational level). While the first two components would segregate the participants into the sample strata, the combination of the remaining factors would indicate students' competence in English language and level of information literacy. The second part of the survey examined students' library expectations (i.e. previous library experience, frequency of use of resources and services, favored method for gathering study information, information expectations from the McClay Library). It also sought students' evaluation of current library website and library staff skills. The survey used open-ended question to inquire any suggestions for service improvements. A pilot test of the survey was conducted with a small number of international students leading to some phraseology corrections (Figure 3.1).
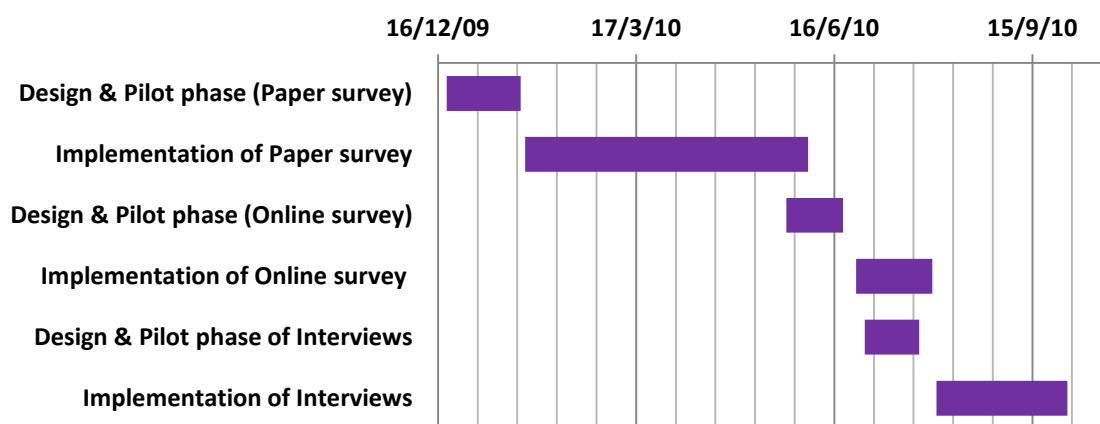
Figure 3.1 Timeline of the research

The sampling frame for this investigation was drawn up from statistical data on the international students' population at QUB for the 2009/10 academic year, provided by the Planning Office (Table 3.1). In order to comply with the DPA'98, those statistics excluded personal data, thus complicating the participants' identification. Therefore, a proportional stratified sampling technique was chosen, dividing the entire international UG and PG1 population of 1038 students into subgroups by gender and geographical origin (grouped by continents, corresponding to available statistical data). The representative sample was obtained by calculating the percentage of participants required from each subgroup (specified in brackets in Table 3.1).

Geographical region	Number of students	
	Male	**Female**
▪ Europe	269 (26%)	340 (33%)
▪ Asia	193 (18.5%)	204 (19.5%)
▪ Africa	15 (1%)	11 (1%)
▪ South America	4 (0.5%)	2 (0.5%)

Table 3.1. Number of international students enrolled in UG & PG1 courses at QUB for 2009/10 academic year

Subsequently individual international students were approached in the library with an appeal to participate in the research. The completed questionnaires were sorted by sampling subgroups. Additionally, a snowballing method for data collection was used to include students visiting the library less frequently. Unfortunately, for various reasons (discussed later) the response rate for this method was only 10%. The survey concluded when the initially calculated minimal percentage ratios of participants for each subgroup were reached (Table 3.1). Results from international

students excluded from the targeted population (from UK or other English-speaking countries) were disregarded. Thus, only 104 responses were used in the research.

3.3.3.2 Online survey for PG2 international students

There are two reasons to employ a second survey in this study. For a more comprehensive investigation, the research aimed to include international students from all study levels. However, the information needs and library skills of PG2 students vary greatly from those of their taught colleagues. The research level of their study indicates more experience using academic libraries. The information they require is strictly subject-specific, containing current developments on a particular topic. Therefore, a separate survey was conducted with international PG2 students, investigating their viewpoints on quality of library services.

The second reason to carry out this survey is the anticipated remoteness and complicated work schedule of PG2 students. Because of the nature of their work, PG2 students generally prefer to work outside the library (e.g. in their own offices), undisturbed by other students. Furthermore, much of the information and services they require are made easily accessible online (availability of various online resources, place reservations, submit Inter-library requests), which substantially reduces their visits to the library. Therefore, an online survey proved to be the best method for reaching out to PG2 students.

The questionnaire was again split in two sections (Appendix E). Again, the personal information collected was used to divide the participants into subgroups and to establish students' English competence and experience with the local higher education system (i.e. gender, geographical origin, age, year in doctoral study). The

second section of the survey examined PG2 students' experience with specific library services prior enrolling at QUB, their preferential method for accessing information and the frequency of use of individual resources and services in the McClay Library. They were also asked to evaluate the available services and library staff skills. The questionnaire concluded with open-ended questions examining participants' best and worst library experiences. The online survey was created using the KwikSurveys software, providing a range of practical features for straightforward design of a user-friendly interface and allowing an unlimited number and various types of questions. A pilot test was conducted with a number of international PG2 students and subsequently phraseology corrections were made.

The sampling frame for this survey was also drawn up from the Planning Office statistical data (Table 3.2). Following the same model as the paper survey, the stratified sampling technique was chosen. The international postgraduate research population of 416 was broken down into subgroups by gender and geographical origin, using continental rather than national division to simplify the analysis. The representative sample was determined by the percentage of participants required from each subgroup, calculated from the corresponding number of students (Table 3.2).

Geographical region	Number of students	
	Male	**Female**
▪ Europe	77 (18%)	106 (25.5%)
▪ Asia	115 (28%)	82 (20%)
▪ Africa	18 (4%)	9 (2%)
▪ South America	6 (1.5%)	3 (1%)

Table 3.2. Number of international PG2 students at QUB for 2009/10 academic year

This survey was conducted with significant help from the ISSO at QUB. As the Office was not able to supply students' e-mails (in accordance with the DPA'98), it played the role of a mediator between researcher and students. However, as the ISSO was created recently, their PG2 students' database appeared to be incomplete. Therefore, a snowballing method for data collection was additionally employed by approaching a number of known PG2 students with appeal to participate in the research. Students were also asked to forward the invitation e-mail to their colleagues.

The response rate for this method was impossible to calculate, because of the indirect contact with participants and unknown number of approached students. The survey concluded when the initially calculated minimal percentage ratios of participants for each subgroup were reached (Figure 3.1). The responses from students from UK or other English-speaking countries were again disregarded leaving only 81 responses to be used in the research.

3.3.3.3 Interviews with frontline library staff

A qualitative approach is chosen to investigate library staff personal experiences with international students. Richards and Morse point out, that qualitative methods are the most appropriate technique "if the purpose is to learn from the participants … the way they experience, the meaning they put on, and how they interpret what they experience…" (30). Individual semi-structured interviews were chosen as data collection method. Although interviews are significantly time-consuming to conduct and analyse, their main strength is that they give the researcher better control over the investigation through interaction with the participants. The method presents an opportunity for observation of participant's body language and

further clarification of any misunderstood questions, using pre-determined prompts and probes (Oishi 171). Additionally, it may bring "entirely unexpected issues which may be of interest" to the research (Bryman, *Quantity and quality* 67). These advantages of semi-structured interviews were used to obtain a clear picture of library staff preparation for international students' support.

As this study is concerned only with the quality of library services, the target population excludes IT, Media Services and the Language Centre staff, also situated in the library. Subsequently, the McClay Library has 94 full-time and part-time members of staff. However, mostly staff at the Borrower Services Desk and Subject Specialists are in direct contact with students, hence they would have better reflection of international students' study challenges. Therefore, only those members of staff are object of this study. There are 11 full-time and 7 part-time Library Assistants and a User Services Librarian, providing full range of library services. Additionally, there are 8 Subject Librarians responsible for the collections management, information literacy training and subject-specific support. Thus, individual interviews were conducted with 25 members of staff[3].

A range of open- and close-ended questions was initially prepared to guide the researcher during the interviews (Appendix F). The questionnaire explored staff awareness of library policy and designated member of staff for international students' support; most common problems encountered with those students and staff perception of necessity to develop specific services for those students. The time and places for the interviews were prearranged individually with participants without obstructing their work schedule (Figure 3.1). As the Borrower Services Desk does not

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[3] Two of the Subject Librarians have taken a leave of absent at the time of the investigation.

allow longer staff absence, a number of Library Assistants chose to fill in a paper questionnaire, providing a sufficient space after each question for more complete answer. These participants were later given the opportunity to discuss further any issues raised by the questionnaire. Additionally, three of the Subject Librarians did not consent to an audio recording of the interviews and chose to fill in the paper questionnaire. The interview sessions lasted between 45 min to one hour. They were recorded using portable Tascam MP3 digital audio recorder[4]. The interview records were later cleared and transcribed in preparation for coding. An example interview transcript is included in Appendix G.

3.3.3.4 Observation of the websites of other Irish academic libraries

To complement the qualitative approach, the functionality of Irish academic libraries' websites for international students were also examined. The accomplishments of other Irish libraries are of particular interest to this research due to the location, cultural traditions and language similarities. The QUB is located on the same landmass with these universities, thus, in the same proximity for students from all other countries. Additionally, the international students in RoI and NI may meet similar barriers in apprehending local custom and dialects. Furthermore, the local political and religious issues and thus more restricted access to universities in the NI until recently, suggest that universities in RoI may have more extensive and valuable experience in supporting international students. As the attention to international students' information needs is a relatively new phenomenon for NI, the study also aimed to observe the support for those students in other NI academic institutions.

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[4] The Tascam MP3 recorder was rented from the Media Services at the McClay Library.

Consequently, the libraries of the first four most prominent universities in the RoI, according to 'The Sunday Times' league tables, are selected for examination, i.e. Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, University College Cork and National University of Ireland Galway ("University Ranking League Table"). Additionally, the library website of the second major university in NI, University of Ulster was also explored. This analysis was designed to identify the existence of online language and research support, tutorials or other information particularly useful for international students, e.g. library terminology index, online reference materials.

3.4 Limitations of the research

The aim and objectives of this study presupposed thorough investigation and comprehensive methodological approach to the research. To fully explore the topic and offer a more conclusive answer to the research question, numerous methods for data collection were chosen. This time-consuming and costly task, however, has various limitations.

A major drawback was the identification of international students without breaching the DPA'98. As the student statistical data used for the sampling frame excluded personal information, conducting the paper survey, for example, was sometimes uncomfortable (asking the same student for participation several times) and even embarrassing (approaching students based on their appearance, just to discover that they were born in NI and have foreign ancestry). This slowed down the data collection process immensely.

The online survey forwarded to students through the ISSO, proved to be a faster method in cases, where it is difficult to identify the representative sample

amongst the entire student population (provided the Office has complete and up-to-date student database). Interviews or focus groups with international students would have given a more exhaustive view of their expectations from and experience in McClay Library. However, the student identification barrier and time constrains did not allow the organisation of such events.

Another difficulty during this research was the busy schedule of the researcher and the library staff. This did not allow organising focus groups with members of library staff, which would have reduced the data collection period and would have tolerated thorough group discussions of separate issues. Alternatively, a representative sample of staff population could have been used to participate in individual interviews using a simple random sampling. However, to maximise validity of the conclusions, the researcher has chosen to interview all 27 members of staff in direct contact with international students.

Many authors agree that the success and quality of interview data collection depends on the interviewer skills (Oishi 93; Ruane 147; Creswell 184). The interviewer must be able to motivate respondents, using neutrality and probing techniques, without influencing results by using leading questions. In this study, the researcher's interview training and experience is very limited. The researcher, however, trusts that this limitation was minimised through the assistance of various available guides and cautious performance of interviewing techniques.

Finally, the limited time and personal expenses of the researcher did not permit a more exhaustive examination of other Irish universities' experiences with international students, which would be beneficial for further development of

information services at McClay Library. This issue could be addressed more successfully in a future research.

3.5 Summary

Aiming to investigate the quality of existing library services for international students, the research employed a quantitative research technique, complimented by qualitative methods, thus allowing simultaneously examination of international students' and library staff viewpoints on the subject, as well as the achievements of other Irish academic libraries.

This chapter discusses in detail the mixed-method approach and the separate data collection methods used in the research. It reasons the selection of these methods and addresses various complications arising during sampling; organising and conducting surveys and interviews.

The chosen scope of this research is very broad and faces numerous limitations. The researcher trusts that through the appropriate selection of data collection methods and population sampling techniques in these particular circumstances, the findings can be successfully analysed and valid and useful conclusions can be reached. The primary data collected will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

In order to evaluate the quality of existing information services in McClay Library for international students, this study encompasses the following objectives:

- to establish the information needs and previous library expertise of those students;

- to identify students' expectations and level of satisfaction from existing services and staff skills in the McClay Library;

- to determine library staff awareness and experiences supporting international students

- to observe the achievements of other academic libraries.

This chapter presents the results from the different methodological approaches, illustrating two different angles for international students' support – students' needs and expectations, and front-line library staff consideration of these issues. The findings from the students' surveys, staff's interviews and website observations are presented in separate sections of this chapter.

The different quotations used are referenced with №_UG&PG1 and №_PG2 for participants in paper survey (for UG and PG1 students), and in online survey (for PG2 students) respectively. References such as STN№ are used to quote library staff interviewees' responses.

4.2 Surveys

The results from the two surveys were analysed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 18.0 (PASW[5])[6]. This software allowed further analysis of various relationships between different nominal and ordinal variables, in order to investigate some hypotheses from the literature. Although especially sophisticated for analysis, PASW however, is not very convenient for graphical representation of multivariable sets. Therefore, the graphical capacities of Microsoft Excel were also employed in some cases to provide a clearer comparison of population groups.

The results from both surveys are presented in parallel to compare the library experience of international students at different educational levels. Further results for individual variables and cross-examinations are introduced in the Appendix H1 (for UG and PG1 students) and Appendix H2 (for PG2 students).

4.2.1 Demographic profile of the respondents

Before commencing to analyse the separate issues of the surveys, collected data was used to examine the overall impression of respondents' population. The distribution of the populations regarding participants' age, sex, country of origin, level of education, year of research or duration of stay in the NI are presented using Population pyramid graphs.

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[5] PASW - Predictive Analytics Soft Ware is the premier software for SPSS between 2009 and 2010.
[6] SPSS version for home usage obtained via the University Software Licence Management Scheme.

4.2.1.1 UG and PG1 students

The distribution of UG and PG1 student population by participants' country of origin is presented in Table 4.1

Continent	Country	No. of participants
Europe: 59 students	Germany	11
	France	8
	Poland	7
	Greece	6
	Bulgaria	5
	Slovakia	4
	Italy = Czech Republic = 3	6
	Spain = Holland = Denmark = 2	6
	Portugal =Cyprus =Croatia =Norway =Belgium =Latvia = 1	6
Asia: 38 students	China	15
	Malaysia	7
	India	6
	Turkey	3
	Japan &=Russia = 2	4
	Tajikistan = Thailand = Taiwan = 1	3
Africa: 5 students	Saudi Arabia	2
	Mauritius = Libya = Senegal = 1	3
South America: 2 students	Brazil = Chile = 1	2
	Total:	104

Table 4.1 Distribution of the UG & PG1 population by country of origin

The graphical representation (Figure 4.1) reveals uneven dispersion of the population with the majority of participants being UG students and the bulk group residing in NI for 2 years or less (see also Appendix H1). The central tendency of these two elements may suggest that the majority of the population is less experienced in and influenced by the local educational system and the use of academic libraries, making their expectation of library services and resources more valuable for this research. Figure 4.1 also shows that the PG1 students from South America are not represented in the research, which is a disadvantage of the chosen sampling method.
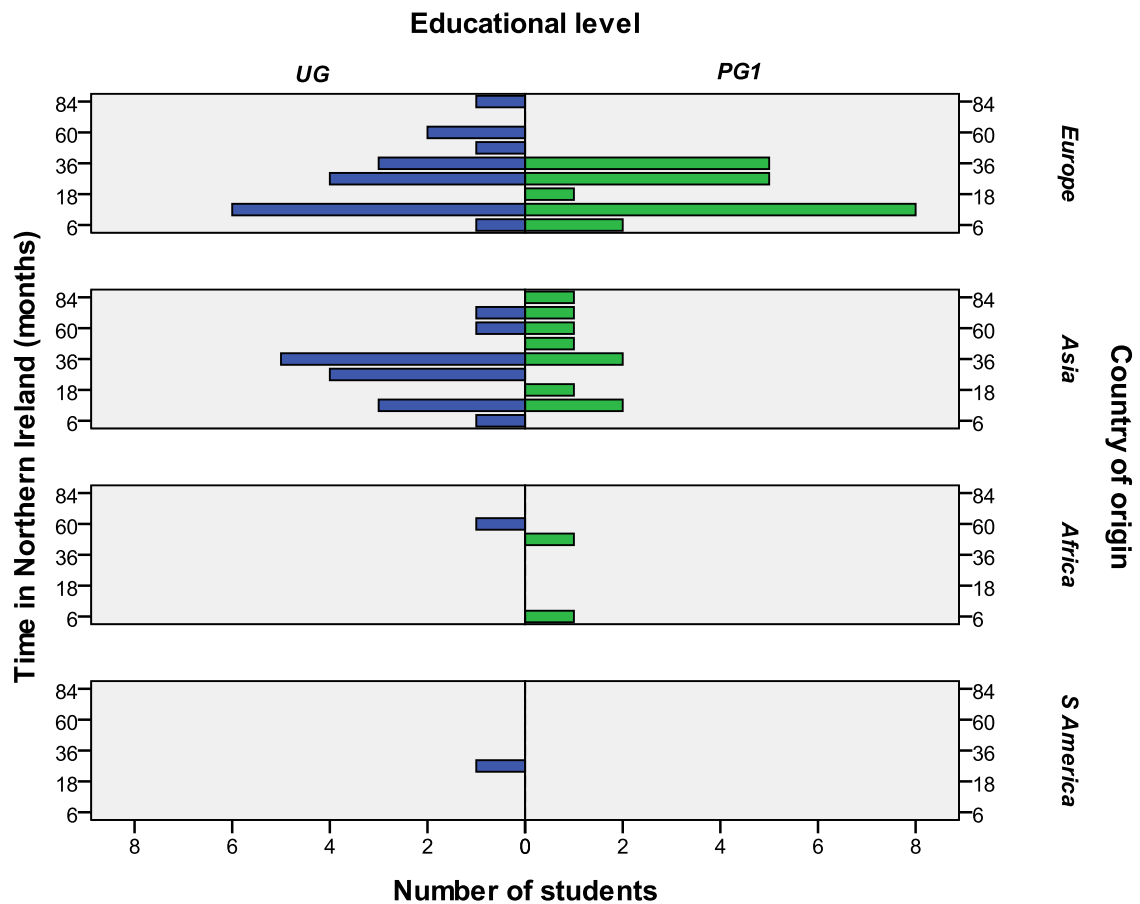
Figure 4.1 Distribution of UG & PG1 population by Level of education, Geographical origin and Time resided in the NI

4.2.1.2 PG2 students

The distribution of PG2 student population by participants' country of origin is presented in Table 4.2. The overall distribution of the population (Figure 4.2) in this case is more balanced in terms of duration of research, with majority of participants within 26-34 age group (see also Appendix H2). The distribution shows that survey results embrace the opinion of researchers with different levels of library experience and could be used for further interpolation and modelling of international students' expectations from McClay Library.

Continent	Country	No. of participants
Europe: 36 students	Germany = France = 6	12
	Poland	5
	Greece	4
	Cyprus = Italy = 3	6
	Portugal = Slovakia = Sweden = Hungary = 2	8
	Bulgaria	1
Asia: 38 students	China	14
	India	10
	Malaysia	8
	Turkey	2
	Japan = Russia = Palestine = Brunei = 1	4
Africa: 5 students	Sudan	2
	Saudi Arabia = Libya = Senegal = 1	3
South America: 2 students	Colombia = Brazil = 1	2
	Total:	**81**

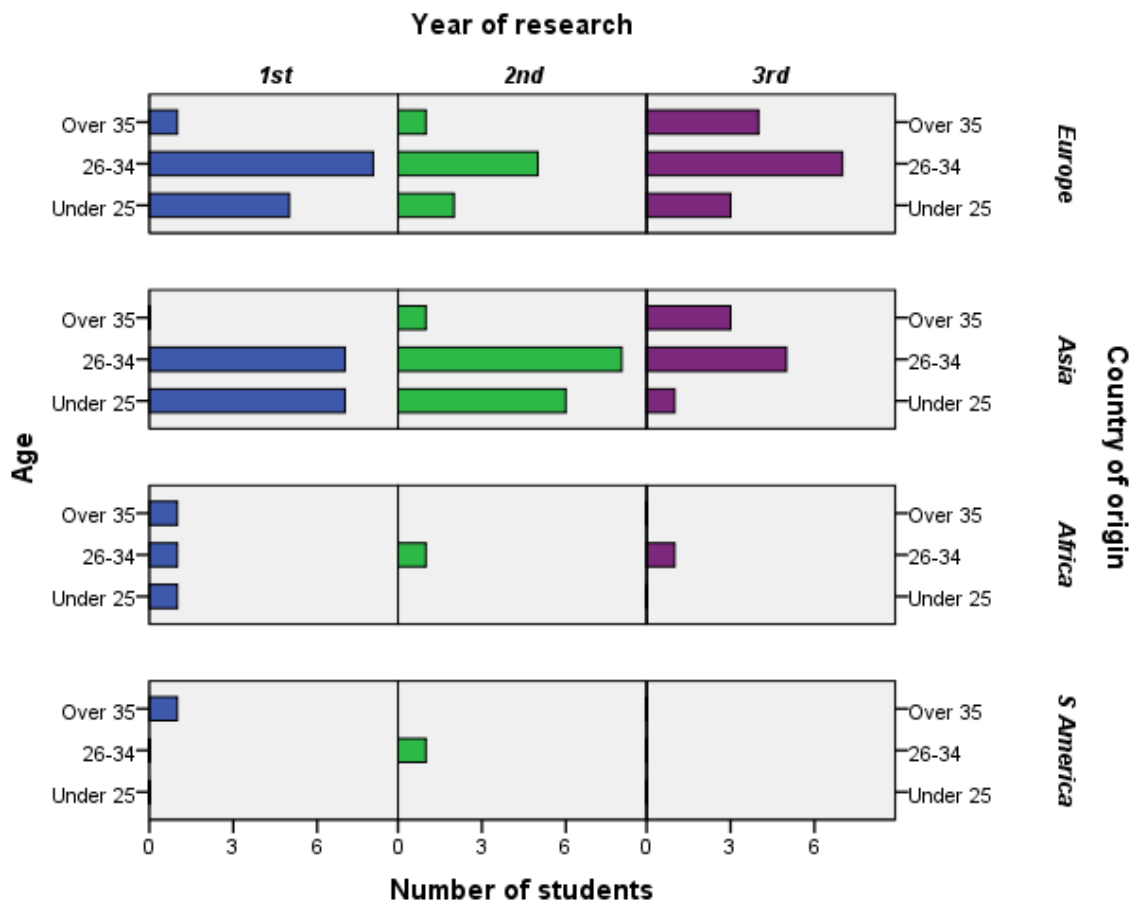Table 4.2 Distribution of the PG2 population by country of origin

Figure 4.2 Distribution of PG2 population by Age groups, Year in the research and Geographical origin

4.2.2 Use of Library services and resources

Chapter 2 discussed various factors influencing international students' library experience, the most evident of which appears to be understanding of library services and proper skills to fully exploit them. This in turn would determine students' requirements in terms of variety and frequency of use of different resources and services available at McClay Library. The previous library experience would also predetermine students' expectations from and attitude towards library staff'. Therefore, in this section the collected quantitative data is analysed against the following aspects:

- Information services new for the international students;

- Students' information needs and expectations;

- Preferred method for learning about library services (UG and PG1 students) or for collecting research information (PG2 students);

- Frequency of use of resources and services in McClay library;

- Students' evaluation of the library website;

- Rating of library staff.

4.2.2.1 Services and resources not used prior enrolling to QUB

The first step in this study was to identify information services new for the international students. This would indicate the library services proven to be useful for local educational practice, but are not conventional in other countries. Once established, those services need to be introduced methodically to the international students with more in-depth demonstration of their advantages.
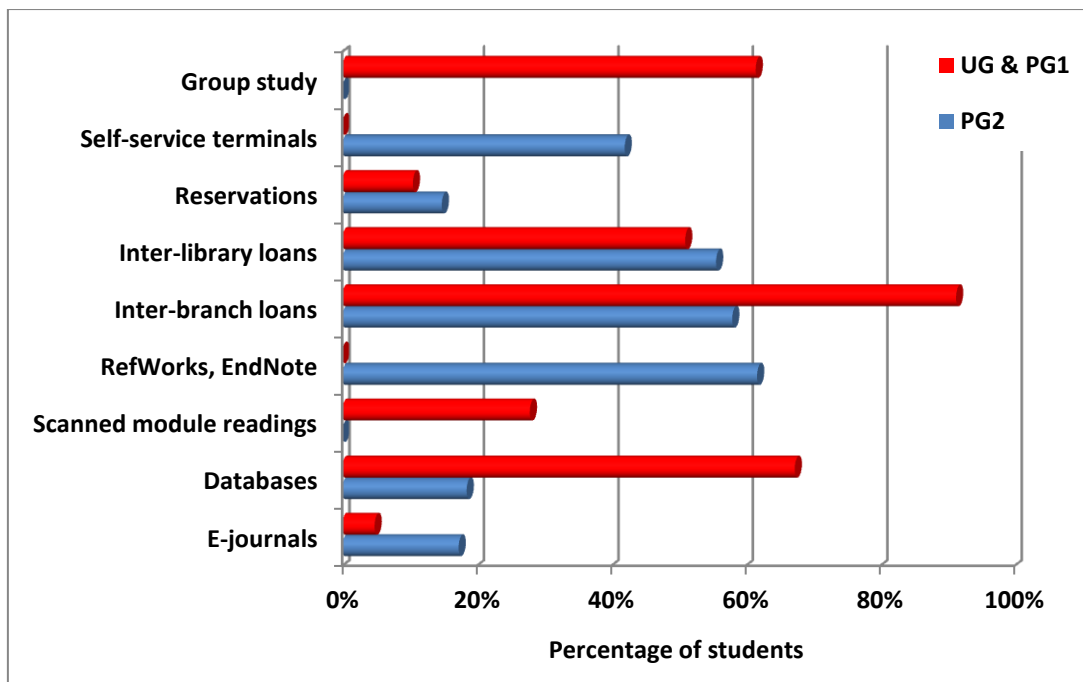
Figure 4.3 Information services new for international students

A comparison of previous experience with various library services for students at different study levels (Figure 4.3) shows a high percentage of UG and PG1 students unfamiliar with group study (60%), database searches (65%), and Inter-library loans (50%). This general inexperience may be expected due to the higher number of UG population in the sample.

The common unfamiliarity with inter-branch loans, evident for students at all study levels, may suggest general misunderstanding of library terminology. Another explanation could be that the majority of students have previous experience with centralised academic libraries instead of dispersed branches.

Of a greater concern, however, is the percentage of PG2 students unfamiliar with bibliographic management systems (RefWorks or EndNote). Familiarity with reference systems is an important element in research studies and should have been introduced to researchers in their previous levels of study. This could only confirm a

conclusion from the literature that some educational systems are more favourable towards the content rather than presentation of an academic writing (Vassileva 99). This issue should be further addressed by library professionals.

4.2.2.2 International students' information needs and expectations

It is expected students' information needs to be determined not only by the subject or level of study, but also by the standards of information delivery they have come across before. Thus, establishing students' prior knowledge and skills of various services would suggest their expectations from McClay Library. The next step in the research was to further identify students' perceived needs of particular materials.

The students were asked to grade their expectations of different resources, which the McClay Library should offer. Figure 4.4 summarises the UG and PG1 students' information needs. It illustrates that students almost equally necessitate information to support their academic studies (20%), various software applications (19%) and to improve their English language (18%). The highest demand for materials on academic writing could be explained with differentiation in the educational systems, according to several hypotheses from the literature (Cortazzi and Jin 78; Vassileva 99). Interesting observation is the small percentage of students requiring materials in their native languages (11%), contrary to the general library staff beliefs.

Required information resources
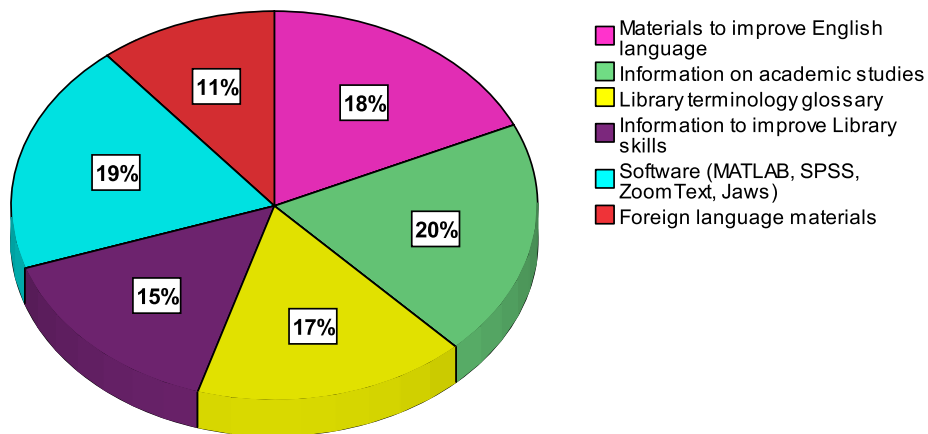
Figure 4.4 Summary of UG & PG1 students' information needs

A further analysis was carried out to examine students' information needs of individual materials (Appendix H1). Figure 4.5 for example, presents the results for students' requirements of English language materials and for a glossary of library terminology. As expected, more than 1/3 of the international students intensely require English language improvement. The 10% of students who do not need support could be explained by the small number of students living in the NI for 5 years or longer.

50 % of students need intense or frequent help with library jargon to exploit successfully the library services. While the small number of students (20%) who never or rarely require assistance with the terminology could again be explained by a lengthy stay in NI and/or more experience using academic libraries.

Need of English language materials

Legend: None, Rare, Occasional, Frequent, Intense

10%, 15%, 16%, 19%, 39%
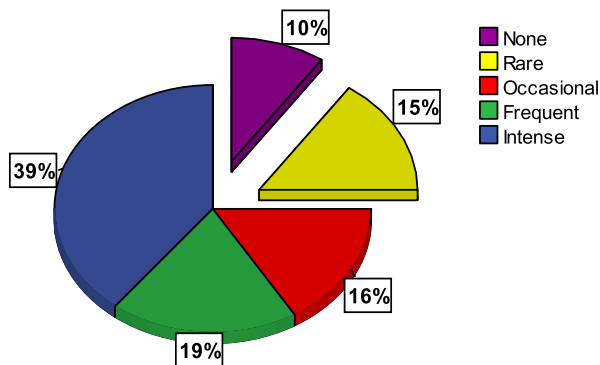
Need of Library terminology glossary

10%, 10%, 31%, 35%, 15%
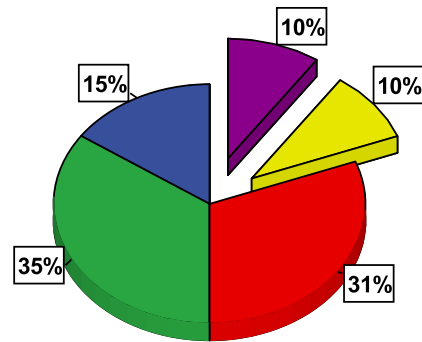
Figure 4.5 UG & PG1 students' needs of 'Materials to improve English language' and 'Glossary of library terminology'

Analysis of the results from the online survey (Figure 4.6) demonstrates that the reference materials (20%), glossary of library terminology (19%) and English language materials (18%) are almost equally important for PG2 students. In contrast to some published studies (Ajileye-Laogun 16; Mu 577), this pie chart shows the smallest requirement for self-training materials (11%) and online support (15%) compared to the percentage of students desiring research skills training in person (17%).

Required information resources

Legend: Materials to improve English language, Reference materials, Research skills training (in person), Research skills training (online), Library terminology glossary, Self-training materials

11%, 18%, 20%, 17%, 15%, 19%

Figure 4.6 Summary of PG2 students' information needs

However, if these two service requirements are examined separately (Figure 4.7), they show that more students consider on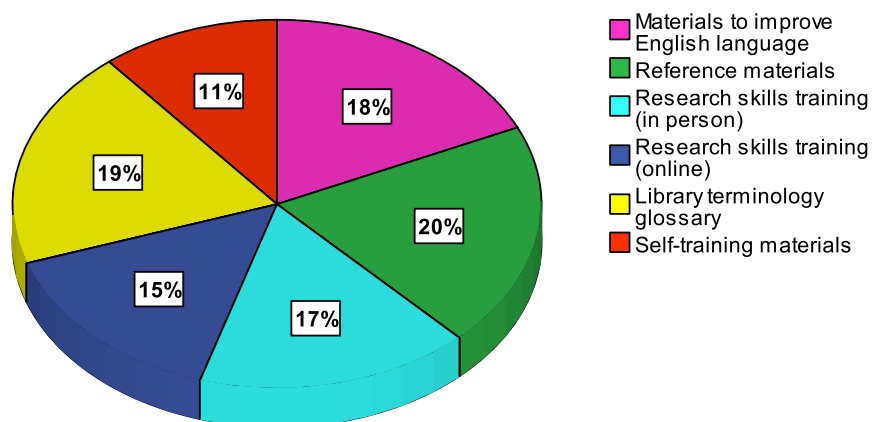line trainings as very important or important compared to personal consultations. The opposite result on Figure 4.6 for those two services could be explained with the much higher percentage of 'neutral' answers for personal (40%) compared to online training (19%), which influences the summarised results.
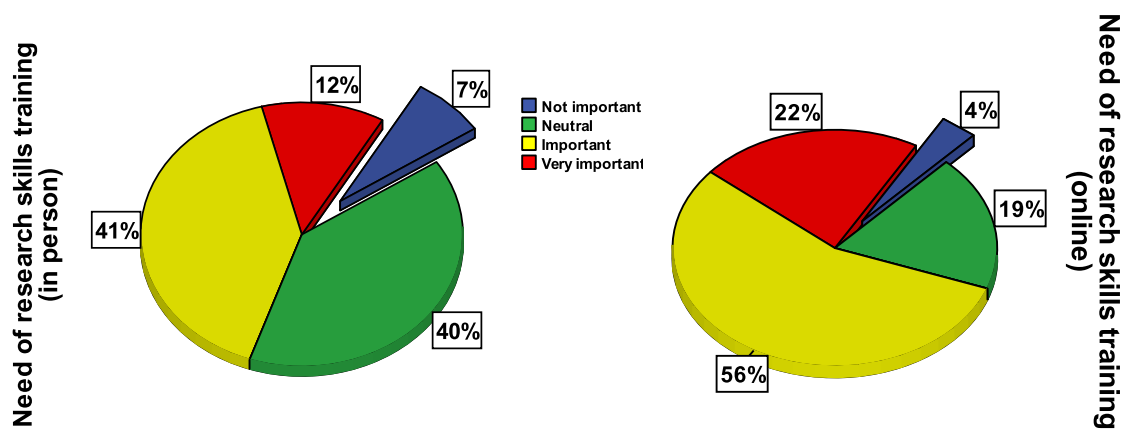
Figure 4.7 PG2 students' needs of research skills trainings – 'In person' and 'Online'

4.2.2.3 Preferred methods for gathering research information

The preferred method for acquiring information is also important element for quality library services. The results from this study illustrate that all modes of communication are almost equally important for international students (Figure 4.8). The bar chart is consistent with Figure 4.7, confirming that a higher proportion of students prefer to search the library website (24%) instead of approaching library staff. The graph surprisingly shows very low percentage of students wishing to use print guides (16%). This may be explained by the busy schedules and vast amount of study materials which students need to cope with. Thus, by choosing faster website guidance

or communication with library staff, students could avoid additional reading and have better clarification of library services or terminology.
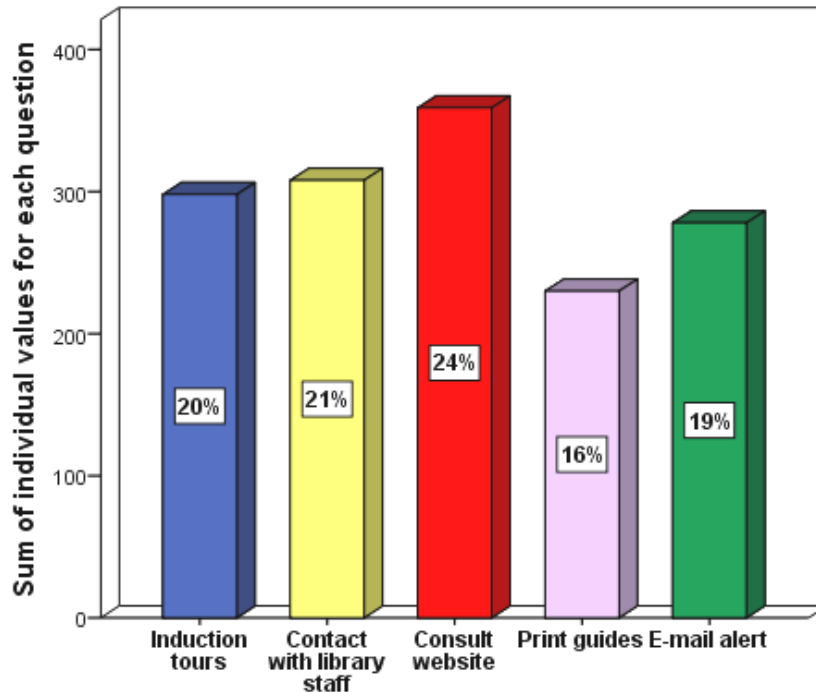
Figure 4.8 UG & PG1 students' preferred methods to learn about library services[7]

The same issue was directed at PG2 students as a multiple response enquiry. This type of question, however does not tolerate generation of any meaningful summarised graphical analysis. Therefore, here are presented only the two study variables discussed for the UG and PG1 students, i.e. preferences in 'Contacting subject librarian' and 'Using other Internet sources' (full results in Appendix H2).

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[7]The graph uses an additive scale to illustrate the sum of answers for each question, which is the most effective way to display results from "Matrix of choices" type of questions. (In this instance values from 0 to 4 were assigned to each possible answer, i.e. 0-Not sure; 1-Not a priority; ... 4-High priority.)

Figure 4.9 PG2 students' preferences for acquiring research information

The survey results on Figure 4.9 illustrate that a large percentage of international PG2 students (81%) prefer to execute online searches independently while only 35% choose to consult a subject librarian. As the highest proportion of the sample population is from Asia, one explanation could be that students generally underv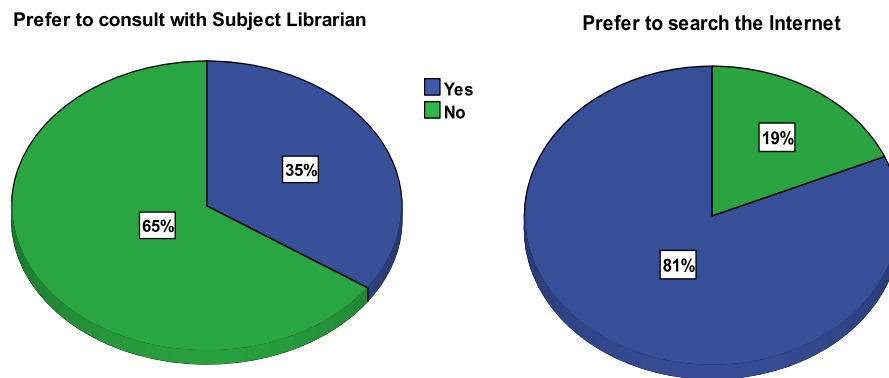alued the role of library professionals, which would confirm conclusions from the literature (Ajileye-Laogun 16; Mu 577).

4.2.2.4 Frequency of use and satisfaction with existing library services

This section reveals the usage of available information resources and services. Therefore, the survey for UG and PG1 students examined the frequency of use of various resources and services (Figure 4.10). The box-plot[8] illustrates a maximum usage of e-mails, the Internet and electronic journals from the participants. This is expected from contemporary students due to learning demands (online readings and assessments, communication with tutors and colleagues), as well as contacts with relatives abroad.

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[8] The Box-plot graph in this case offers better illustration of the data distribution for each question. The boxes represent the middle 50% of the results, while the whiskers (vertical lines) characterise the distribution of the other 50% of results. The thick line within the box corresponds to the median result.

The negative skewness of the results for use of databases, Inter-branch and Inter-library loans exposes those services as least exploited, which may be expected from the nature of these levels of study. Very unusual however, is the dispersion of the data for usage of reservations and scanned module readings, considering the fact that these services are distinctive for taught courses.
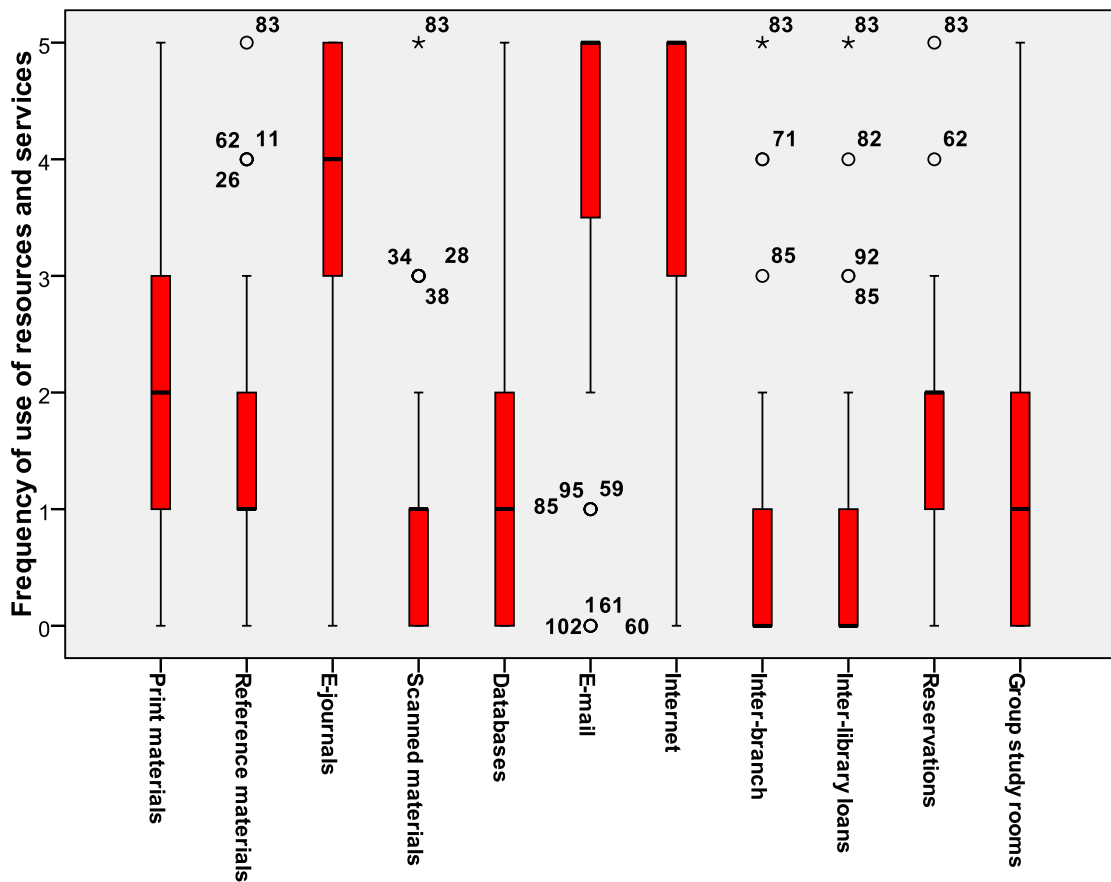
Figure 4.10 Frequency of use of resources and services from UG & PG1 students, where:
0 -Never used; 1 -Few times a term; 2 -Few times a month; 3 -Few times a week;
4 -Once a week; 5 –Daily;
o – outliers and ★- extremes

The graph reveals that group study rooms are not fully exploited from the international students, which may support the hypothesis that, collective discussions are not a common learning method in some countries (Cortazzi and Jin 78; Manikutty,

Anuradha and Hansen 79). Another peculiar finding is the infrequent use of print materials, although textbooks are the main source of information for UG and PG1 students. This may be a result of misunderstanding of the term 'print material'.

One extreme emerges amongst the numerous outliers in the box-plot. This exceptional use of all resources and services from respondent No. 83 may be explained with extensive previous experience in use of academic libraries or lengthy stay in NI.

The survey for PG2 students aimed to investigate their overall satisfaction of available resources and services (Figure 4.11). As the graph illustrates, the majority of international PG2 students are satisfied with the information provided on available resources and services, sufficiency of organised training and scope of research materials. There are several extremes on both ends of the scale. The high satisfaction could be expected from new students, unfamiliar with the study environment, finding the variety of novel services valuable. The cases of very disappointed readers however, may result from extensive research experience in different academic libraries, increasing their expectations for information and support.

The satisfaction from library opening hours and feedback opportunities are evenly distributed with the majority of PG2 students being content with (or have no opinion regarding) those services. Cases emerge of students genuinely disappointed by the opening hours (i.e. No.69 and No.26). However, since the survey was conducted, opening hours have been extended and various self-service facilities introduced.
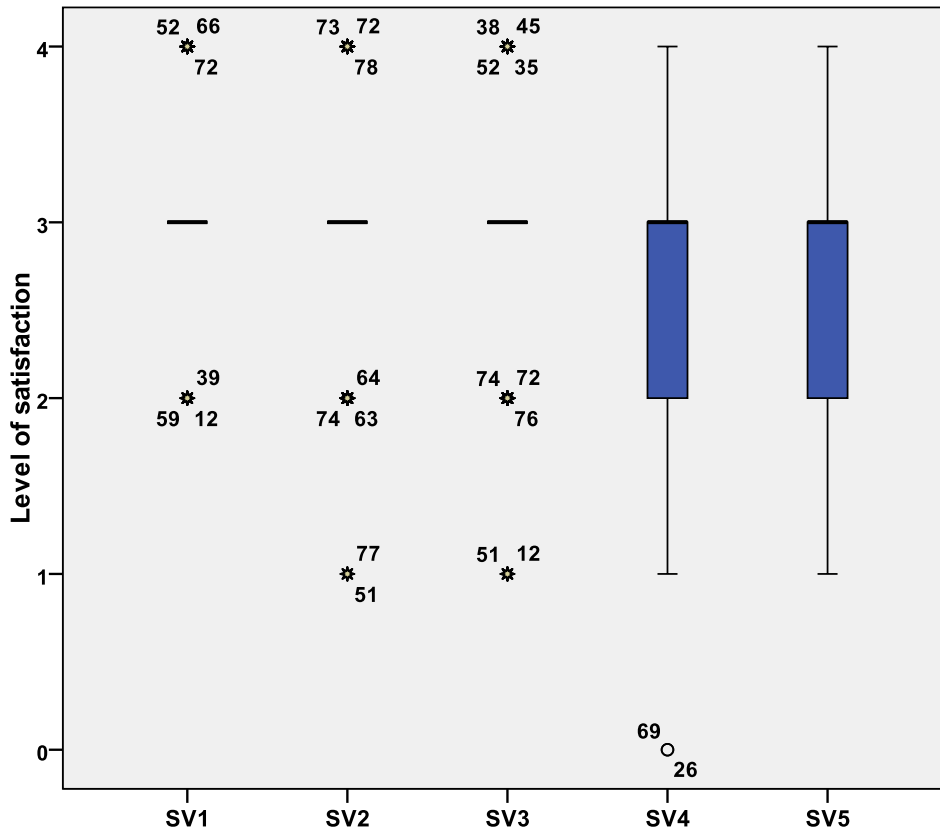
Figure 4.11 PG2 students' satisfaction of particular aspects of library resources and services, where: **SV1** - Adequate information on resources and services; **SV2** - Training sufficiency; **SV3** - Comprehensiveness of resources; **SV4** - Opening hours and **SV5** - Opportunity for feedback;
0 -Very dissatisfied; 1 -Dissatisfied; 2 -Neutral; 3 -Satisfied; 4 -Very satisfied;
o – outliers and ★- extremes

4.2.2.5 Evaluation of online information support

The results so far demonstrate that the majority of international students prefer to use online study support and perform independent searches. This highlights the need for an accurate, informative and easy to navigate library website. Therefore, it was essential to investigate international students' assessment of the existing website and identify any weaknesses from the students' point of view.
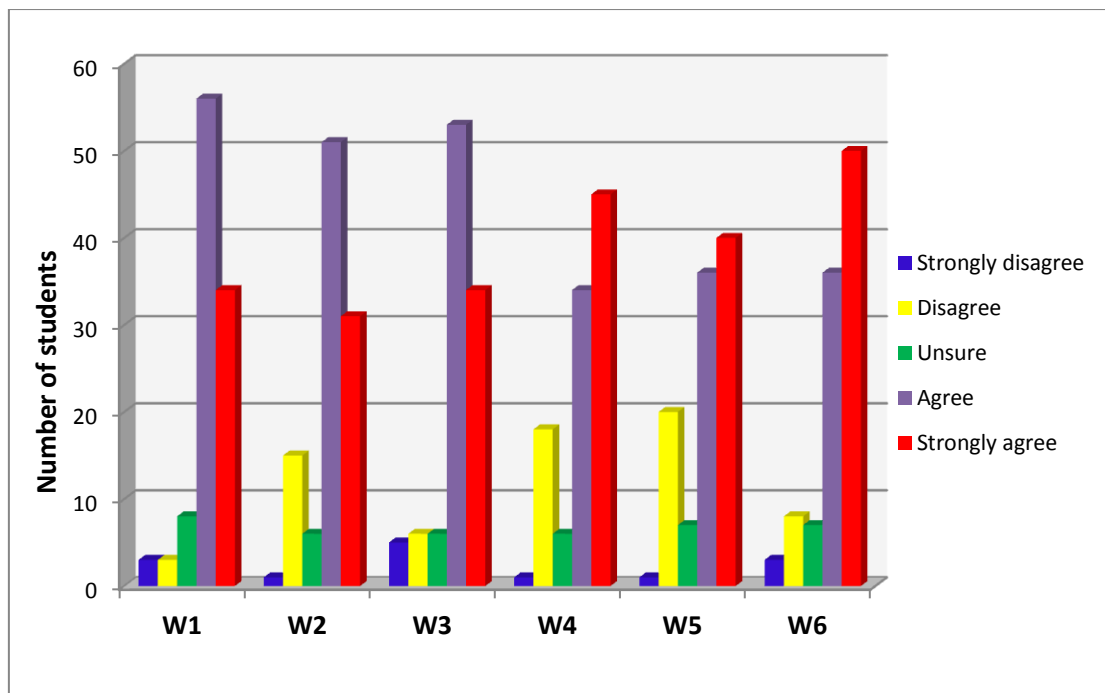
Figure 4.12 UG & PG1 students' evaluation of library website, where: **W1** - Simple navigation; **W2** – Currency; **W3** - Easy to locate information; **W4** - Information is always correct; **W5** - Sufficient information regarding resources & services and **W6** - Straightforward catalogue

Figure 4.12 summarises the responses of UG and PG1 students. The outcome is that generally students are satisfied with the design and currency of the library website and especially with its simple navigation and practical catalogue. The number of dissatisfied students however, is disappointingly high, i.e. 21% of the students are dissatisfied with the information sufficiency regarding available resources and services, 19% and 14% are displeased with the accuracy and currency of information respectively. Further thorough appraisal of these drawbacks is required.

The survey for PG2 students enclosed only two elements of library website efficiency – design and information sufficiency (Table 4.3). Interestingly the responses for both questions are identical. The results clearly state a sufficient proportion of satisfied and very satisfied students. The table also illustrates the greater percentage

of neutral PG2 students (17%) compared to UG and PG1 students (less than 10% for

each aspect), which suggests that UG and PG1 students may be more expressive of

their opinion.

	Website design		Sufficient information	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Dissatisfied	4	5	4	5
Neutral	14	17	14	17
Satisfied	46	57	46	57
Very satisfied	17	21	17	21
Total	**81**	**100**	**81**	**100**

Table 4.3 PG2 students' evaluation of design and sufficiency of information
on the library website

4.2.2.6 Library staff rating

As it was established in Chapter 2, the staff knowledge and attitude are

amongst the key factors influencing students' library experience. Therefore, an

examination of students' evaluation of library staff skills was also performed. Students'

opinions from both surveys are compared in Figure 4.13 (detailed charts in Appendixes

H1 and H2).

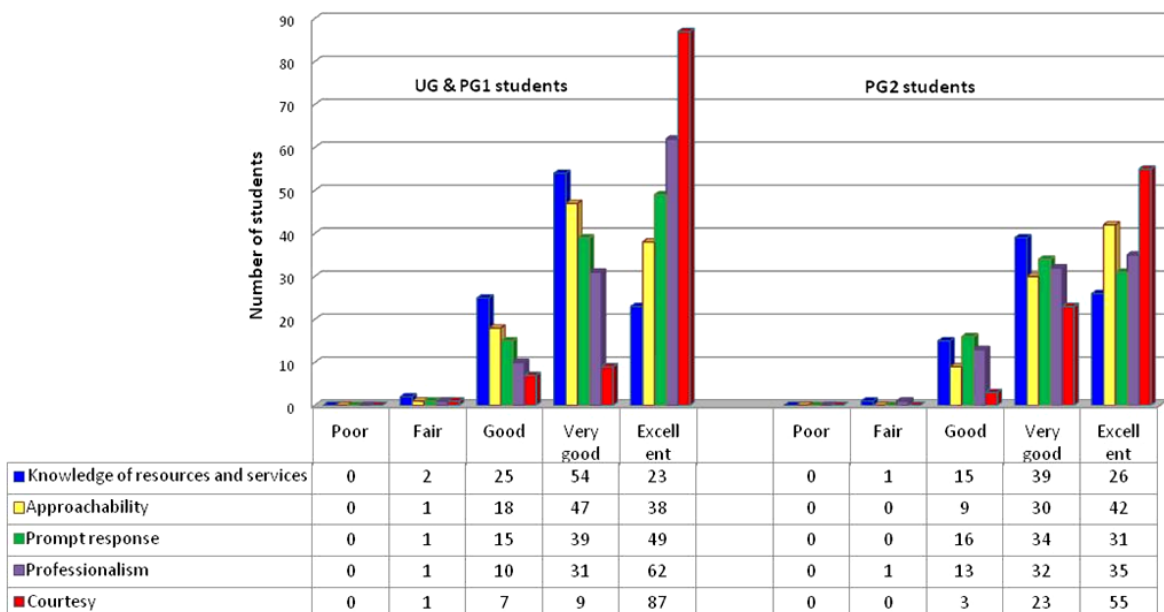|	UG & PG1 students					PG2 students				
	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent		Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
Knowledge of resources and services	0	2	25	54	23		0	1	15	39	26
Approachability	0	1	18	47	38		0	0	9	30	42
Prompt response	0	1	15	39	49		0	0	16	34	31
Professionalism	0	1	10	31	62		0	1	13	32	35
Courtesy	0	1	7	9	87		0	0	3	23	55

Figure 4.13 Library staff rating by international students at different levels of study

Figure 4.13 illustrates a general satisfaction of staff proficiency from students at all educational levels. Overall, all participants rate staff courtesy and professionalism as exceptional and their knowledge of resources and services as very good. There are some differences in opinion, namely the UG and PG1 students are less satisfied with staff approachability and are more content with their prompt response, while the results for PG2 students show the opposite effect.

4.2.2.7 Suggestions for service improvement

The participants were given a chance to disclose their best and worst experiences in McClay Library and the opportunity to suggest further improvements of library services.

Amongst the best features the library offers, students distinguish Inter-lending, self-service and reservation systems. Additionally, students are attracted by the building design and library layout, providing "great study environment and facilities" (20_PG2). Another success is the amount and variety of available resources, which students describe as: "fairly broad and contemporary collection" (46_PG2), "organised and easy to find materials" (27_PG2), variety of "online availability of resources" (9_PG2).

There are unfortunately some areas of library functionality, which students find unsatisfactory. The majority of students are mainly discouraged by the opening hours, noise and lack of study space, issues which were addressed shortly after the surveys were conducted. Several students express disappointment in the insufficiency or capacity of IT equipment (e.g. computing and software availability).

Through this survey also became clear the general confusion regarding the purpose of some services, e.g. "Reservations are lost materials put aside" (4_PG2).

Students also make further suggestions for collection improvement:

> "Several books in the reading list for my course were found only in 1 or 2 copies. This meant that if one got the book, the others in class would have to wait" (9_UG&PG1)

> "I would recommend the library to obtain more electronic journals and databases, which we can use on research" (6_PG2)

The perceived deficiency of materials is an issue for home students as well. Unfortunately, resolving this depends on the library budget and collection development policy.

Single comments, such as:

> "Trying to login to QUB Athens system when I am trying to find a database. This has not worked for a number of months. I now use a roundabout way to find the database I want" (17_PG2)

> "Catalogue is not friendly for users (I mean the on-line search) and doesn't reflect the stock. If I needed specific book, I would just need to find it in the shelf (check if it is there)" (8_UG&PG1)

> "The website is very confusing. I usually end up calling the librarian for clarification and confirmation on information provided on the website" (5_UG&PG1)

illustrate misunderstanding of the access to electronic resources used at QUB and lack of skills to use the library OPAC, which should be addressed further by library staff.

Several constructive suggestions were made, such as: to provide access to online dictionaries and translation software or to expand the collection of English

grammar and foreign languages books. Other practical recommendations are to increase the number of library tours, study training particularly for international students or even to hire "multi-lingual part-time staff ... to assist students who struggle at understanding English language or the local accent" (2_UG&PG1). Some students suggest that a section of the library could be dedicated for PG2 students only or a quiet place for international students from other religions, where students can perform their prayers (23_UG&PG1). Unfortunately, those are not plausible considering the library capacity. Furthermore, such areas are available at the International Student Support and Postgraduate Students Centre, which are in close proximity to the library.

One particular view on improvement of library services is slightly different:

> "International research student is also research student. Why do you have to name it apart from other research students? Can we get different treatments? NO. Can we not speak English while ask for books? NO. We are forced to speak and read in local style. Why do you want to change it so called improve? That doesn't make sense" (63_PG2).

It is difficult to completely understand the student's comment. However, generally it points to the sensitivity of the issue.

4.3 Interviews

This section presents the results from the personal interviews with front-line library staff. Considering the key responsibilities of the two groups of interviewees, questions for paraprofessional staff were primarily customer care oriented, while the

interviews with the professionals focused on subject support and research training of international students.
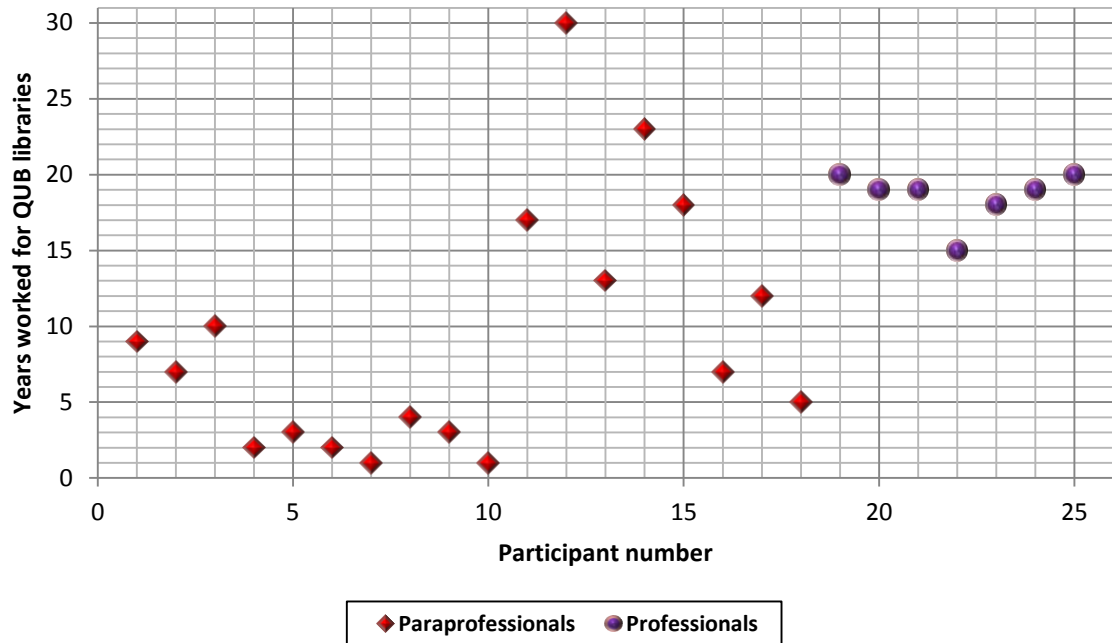

Figure 4.14 Distribution of the population participating in the interviews in accordance with the years they have worked for the QUB libraries

The distribution of study population reveals that only 1/3 of the interviewed paraprofessional staff have worked for the Queen's libraries for more than 10 years and 8 of the participants have worked for less than 5 years, thus having considerably less experience supporting international students in this particular academic environment (Figure 4.14). The graph also shows that the professional staff has more than 15 years experience with this university, which suggests they would have a better understanding of the Library policies and procedures.

The first theme that derives from the interviews is that: **The library staff is not aware of the existence of an Action plan concerning international students**. The majority of participants believe that a policy outlining library's commitment to those

students and expectations from them, the quality of services they are entitled to and the responsibilities of various support services would be equally beneficial for students and staff. Naturally, some differing views were also expressed:

> "It may be unfair to be seen to give certain students more [help] than others" (ST14) or

> "Not necessarily – if our interaction with all students is done with care and sensitivity" (ST23)

The two comments are closely linked and can be seen to reflect the view of student 63_PG2 (p.60).

The interviews illustrate that **Library staff is generally unaware of a member of staff designated to support international students**. Even the few positive responses, were uncertain of the exact role of this liaison representative.

Only one interviewee was able to give detailed answers regarding the action plan and the international students' library representative:

> "Yes, we do [have an international students' Action plan]... It is 3 and a half years old - a direct action plan.... It hasn't been published. It is an internal group – it is actually one of our divisional objectives...." (ST19)

Unfortunately, even after further prompting, it did not become clear the content of this Action plan and the reasons for its confidentiality.

> "When I came to my job ... I became our representative for international students. It just means that I am the contact person for the library to see how things pan out – it means that I will know

people in the International Student Support Centre, in INTO[9] and in the International Office. The plan is to see how to improve relations – the first thing that I did was to contact them [the university units supporting international students] – to go and meet them in order to see what they needed... Really what came out from that was concerned with arranging tours and improving tours … focusing on what they can expect in the library … letting them know it is a free service. …. We need to address some of the cultural barriers - things like how to speak to people at service points; ...perhaps providing some etiquette awareness; ...making them feel comfortable to get help; educating them about what is expected of them" (ST19)

This response confirms the existence of library support officer for international students. It also reveals various initiatives to support those students developed in collaboration with other university organisations. Unfortunately, the response is too vague with regards to any ideas of how to implement them. Regrettably, this interview revealed that the only time the international students' views have been inquired was through a rather unsuccessful survey organised two years ago:

"[We] tried to do a good qualitative survey but we couldn't get the international students to come in" (ST19)

Another weakness of the library is that: **There are no designated webpages for international students on the library website**. The majority of participants consider the designated pages on the University or the Language Centre websites as sufficient. These provide details about accommodation, life in Belfast, international societies, language courses, but do not offer information regarding the library. The following statement summarises those opinions:

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[9] INTO University Partnerships is the umbrella name of an organisation working in collaboration with "a range of leading universities in the UK and the US to reshape programmes and services for international students" ("INTO")

> "What would we say that would be different to any other students? Why would we single out a group that we would prefer felt integrated to the 'Queen's family'" (ST21)

The staff attitude towards cultural awareness was also studied - only two participants have attended cultural awareness training, 70% are not aware of such training provided in the university; however 90% of the interviewed believe that such training would be useful. The following responses recapitulate the polarised staff feelings:

> "Too many cultures are represented at QUB to be able to provide useful training. However, general customer service training with an aspect on cultural awareness could be beneficial" (ST9)

> "I would strongly advocate that international students are not treated in very different ways to any other students – in my experience learning about using the library is something all students have to go through and in many cases the difficulties felt by international students are shared with their non-international fellows" (ST22)

The professional library staff interviews focused on the differences in study and research behaviour of international and local students. The majority of staff recognises the difference between the information needs of international and home students.

> "Yes, it depends on their background and cultural references as well as the resources (including people) to which they had access before Queen's" (ST20)

> "High proportions of students visiting the RefWorks trainings are international students - this is obviously something new for them" (ST23)

The most frequently mentioned additional information needs of international students were mainly related to language, such as alternative signage, "better

explanation of library terminology" (ST3), "one-to-one or small group sessions for use of catalogue and other facilities" (ST5), multilingual user guides and even development of "library staff language skills" (ST12).

The general opinion of professional staff is that there is also a distinction in information-seeking behaviour of international students, depending on cultural and educational differences:

> "Yes, some may be used to a less independent style of info seeking" (ST20)

> "English speaking institutions seem to have resources that are not available in non-English speaking institutions. My impression is that there is more emphasis of printed reference material in non-English speaking countries" (ST22)

To further examine staff perception of international students' study behaviour, interviewees were asked whether it is necessary to recognise diverse learning styles. This question aroused a broad range of responses:

> "The issue of addressing 'learning styles' goes beyond the library and would have to be addressed by both schools and the library. There is also a question of the extent to which the library (or the university) should seek to imitate other institutions … I would also question why we would want to make radical changes to our 'learning styles and the library experience', international students have after all chosen this institution because they want to get the type of education and experience it offers" (ST22)

> "Definitely yes! For some cultures and thus learning approaches it is considered to be a noble thing to copy others' work. Hence, the problem with plagiarism" (ST25)

These two opinions suggest librarians recognise the difficulties that may be caused by diverse learning styles and appreciate that they should be addressed by both academic schools and the library.

In conclusion, all interviewees agreed that the library terminology is another major problem for international students at McClay Library.

> "[International students] are less likely to have heard of the terminology we use in the library and it is harder to explain the meaning to them. We take it for granted that the words such as issue, discharge, renewed, due back on etc., will make sense, but they are better ways of getting the same functions across and avoiding technical in-house talk" (ST6)

Various suggestions were made on how library staff can overcome these obstacles, including use of simple English language and avoiding jargon when communicating with international students; simplifying library terminology; increasing practical demonstrations of services accompanied by explanatory handouts. Further approaches included encouraging students to socialise with locals and to discover local culture by organising various library events and exhibitions. All participants consider face-to-face contacts as the best method for communication with international students:

> "When you get a conversation you can probe more and pick out the areas they're interested in. You can't do that with email. Personal contact is more useful" (ST19)

4.4 Website observations

An examination of other Irish universities' preparation for international students was another objective of this study. Five Irish academic libraries' websites were analysed – i.e. University of Ulster (UU), Trinity College Dublin (TCD), University College Dublin (UCD), University College Cork - Boole Library (UCC), National University of Ireland at Galway - James Hardiman Library (NUIG) (Appendix J). There are numerous criteria for evaluation of a website, which include authority, currency, objectivity, scope and quality of information, accuracy, grammatical correctness, design, useability, cost. Criteria chosen as particularly important for this investigation were:

- availability of information directed especially for international students and/or presence of links to specialised university or governmental websites (e.g. International Office, UKCISA).

- sufficient and clearly presented information for self-training and study support

- accessibility to glossary of library terminology,

- comprehensive guides for resources, services and policies;

- convenient information for library training courses, online tutorials, subject support;

- design, useability and currency of the websites (Table 4.4).

The library website at UU is characterised by simplicity and rational presentation of information. Individual information for various user types (Distance, Part-time and Associate students, SCONUL, Alumni and INSPIRE readers) is clearly

offered, which unfortunately excludes the expanding group of international students. Although there is no last update record, it is evident that news are regularly updated.

The first impression of the library portal at TCD is of a complicated website with immense variety of information and collections' advertisement. Once past the initial overload, the logical order of the information is evident and offers easy navigation and retrieval of data. A good practice here is the availability of comprehensive notes regarding accessibility of the website in agreement with the Disability Act 2005.

Criteria	UU	TCD	UCD	UCC	NUIG
Information committed only for International students	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
Link to International Office website	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
Glossary of library terminology	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
Comprehensive guides for library services, policies and procedures	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Study and research support: • Online tutorials • Information for library trainings • Additional study support • Subject specialists contacts • Live enquiry support	✓ ✓ ✗ ✓ ✗	✓ ✓ ✗ ✓ ✗	✓ ✗ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✗ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
Design and useability: ▪ Simplicity ▪ Practical use of colours and graphs ▪ Easy navigation ▪ Adequate size and quantity of text ▪ Accessibility ▪ Multilingual opportunities ▪ Direct access to the library catalogue	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✗ ✗ ✗	✗ ✓ ✓ ✗ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✗ ✓ ✓ ✗ ✗ ✓	✗ ✓ ✓ ✗ ✓ ✓ ✓	✗ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✗ ✓
Currency: - 'Last updated' date - Latest updated news on homepage	✗ ✓	✓ ✓	✗ ✗	✓ ✓	✗ ✗

Table 4.4 Assessment of quality of library information services for international students

The UCD initially offers a gateway 'Library and Archives', describing the mission and role of these branches. It also provides a link to the University International Office. The library website itself is well organised, easy to navigate and locate the comprehensive guides for writing, citing and resource evaluation skills. The virtual library tour is an original supplement. One disadvantage may be that 'Live chat' service appears hidden at first sight (same colour and style to other information links and positioned directly underneath them). There is no evidence also of a regular website update.

Amongst the five examined entries, UCC presents the most efficient and informative library website. Despite the large amount of text on the homepage and the spacious news and calendar sections, the neat use of graphs and colours makes it easier to navigate. The homepage also provides a noticeable direct link to webpages designated for international students. This additional webspace offers very exhaustive study and research guides and tutorials, links to external resources (international newspapers, online dictionaries and various web gateways), as well as contact details of library staff including the languages they speak.

Although the actual information on the library website at NUIG is clear and segregated in sections for 'Collections', 'Using the library' and 'Support', it requires further scrolling of the page to locate required information. A very useful addition to the library services here is the presence of specialised 'Academic Writing Centre', where there is a possibility to book group or one-to-one tuition sessions. The later could be especially helpful to those students unfamiliar with academic writing and not confident enough to participate in group trainings.

4.5 Summary

In conclusion, the results from this study show that international students' demands and expectations confirm various theories from the literature. They also illustrate some inconsistency between library staff perception of efficient study support for international students with the actual students' needs.

The outcome from student surveys illustrate a generally high level of satisfaction from recourses, services and library staff skills considering the variety of previous experiences and the broad spectrum of expectations of the international students' population.

The findings from the interviews illustrate different problems library staff encounter supporting international students. Certain biased perceptions cannot be disregarded, including the necessity of a designated web space, the variations in information-seeking behaviour and recognition of the diversity of learning styles.

The results from library websites observation demonstrate various achievements in academic libraries across RoI and NI regarding international students' study support. It is obvious that although most libraries do not offer information designed specifically for international students, the availability of comprehensive study guides, online tutorials and other supplementary services are a good start for all readers, unfamiliar with library traditions.

Further analysis of the findings will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussions

5.1 Introduction

The literature review highlighted several factors shaping international students' study behaviour and library expectations:

- Language barrier affecting the way students communicate;

- Cultural values determining students' behaviour in the library;

- Teaching styles and learning approaches, influencing students' information-seeking and academic writing skills;

- Previous library experience, e.g. access to resources affecting students' perception and confidence using the McClay Library; previous encounters with library staff or culture image of librarians resulting in avoidance of contact with staff.

Focusing on these factors, this chapter discusses the results from international students' surveys and the outcomes from personal interviews with library staff. The observations of other Irish academic libraries' websites are also discussed.

5.2 International students' expectations and satisfaction from resources, services and staff skills at McClay Library

5.2.1 Information needs and previous library experience

To assess how existing information support in McClay Library accommodates international students, it is crucial initially to identify the essential resources those students require and their previous experience with various services. This will allow

library staff to focus on collections requiring expansion and services needing better marketing.

The results from both student surveys confirm an expectation for a high demand of materials for improving English proficiency, essential for international students' adaptation to the local environment and their academic success. Similar demand to increase such materials is reported in other studies (Yi 668).

The intense necessity for materials supporting academic studies also affirms theories from literature indicating students' inexperience in academic writing in some countries, such as China (Cortazzi and Jin 78) and Bulgaria (Vassileva 99). Further cross-examination of the results with participants' geographical origin also supports those hypotheses by revealing a higher percentage of students from Europe and Asia intensely and frequently requiring materials for improving their academic skills compared to students from Africa and South America (Figure 5.1).

This high demand of English language and academic study materials suggests that a revision of current library collections in McClay Library and possible development of additional study skills courses would be highly beneficial for international students.
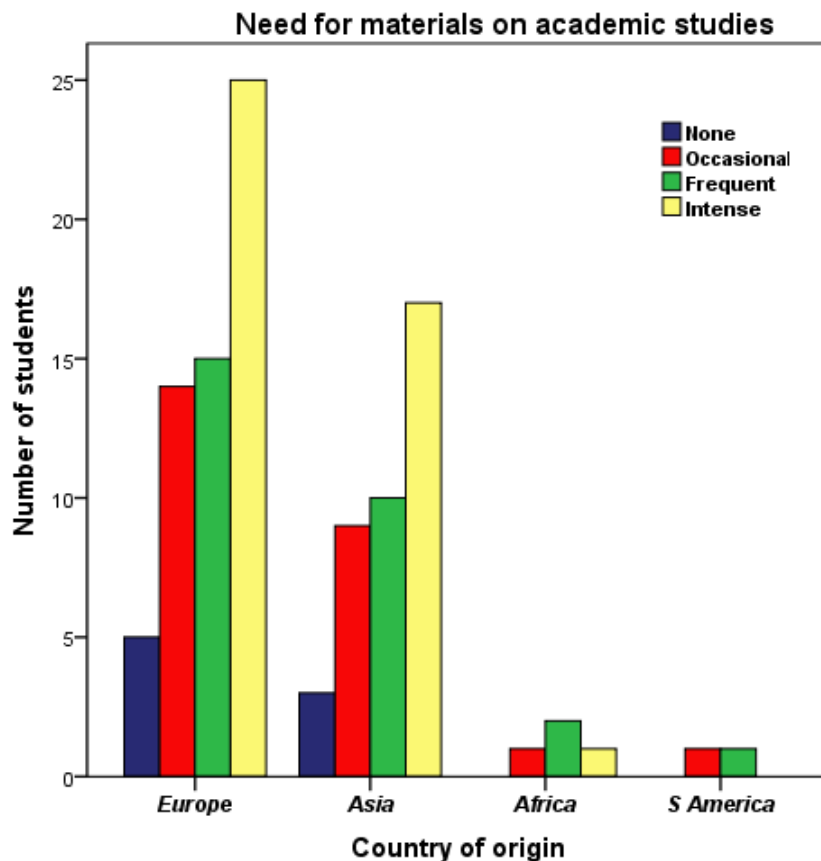
Figure 5.1 Needs of materials for academic skills enhancement, presented by students' geographical origin

The surveys also convey a higher requirement for online tutorials instead of personal training. This outcome could have been influenced by a language barrier, time and location constrains or previous negative experiences with staff. Further cross-examination of students' preferences with their geographical origin reveals that students from Africa and South America consider equally important searching the Internet and seeking guidance from library staff (Figure 5.2). In contrast, students from Asia and Europe generally favour independent research of online resources. These results may confirm hypotheses from the literature suggesting that some cultures diminish the professional skills and qualifications of library staff, thus considering insignificant their support (Ajileye-Laogun 16; Mu 577). This issue requires further

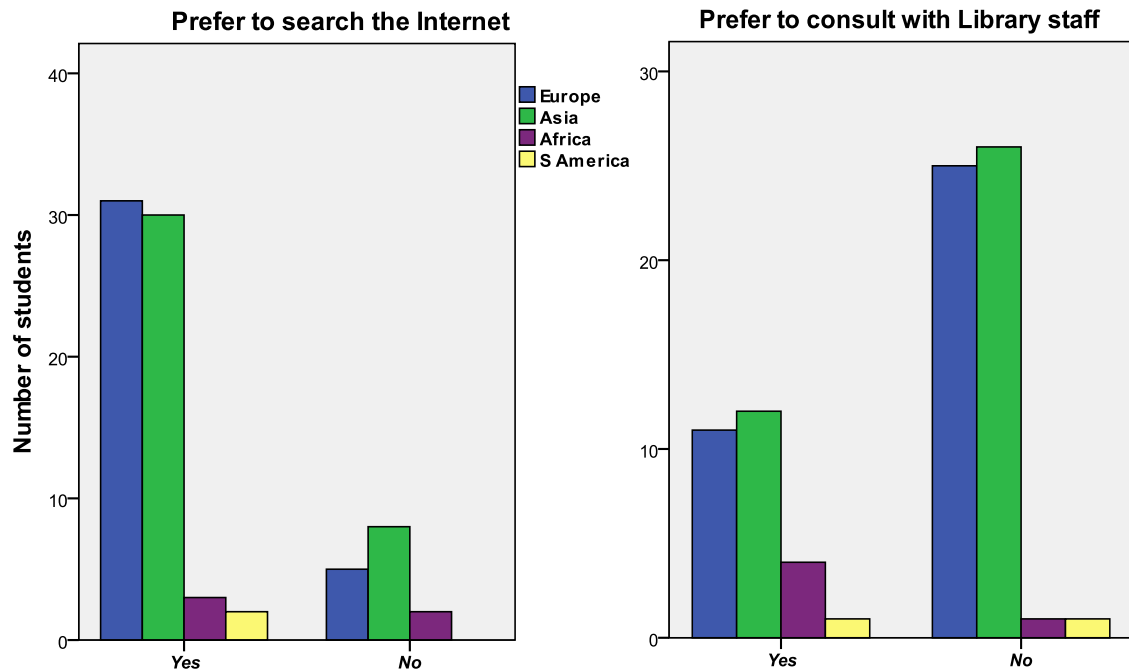thorough investigation involving a much larger stratified population to clarify these results.

Figure 5.2 Preferred methods for acquiring information for students with different geographical origin

Students' demands for particular information resources and services are related to their previous library experiences. If students do not have prior knowledge or skills with certain information services, they would not be able to recognise their academic significance and fully benefit from them. The findings reveal that services, such as Scanned module readings, Inter-branch loans and Group study are unknown amongst the majority of UG and PG1 students. Similarly, over half of the population of PG2 students are unfamiliar with Inter-library loan services and have not used any bibliographic management systems. The unfamiliarity with Inter-library loan service of international students is consistent with published results from similar investigations (Puente, Gray, Agnew 37; Marama 93; Jackson 203). As the above-mentioned services

are very beneficial for academic achievement, library staff needs to further determine the extent of students' knowledge of each individual underused library service. Cross-examination of the results with country of origin and level of study would indicate where library staff needs to emphasise marketing of those services in the future and possibly develop related training sessions aimed exclusively for international students.

5.2.2 Satisfaction with existing services and staff skills

The awareness of international students' previous library experiences can also predict the frequency of usage of various services offered in McClay Library. The findings from this study affirm general underuse of scanned module materials, reservations, Inter-library loans and group study rooms, resulting from students' unawareness of the connotation or importance of those services. Furthermore, some students expressed dissatisfaction with reserving books for readers (thus keeping them away from the shelf stock), while several other students criticised the insufficiency of electronic resources, or the organisation of inter-library loans service. These comments suggest misinterpretation of the concepts of those services or general misunderstanding of collection management policies. Another explanation is offered in an investigation in Chinese academic libraries (Jiao et al. 5). The authors report similar findings regarding library terminology ('Reserve Services') or policy for 'Inter-library loans':

> "The Chinese wording for 'Reserve Services' is similar to 'holds'…. From ALA Multilingual Glossary: Language Table (ACRL Instruction Section), the Japanese translation for Reserve Services is 'Curriculum Reference Books'. This is similar to the 'Curriculum Supplementary Materials Reading Room' where many Chinese academic libraries have organized and more importantly where the librarians might determine what materials are placed on reserve" (5)

"We learned from our colleagues in China that the 'returnable' ILL items were least favorable in their ILL practices.... Libraries prefer to scan the requested chapter into digital format for loaning to other library patrons" (6).

As the surveys used here recurrently demonstrated, the majority of international students choose to exploit mainly online resources and support. This emphasises the importance of an efficient library website for international students. Unfortunately, the QUB library does not have web pages devoted exclusively for those students. Despite students' overall satisfaction with the current website, several negative comments were also expressed, regarding insufficiency and inaccuracy of the online information, and complexity of the library OPAC. This highlight the necessity for further systematic examination of the website, clear presentation of glossary of library terminology and improvement of information literacy courses with extensive demonstrations in the use of the library catalogue.

This study provides evidence for a general satisfaction of library staff knowledge, professionalism, prompt response and courtesy. Additional cross-examination of the results with students' geographical origin did not show any cultural differences in students' opinions. Although these satisfactory findings are gratifying, they fail to explain why the majority of students prefer online training or independent search of electronic resources and the Internet, than to seek assistance from library staff. The results are surprisingly positive compared to hypotheses from previous studies (Ajileye-Laogun 16; Mu 577). The positive outcome could be due to a bias, such as students' good manners or cultural praise of professionals' authority, or simply trying to please a member of staff acquiring their evaluation of library staff proficiency.

Further individual interviews with the international students may present more clarity on this matter.

5.3 Staff experiences and attitudes regarding international students

In light of the outcome from students' surveys and recent concerns for international students' welfare worldwide, the results from interviews with library staff are rather disappointing. It appears that the staff at McClay Library is not aware of clear guidelines for communication, support and information skills development regarding those students. Furthermore, frontline personnel are generally uncertain of the existence or the role of an International Student Support Officer in the library. The only member of staff who confirmed the existence of an action plan and a library international students' support officer, could not explain why these are not promoted clearly amongst students and staff.

The international students' library support officer response implies that amongst their main post's responsibilities, they fulfil the role of a Liaison Officer between the library and various university units supporting international students. This is very different from the image of an International Students Support Librarian described in the literature (Singer 64; Mestre 50), whose only duties should include being students' primary contact for library enquiries and guiding library staff in their information delivery to those students. The interviewee further assumes that the students' support for any social issues and language barrier, study skills trainings and multicultural events arrangements are obligations for other university authorities, such as International Office, INTO, Language Centre, and thus diminishes the role of the

library to a passive information distributor. Moreover, the message emerging from this interview is that the library, in collaboration with other university support units, essentially decides what those students need (without asking for students' opinion), which is to be aware of various local rules and regulations, and to adjust to **our** language, culture and etiquette.

From the staff experience, the main problems with international students are associated with communication (due to language barrier) and etiquette (due to cultural misinterpretations). It became clear that the majority of library staff has not attended any cultural awareness training, however generally they regard such activities as beneficial and even essential. The results also illustrate that a number of staff confuses the university-wide diversity guidance with cultural awareness training, which further confirms the necessity to introduce staff to the various cultures embraced at QUB and their traditions. Detailed examination of international students' experiences in McClay Library may assist in future development of cultural awareness courses for library staff.

Although the library is "trying to reach out" to international students (ST19), the interviews revealed that the majority of library staff does not consider the development of a webpage dedicated to those students as important. The common staff perception is that there is no need to distinguish between groups of students, especially when there is nothing exceptional to offer to international students that is not already provided on the website. As the first study at the McClay Library investigating international students' online preferences, the results presented here are significant and show that these students expect easy access to online dictionaries and

thesauri, a glossary of library jargon, or quick links to other lingual, cultural or governmental resources. Of course, the library staff is correct in insisting that all this information is available elsewhere on university and departmental websites and there in no need to repeat it. The question is: As a key provider of information, isn't it the library's responsibility to serve as a gateway to this information through its website instead of waiting for other support offices to develop "a link to the library pages" (ST19)?

The library staff generally agrees with the differences in information-seeking behaviour and information needs of international students as a result of their cultural background or previous access to resources. Despite this, the professional library staff does not consider it important to provide separate information literacy training for those students. They argue that it is not uncommon even for local students to be unfamiliar with various information resources, resulting in their incomplete exploitation. Therefore, librarians rely on individual schools and other academic authorities to prepare international students for their educational journey, providing initial study skills support. Consequently, librarians hope that those students would not require separate library courses, but rather an adjustment of the delivery method, e.g. speaking slowly and clearly, developing visual and textual tutorials for all students and offering additional training sessions only on request. This teaching approach however, disregards students from English speaking countries, who might be irritated by the speed of teaching. The other extreme is also possible - excluding some non-English speaking students with no previous knowledge of various resources, who may be afraid of appearing unintelligent. Therefore, the professional staff should probably

consider organising follow-up sessions after the general induction training, particularly for small groups of international students requiring more detailed explanations and hands-on exercises.

Another disturbing outcome of the interviews is the negative attitude towards acknowledgement of the diversity in teaching and learning styles worldwide. The majority of professional library staff are not aware that various cultures have different traditions and learning styles, which may affect students' academic achievements abroad. Some librarians confuse learning styles with level of English proficiency or cultural barrier, but are not aware of different styles involving thoroughly reproducing teaching authority's opinion, passive participation in the education, or assumed acceptance of information. Others misunderstand the purpose of exploring foreign learning styles, assuming it is with the intention to change our styles in order to imitate international students' learning environment. Thus the majority of librarians fail to understand that as information literacy educators, the knowledge of various teaching and learning styles worldwide may explain why international students have a different appreciation of and attitude towards various information services and library staff, or why some of them are not actively involved in discussions. This awareness would assist in developing appropriate training courses for those students and introducing our learning approach more effectively.

5.4 Website observations

5.4.1 Other Irish academic libraries' achievements

The observation of the websites of other Irish academic libraries illustrates a common lack of webpages nominated for international students or direct links to other

sites for support (e.g. International Office). Only the library at UCC has recognised the growing importance of providing online support to the international students.

Despite the lack of designated webspace in the other observed universities, international and new students are still able to easily navigate through logically organised information and comprehensive support guides on library resources, services, policies, referencing and plagiarism. Various additional advertisement materials (TCD) or graphics (NUIG) however, add complexity and may have a negative effect on new users.

Some of the examined universities recognise diversity amongst library users by providing sufficient information for other different types of readers, but not international students (UU). Others offer specialised online study support sectioned by different levels of education (UCD).

Although a glossary of library terminology is available on most of the websites, this especially useful information is commonly hidden a few clicks away for first-time users. Direct access to the library OPAC from the homepage is also a good idea, which most of the universities have adopted. Regularly updated news on all websites about courses, resource availability status and even various events and exhibitions is also a useful tool for students.

5.4.2 QUB library website

The design and structure of QUB library website are more similar to those at UU than the other Irish universities (Figure 5.3). The data is separated into several main sections, without confusing readers with excessive information. For example, in

order to review policies on borrowing, renewing or reserving materials, readers first need to select 'Using the Library' link. This design simplifies information retrieval for new and international students. However, links could be simplified even further by additional clustering, such as 'The McClay Library', 'Medical and Healthcare Library' and 'AFBI (Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute) Library' under heading '*Libraries at QUB*' or 'Using the Library', 'Library Opening Hours', 'Guides, Policies and Regulations' and 'Library Research Skills' under heading '*Using the Library*'. Such presentation has been adopted by TCD, UCD and NUIG.
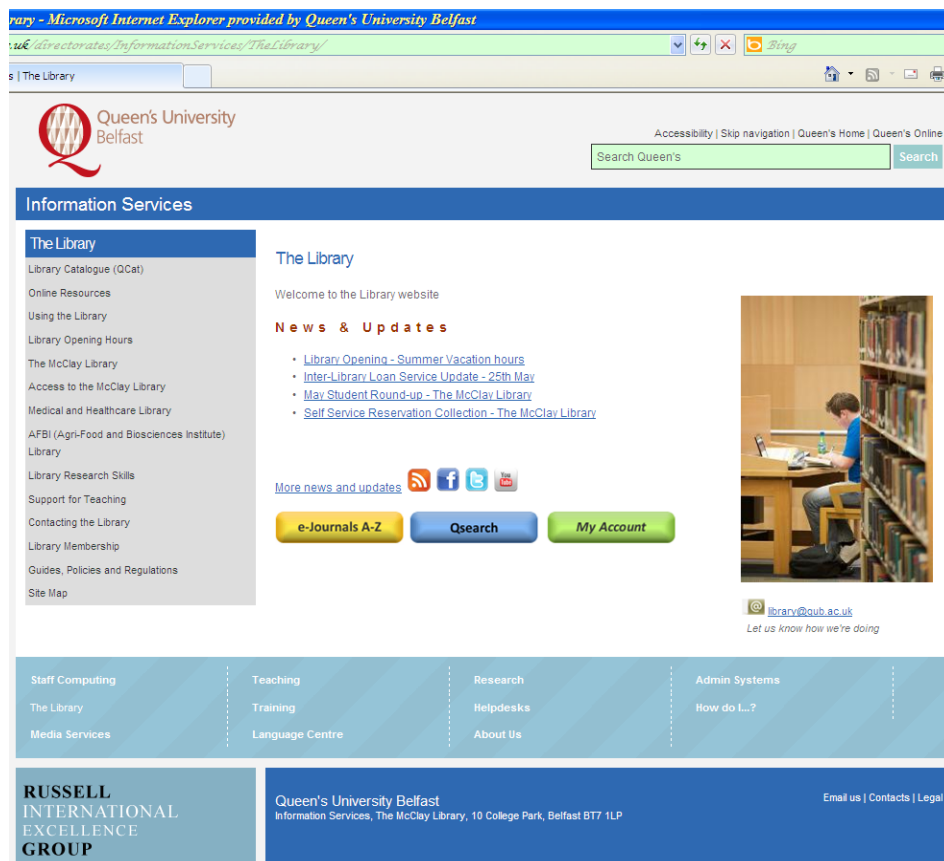
Figure 5.3 Queen's University Belfast Library website

While the 'Live enquiry support' appears to be popular among many Irish universities, this service was not received well by QUB students. This may be explained by the impersonal nature of the service. Another reason may be the recent merge and relocation of several library branches, which led staff to prioritise the promotion of other services. Frequency of enquiries did not justified time invested by staff, therefore this service was withdrawn from the library website.

Unfortunately, the website is lacking in separate information for international (or even new) students. This exclusion suggests that the library does not favour some student groups over others. However, clear acknowledgement of 'Staff who can help' would be beneficial for international students. It may be worth for QUB staff to further investigate UCC achievements and adopt various ideas to improve the online support for international students.

5.5 Summary

The outcomes from this study confirm published results of similar investigations abroad regarding international students' information needs and expectations. The investigation identified a range of information resources and library services not fully exploited or new for those students. This leads to the question of whether such resources are correctly introduced to those students. Further rigorous promotion and demonstration of such resources and services is necessary. The results also confirm that an awareness of various library regulations abroad, leading to particular information retrieval skills, is necessary. This would assist the McClay Library to become better equipped to meet the information expectations of future international recruits. The study establishes a general satisfaction of available services

and staff proficiency in the McClay Library and identifies several weaknesses, which need to be addressed in the future.

Generally library staff acknowledges the various challenges international students encounter in McClay Library. It is apparent that there is widespread requirement for cultural awareness courses for library staff. Overall professional staff perceptions of international students' demands do not fully reflect the contemporary tendency for recognition and special consideration of those students in terms of library services, as directed by SCONUL Group. The majority of McClay Library professionals for example, do not recognise differences in students' study behaviour and their influence on academic achievement. This may explain why library professionals have not considered developing appropriate training approaches for diverse students. Furthermore, many librarians believe other university authorities to be responsible for students' adjustment to the local study environment, thus diminishing the role of the library in the study process. All these concerns need particular attention in the future.

The study also reveals the necessity for re-evaluation of the online support for international students. The observation of other Irish academic libraries' websites illustrates a different level of preparation at some of those institutions for their international students. Several valuable ideas arising from the results of this investigation were discussed in this chapter. The study reveals that a future liaison with those universities and possible exchange of experiences would be beneficial for McClay Library.

The next chapter will recommend further improvements to services for international students in McClay Library.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

The increased number of international students at QUB over the last six years calls for further investigation of information services for those students. The aim of this research was to conduct a comprehensive investigation of existing library services at the McClay Library, QUB for those students integrating different viewpoints. The following overview illustrates how the aim and objectives of this study were accomplished and concludes with recommendations for improving library services for international students.

6.1 Research objectives

To establish whether the library is prepared to accommodate the anticipated further increase of the number of international students, the researcher commenced a study of the factors influencing the academic journey of those students, as published in the literature. In order to understand international students' additional information needs, the researcher then set out an investigation to identify the differences between the library services offered at QUB and students' home countries. The research continued with an examination of the frequency of use of various services available at McClay Library and students' satisfaction with these. The study was also concerned with identifying library staff awareness and any challenges they have experienced while supporting international students. Thus, by establishing the weaknesses in information delivery to international students, the researcher was hoping to draw the attention of the McClay Library's Management Team to the exceptional needs and expectations of international students and the necessity to further develop the existing services. Finally, the achievements in support of international students of other

academic libraries were observed, which enable the researcher to provide recommendations for further improvement of the information services in McClay Library.

6.2 Literature review synopsis

Through its comprehensive literature review the research reveals various challenges international students encounter in their academic journey. Using a large number of published studies, it provides an in-depth description of the key factors influencing those students' experience. The factors, such as cultural and language barrier, teaching styles and previous library skill were later used as guidelines for investigation. The review also presents an overview of the policies of different governmental and professional bodies have developed as a result of the increasing internationalisation of higher education. The study further examines other similar investigations and how academic libraries worldwide are approaching this issue. To gain a better understanding of the educational challenges for international students, the researcher attended several events at the beginning of this study, such as a CILIP workshop "Information services for international students", a "Introduction to Cultural Awareness" training session at QUB and the "Internationalisation in Higher Education" symposium at UU.

6.3 Overview of the research

The researcher employs a mixed-method approach - a quantitative research method, in combination with a qualitative technique, to allow a broad examination of the topic from different angles - the international students' and library staff points of view.

The sensitivity of the research question and difficulty identifying the target population resulted in various limitations in population sampling, organising and conducting the study, as discussed in Chapter3. To minimise these constraints, the researcher has selected paper and online surveys for international students in addition to the personal semi-structured interviews with library staff as the most appropriate data collection methods. The data was obtained from three different populations - taught and research students and library staff. Additionally, the study employed library websites observations to examine the current situation in other academic establishments.

In preparation for analysis of the data obtained from the surveys, the researcher undertook advanced training in the use of SPSS software for analysis of qualitative data in social sciences[10].

The findings from this study support hypotheses from the literature regarding the influence of different cultural and educational systems on students' study requirements (Cortazzi and Jin; Manikutty, Anuradha and Hansen; Vassileva). The results are also consistent with findings from similar investigations describing international students' unfamiliarity with various information services. The outcome of both surveys suggested different previous library experiences leading to a wide range of student expectations, as well as a number of resources and services offered at McClay Library, not fully exploited by those students. The findings also illustrated a general satisfaction of available resources, services and library staff skills, and identified several limitations, which need to be addressed in the future.

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[10] The hands-on training "Data Analysis using SPSS" was organised by the Staff Training and Development Unit at QUB and took place at the McClay Library on 4th & 5th Oct. 2010.

The results from the interviews presented various problems library staff encounters in assisting international students. Unfortunately, the researcher was not able to discover any publications of similar investigations for comparison. While the academic institutions worldwide are anxious to develop action plans for efficient study support for international students, the results from this research demonstrated that staff at McClay Library is not fully prepared to meet the actual needs of those students. Although the staff demonstrated an understanding of the challenges international students face and agreed with the necessity of mandatory cultural awareness courses, there are still several concerns regarding sufficient study support for those students, which staff need to address in the future.

The outcome from observation of several Irish academic libraries' websites revealed that only the UCC library offers comprehensive information specifically designed for international students. It became obvious however, that this disadvantage can be overcome with the availability of clear guides and policies, web-based tutorials and other additional study support. The research exposed the necessity for re-evaluation of the library website design with potential inclusion of additional online support for international students. In conclusion the study suggested that further investigation and future cooperation with those universities may bring valuable ideas for further development of the QUB Library website.

6.4 Lessons learned and limitations of the research

The key obstacle in this research was to identify the representative student population sample in accordance with the DPA'98. The advice for future researchers is to employ online surveys and seek assistance from the international students'

representatives to forward the surveys. These proved to be more effective in reaching out to the target population for cases, where it is difficult to identify the population without breaching the law.

Given the broad topic and numerous data collection methods chosen, the researcher encountered several challenges. First, interviews are very time-consuming, as is there transcription and analysis. Furthermore, due to expenses, it was necessary to employ a free online survey, which has design limitations. To overcome those limitations, any future studies of this scale could focus only on a particular population group. This would accelerate the data collection and reduce the time for its analysis. Additionally, if a qualitative method is chosen for the research (interviews in this case), future researchers should consider using a representative sample of the population, thus providing sufficient time to perform the study and analyse the data.

6.5 Recommendations and conclusions

The results from this investigation illustrate that there is an understanding of the diverse requirements and behaviour of international students and concern for their academic welfare amongst university officials (including the McClay library). However, there is much more to be done to improve the information services for those students, as summarised in the following recommendations:

- More comprehensive qualitative examination of international students' needs is necessary to clarify particular components of the existing library service requiring revision or the possibility for development of new services in order to meet students' expectations.

- As many international students prefer to work independently of time, location and staff availability, more attention should be drawn to accessible online support. Offering separate information for those students on the website does not necessarily mean that the library favours particular student groups over others. It would simply suggest that the library acknowledges their existence, appreciates their unique academic challenges and aims to equalise the study support with that for local students. Thus, the library website requires a comprehensive evaluation (perhaps with opinions from current students) and possible exchange of expertise with other experienced academic libraries, such as UCC.

- Particular attention needs to be drawn towards library staff awareness of cultural and study differences between students coming from diverse backgrounds. This could be achieved by arrangement of compulsory cultural awareness courses for all staff and distribution of supplementary materials amongst library professionals on various learning styles and study environments in the key countries represented by the international students' population in QUB.

- The liaison with other university units for support of international students (especially Language Centre) should be intensified for further development of library collections, language and cultural awareness courses for students and staff. Additionally, to increase the outreach to international students, the library should actively participate in organising multicultural events for those

students (e.g. celebration of various cultural and religious traditions, international intellectual and literary exhibitions). This would also be beneficial for international students' successful adjustment to life in NI and the local academic environment.

- Library policy regarding international students needs to be refined in accordance with SCONUL guidelines and using the expertise of other UK universities as examples. This policy must then be clearly publicised amongst students and staff. This action plan would be especially valuable to frontline library staff and direct them in the delivery of quality information services.

- Appointment of a member of staff with multilingual skills should be considered to be the key contact for international students. His/her responsibilities should be to not only liaise with other university units regarding students' adjustment to local study environment, but mainly to represent those students' prerogatives and assist in fulfilment of their additional requirements.

Are we there yet?

The current global credit crunch and subsequent budget cuts imposed by the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) pressurise higher education institutions in NI, as the rest of UK academia, to identify measures to reduce the funding deficiency. One of the key steps taken by QUB in this direction is to increase international recruitment. This emphasises even more on the importance of

developing high quality services considering the information requirements and expectations of all library users.

The presented research illustrates that the McClay Library has the capacity and willingness to support the growing number of international students. The library staff demonstrates understanding of cultural and language challenges and awareness of how various backgrounds and previous experiences may affect the academic journey of those students. However, the McClay Library is a long way from reaching the finishing line!

In order to become an International Academic Library, the McClay Library needs to re-evaluate the current situation exhaustively, develop a management plan and introduce a range of activities to overcome the existing deficiencies. All these improvements will require a considerable amount of time, expenditure and efforts, as well as essential library staff contributions. With the correct Action Plan and budget allocation, these improvements can be achieved in the most efficient way and bring the library and all of its services up to date for an international academic audience.

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Appendix A: Letter to International Office (Planning Office) at QUB

Queen's International Office (Planning Office)
Queen's University Belfast
BELFAST, BT7 1NN

5th January 2009

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Tatyana Malinova. I work as a Library Assistant at the Main Library, QUB. Currently I am undertaking "MSc (Econ) in Information and Library Studies" course through Aberystwyth University, Wales. My Masters Dissertation is concerned with the viability of Library Services for International Students at the Queen's University Belfast. The study aims to investigate the International students' information needs, their experience and expectations from the library in order to provide high quality information services.

In order to introduce the current international students' situation at QUB and draw up the sampling frame, this study requires the following information:

- Statistics for current number of undergraduate and postgraduate international students (for students only from non-UK, non-English speaking countries);

- Statistics for the number of those students in the last 5 years, in order to outline the trend in International students' submission;

- Additional information regarding any previous collaboration between the International Office and the Library at QUB.

The above information excludes any personal data regarding the international students.

As the dissertation project will include survey amongst international students and interviews with library staff to assess the effectiveness of current services and recommend improvements (if needed) of the library services for international students, I expect the final results to be valuable for the work of the International Office as well.

I would be very grateful if permission could be granted for me to use the above statistics and possibly other related materials.

Thanking you in advance

Tatyana Malinova
Library Assistant
Issue Desk, Main Library
Queen's University Belfast
Tel.: 028 90975022
E-mail: t.malinova@qub.ac.uk

Appendix B: Permission to perform the research in McClay Library

Ms Jacqueline McCurry
The McClay Library Manager
Queen's University Belfast
10 College Park
Belfast, BT7 1LP

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study in the Library

Dear Ms McCurry,

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at the McClay Library. I am currently enrolled in the MSc (Econ) in the Information and Library Studies course at Aberystwyth University, Wales, and I am in the process of writing my Master's Thesis. The study is entitled "*Investigation of the effectiveness of existing Library Services at the Queen's University Belfast for International Students from non-UK, non-English speaking countries*".

The research will include a survey amongst international students and interviews with the library staff to assess the viability of current library services and suggest improvements of the library services for international students. If approval is granted, student participants will complete a 1-page questionnaire (copy enclosed) in their own time and return it to the primary researcher. The survey process should take no longer than one month. Due to the nature of the study, I hope to engage several members from the Borrower Services staff to anonymously participate in individual interviews. These interviews should take place at a time convenient for the participants, which will not interfere with the routine work at the Borrower Services Desk.

The results from this research will be pooled for the thesis project and individual results of the study will remain absolutely confidential and anonymous. Should this study be published, only pooled results will be documented. No costs will be incurred by either the Library or the individual participants.

I would be very grateful if permission could be granted for me to use the McClay Library. I would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have.

Sincerely,

Tatyana Malinova
Library Assistant
Borrower Services,
The McClay Library

Approved by:

_____   _____   _____
Print your name and title here   Signature   Date

Appendix C: Questionnaire for the paper survey

Library Services for International Students Survey

Dear Participant,

My name is Tatyana Malinova. I am a Library Assistant at The McClay Library. This survey is part of my Masters Dissertation in Information and Library Studies. It aims to investigate the quality of existing library services for International students and propose actions to overcome identified problems in order to improve the information services.

The survey is completely anonymous. All data will be kept confidential and used for the purpose of the investigation only. It will be destroyed after the results from this research are published.

I am very grateful for your time and consideration.

Regards
Tatyana

Section A: Your background

Q1. Gender
☐ Male ☐ Female

Q2. What is your age?
18 to 24	☐
25 to 30	☐
31 to 36	☐
36 and above	☐

Q3. What is your country of origin?
_____

Q4. How long have you lived in the UK?
_____

Q5. What is your educational level at QUB?
Undergraduate	☐
Postgraduate Diploma/Certificate	☐
Masters Degree	☐
Doctoral Degree	☐

Section B: Your opinion regarding the Library Services (*Please tick all appropriate boxes*)

Q6. What Library experience do you have in your country of origin?

a/ I have used the library at my secondary school	☐
b/ I have used an academic library for my undergraduate studies	☐
c/ I have used an academic library for my postgraduate studies	☐
d/ I have used only public libraries	☐
e/ I have never used any library	☐

Q7. How often have you used following resources & services at McClay Library this academic year?

Service used	Frequency of use						This service is new for me*
	Every day	Once a week	Several times a week	Several times a month	A few times a semester	Never used	
Print materials							
Reference materials							
E-journals							
Scanned module readings							
Databases							
E-mail							
Browsing the Internet							
Photocopying							
Inter-branch loans							
Inter-library loans							
Reservations							
Group study rooms							

* No previous experience of this service in any other libraries used

Q8. How would you prefer to learn about the Library services and facilities?

	High priority	Medium priority	Low priority	Not a priority	Not sure
Induction tours	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Contacting library staff in person	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Library webpage	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Printed guides	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
E-mail alert	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Other (please give details) _____

Q9. Please rate the following aspect of library staff skills

Library staff skills	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
Providing sufficient inductions for international students					
Knowledge of resources and services available					
Willingness to listen, grasp quickly and respond to requests					
Promptness in dealing with requests					
Professionalism in handling the requests					
Politeness and friendliness					

Q10. What kind of information do you expect from The McClay Library?

Type of information required	Intense need	Frequent need	Occasional need	Rare need	No need
Materials to improve your English language					
Information assisting in your academic studies					
Glossary of library terminology					
Information to improve your library skills					
Specialised software applications (e.g. MATLAB, SPSS, MapPoint, ZoomText, Jaws, etc.)					
Materials on foreign languages					

Q11. Have you ever used the Library website?   Yes ☐   No ☐

If yes, please give your evaluation on the following characteristics:

Characteristics for evaluation	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Simple navigation					
Up-to-date					
Easy to locate the required information					
Information provided is always correct					
Sufficient information regarding stock, services, subject-related assistance					
Straightforward Library catalogue					

Q12. Would you propose any changes to improve the library services for international students?
Please note your suggestions for any additional information or services which the Library can provide

Thank you for taking time to participate in this research

Appendix D: E-mail invitation for participation in the online survey

Dear Colleague,

I work as a Library Assistant in the McClay Library. Currently I am completing my Masters Dissertation in Information and Library Studies, which aims to investigate the International students' experience and expectations from the McClay Library in order to improve the quality of information services.

The dissertation project includes online survey amongst the PhD students from non-English origin. As there is no other way to identify these students (without breaching the Data Protection Act 1998), I am using the snowball sampling method to identify International PhD students willing to complete my online survey.

I would be very thankful if you decide to participate in the survey. I would highly appreciate also if you be able to forward my e-mail to any other International PhD students who would like to take part in my research.

If you are willing to complete my survey, you can access it on the following website:

https://www.kwiksurveys.com?s=KOLDHK_71010b18

Thanking you in anticipation

Tatyana Malinova
Library Assistant
Borrower Services, McClay Library
Queen's University Belfast
Tel.: 028 90975022
E-mail: t.malinova@qub.ac.uk

Appendix E: Questionnaire for the online survey

Library Services for International Students Survey

Dear Participant,

This survey aims to investigate the quality of existing library services for International students at The McClay Library.

The survey is completely anonymous. All data will be kept confidential and used for the purpose of the investigation only.

Section A: Your background

Q1: Please indicate the year of your doctoral research?   **Q2:** What is your country of origin?

○ 1st

○ 2nd

○ 3rd+

Q3: Are you   **Q4:** What is your age?

○ Male?   ○ Under 25

○ Female?   ○ 26 to 34

                                                       ○ 35 and above

Section B: Your expectations from the McClay Library

Q5: Please indicate the services you had NOT used before coming to the QUB

☐ E-journals

☐ Database searches

☐ Web-based bibliography management software (e.g. RefWorks, EndNote, etc.)

☐ Inter-branch loans

☐ Inter-library loans

☐ Reservations

☐ Self-service equipment

Q6: How do you get to the information you need?

☐ Contacting your Subject Librarian

☐ Asking colleagues/Supervisor

☐ Searching electronic resources available through the McClay Library

☐ Using other Internet sources

☐ From organised library group training courses

☐ All of the above

Q7: <u>What type of information do you expect from The McClay Library?</u>

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very Unimportant
Materials to improve your English language	○	○	○	○	○
Reference materials (e.g. dictionary, thesaurus, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○
Assistance in your research skills (sessions in person)	○	○	○	○	○
Assistance in your research skills (on-line help)	○	○	○	○	○
Glossary of library terminology	○	○	○	○	○
Research skills self-training materials (on-line, print)	○	○	○	○	○
Detailed guides for access to materials not available in the McClay Library	○	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

[text box]

Section C: Your satisfaction from services provided in the McClay Library

Q8: <u>Please indicate your level of satisfaction with each of the following library services?</u>
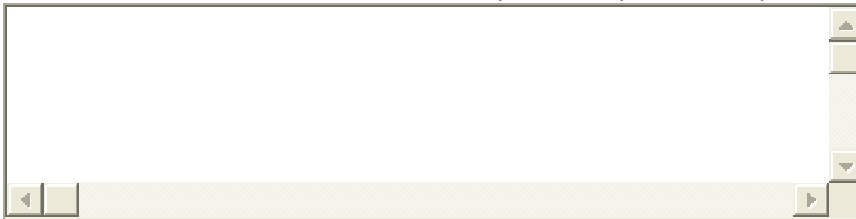
	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Adequacy of information on library services and resources	○	○	○	○	○
Sufficiency of research training offered by the library	○	○	○	○	○
Comprehensive print and e-resources in terms of your research requirements	○	○	○	○	○
IT training and support	○	○	○	○	○
Availability of printing/ photocopying facilities	○	○	○	○	○
Availability of specialised software (MATLAB, SPSS, MapPoint, ZoomText, Jaws, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○
Opening hours	○	○	○	○	○
Design of the library website	○	○	○	○	○
Sufficient information on the library website	○	○	○	○	○
Opportunity for feedback	○	○	○	○	○

Q9: <u>Please rate the following aspects of the library staff skills</u> (where: *1- poor; 2- fair; 3- good; 4-very good; 5- excellent*)
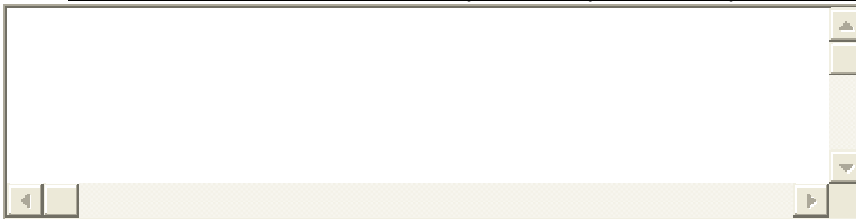
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Availability of library staff	○	○	○	○	○
Approachability	○	○	○	○	○
Sensitivity towards your requirements and needs	○	○	○	○	○
Prompt respond to your requests	○	○	○	○	○
Quality of advice and guidance	○	○	○	○	○
Politeness and friendliness	○	○	○	○	○
Enthusiasm and dynamism	○	○	○	○	○
Cultural diversity awareness of library staff	○	○	○	○	○

Section D: Comments
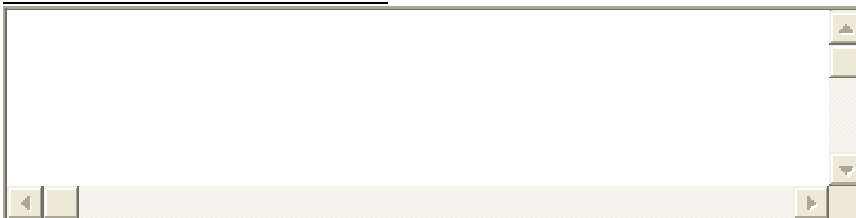
Q10: <u>What is the WORST feature of library services you have experienced in the McClay Library?</u>

Q11: <u>What is the BEST feature of library services you have experienced in the McClay Library?</u>

Q12: <u>What changes to the library services would you propose to improve your experience as an International Research Student?</u>

Thank you for your time and co-operation in completing this survey.

For any queries relating to this survey please contact Tatyana Malinova at Borrower Services, McClay Library on 9097 6143 or t.malinova@qub.ac.uk.

Appendix F: Interview guidelines

Main topic list:

- How many years have you worked for the Library at Queen's University Belfast?

- Are you aware if the University has an International Strategy/Policy?

- Do you know if the Library has an international students' Action Plan? Do you think it would be beneficial for the library to have a policy specifically regarding international students?

- Is there a designated member of staff or unit in the McClay Library supporting the international students? If 'Yes' – Do you know what is their role?

- Have you attended any Cultural Awareness training? Are you aware if such training is offered at QUB? Do you think such training is necessary for library staff?

- Do you know if the library website has pages designated specifically for international students?

- Do you know if the library offers guides for library services and/or study skills materials in languages other than English? Do you think such materials would be useful for international students?

- Do you think the library terminology is more difficult to grasp for international than home students?

- From your experience, can you describe any problems that you have encountered working with international students? How do you think they can be overcome?

- From your experience – which method of communication do international students prefer – online or face-to-face? And which method of communication you personally prefer? Why?

Additional issue for professional library staff:

- From your experience, do you think there is a difference between the information needs of international and home students? Why?

- Do you think there is a distinction between the information-seeking behaviour of international and home students?

- Do you prepare separate courses in information literacy for international students?
    - (if 'Yes' - What additional information do you include?)
    - (If 'No' – Do you think it will be beneficial? Would you consider it in the future?)

- Do you think we need to understand the different learning styles and library experience of international students in order to provide better service?

- Do you agree with the opinion that "Librarians and library staff need to develop and improve cross-cultural communication skills"? Why?

Appendix G: Sample interview transcript (with highlighted themes)

Sample from the interview with staff member No.19 carried out on Wednesday 01/09/2010

Colour-coded themes
Purple -   Library Action Plan
Red -   Library representative for international students
Brown -   Cultural awareness training for staff
Blue -   Challenges for international students
Pink -   Webpages designated specifically for international students
Green -   Additional resources and services for international students

In the sample the respondent is referred to as ST19.

Interviewer	Do you know if the Library has an international students' Action Plan? Do you think such policy would be beneficial for the library?
ST19	Yes, we do…. It is 3 and a half years old – a direct action plan. We are aware that the university has an internationalisation policy. But a lot of people are vague as to what that means. It just means we are aware of the policy. We are aware that more international students are coming to Queen's. When I came to my job… I became our representative for international students. It just means that I am the contact person for the library to see how things pan out – it means that I will know people in the International Student Support Centre, in INTO and in the International Office. The plan is to see how to improve relations – the first thing that I did was to contact them – to go and meet them in order to see what they needed. I used to meet Rita … from the International Office (she is now with INTO) … Really what came out from that was concerned with arranging tours and improving tours. We used to have big tours with 100s of students in the old library – it was atrocious. We cut the numbers and I now give a presentation to students who don't get an IT induction… With INTO coming to Queen's, which was a really significant development, we focused on students, who according to them "have low level English"… These are students who are coming to learn English before they take their degree course. It is a significant category. I will give them a library talk focusing on what they can expect in the library… saying to them "Look you can come in, you can ask for help, it's what we're here for and you don't have to pay to borrow books" (some of them think they have to pay). We are trying to address cultural barriers in a subtle kind of way.
Interviewer	Let's go back to the action plan. Where is it published and where can I find it?
ST19	It hasn't been published. It is an internal group - it is actually one of our divisional objectives… an ongoing divisional objective e.g. it goes into my appraisal. It probably will develop. Because of INTO there are a lot of changes. The relationships are being developed…
Interviewer	You mentioned earlier cultural barriers – do you aim to introduce local culture and traditions to international students? Are you trying to learn more about students' cultural backgrounds?
ST19	I mean what their libraries were like in their home countries. We're giving them information we take for granted … This year I put together a list of key terms – I put it together specifically for international students … We were

looking at things we take for granted i.e. library terminology, fines, borrowing. What does it mean? There are things in their own libraries they may have used extensively. It might be a completely different set-up – e.g. Chinese students shelve in the opposite direction to us… it was something I found out from student shelf tidier.… It is us being aware of things that might get in the way… It is big area in improving services generally and focusing on this group.

Interviewer	Have you attended any cultural awareness training?
ST19	Yes, it was through the language centre.
Interviewer	Do you think such training is necessary for library staff? Should it be made compulsory, such as for example, the disability and diversity training?
ST19	Yes, I think it should be compulsory. Even for professional staff across Information Services… I think staff at all levels should attend.
Interviewer	Do you know if the library website has pages designated for international students?
ST19	We decided not to… We were thinking of having an area that says "If you are an international student, look at this resource and this site". That was motivated by international students… The key library terms were the first point towards that … So we were talking about it for a while… but then we thought we'll open it up for all students… We should be accessible for all; students shouldn't feel that there is this one specific area. We were making it user friendly to all new students. We were actually thinking "when I was 18 I wouldn't have known that". I think it is the right way to go. That's why we don't have a specific page for international students… The international student support office has developed a web site and we were looking for a link to the library pages via library key terms. It is more useful than a library page…
Interviewer	Do you know if the library offers guides for library services and/or study skills materials in languages other than English?
ST19	No we don't… I did request it and it was turned down. It might have been a resource issue… I asked for podcasts in different languages of library tours etc. I think it would be useful to have even an audio tour. I wanted "Welcome" signs in different languages and that was refused as well… It was turned down when we were planning to move… It doesn't mean that it won't happen.
Interviewer	Do you think the library could offer any additional services (that other students don't have) to international students and what kind of services?
ST19	There is the learning development service which we work very closely with. They teach about things like study skills and plagiarism. I don't think we could single out one group of students… There is no specific thing just aimed at international students. There could be something aimed at international students, but rolled out to other students. We are trying to move away from sectioning off a particular group.
Interviewer	It's not about sectioning off. New students from the Northern Ireland understand English – international students don't.
ST19	Those students will go and study English.
Interviewer	From your experience - Can you describe any problems international students?
ST19	I think the main problem is expectations … students who might expect staff to do more for them… One person might think a student is trying it on, if they are asking for a certain level of help, which could lead to misunderstanding. The

student might go away offended and leave with a poor experience. The situation needs staff training – understanding cultural differences…

Another barrier I think is experience of libraries in their own countries. We need to address some of the cultural barriers. Things like how to speak to people… Perhaps providing guides with some etiquette awareness – e.g. gift giving. Gift-giving in Japanese culture means something completely different to here. It is not the same if a student gives a present here – there is an expectation of reciprocal favours… We could give them information … such as how to speak to people at service points; making them feel comfortable to get help; educating them about what is expected of them.

Plagiarism is a huge problem and it is addressing the perception of that – making them aware that it is socially and academically unacceptable.

The library terminology is another challenge for international students. That's why I put the key terms together. If English is your second language you have that second layer. Things like 'reserve', 'issue desk', 'interlibrary loans', even 'citation', 'journal', 'periodical'… - they mightn't mean anything to students…

Interviewer	Are you aware of any plans to organise events in the library for international students e.g. readings, display of literature, etc.
ST19	The International Student Support Office has booked the CS Lewis room for induction week… Drama students will be reading from CS Lewis. If it is successful, it could happen every year. We didn't organise that, but we tried to facilitate them. Another thing since last year - one of the subject librarians suggested this - in Bath they had a poster exhibition of libraries around the world. The students themselves had to do some work for this. They had to nominate their own home libraries. It was a way of giving them ownership of the library as a space... This year with the first intake we mentioned a similar idea to students… We would have needed international student's digital images of their own libraries… But no one got back to us. Also we could use flags of different countries for international induction.
Interviewer	Do you think in the future we could have evenings for different countries?
ST19	There are too many pressures around noise during term time... The CS Lewis room event was great. It is an event that may go ahead every year. Over summer is an ideal time since the students are here anyway.
Interviewer	From your experience – which method of communication do international students prefer (online or face-to-face)? And which method you personally prefer?
ST19	We did a survey on this and it was pretty much half and half... Online had the edge but a surprising number of students want to speak to someone... I would have assumed email. … My experience is more face to face. I prefer face to face... When you get a conversation you can probe more and pick out the areas they're interested in. You can't do that with email. Personal contact is more useful.
Interviewer	At the end would you like to add something more regarding international students?
ST19	I like the idea of the library doing more and it will happen. Then there are other university support units, such as the improved International Student Support Office, INTO Queen's, Language Centre, working also with international students. ... We are no longer a unit on our own - we need the rest of the university. We need to work very closely with support services. There is still a lot of work to do.

Fig. H1.1 Distribution of the UG and PG1 population by 'Time spent in Northern Ireland' and students' 'Country of origin'
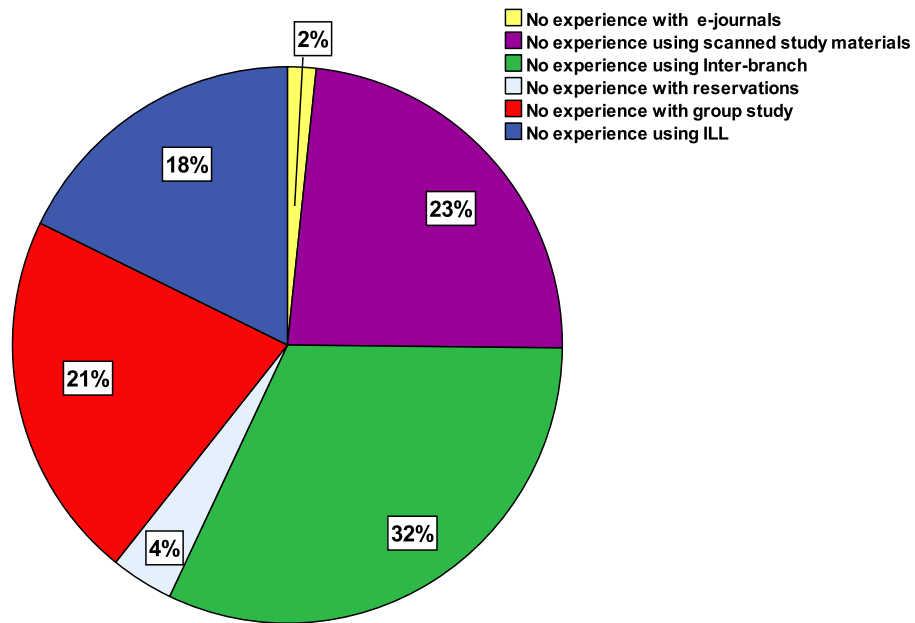
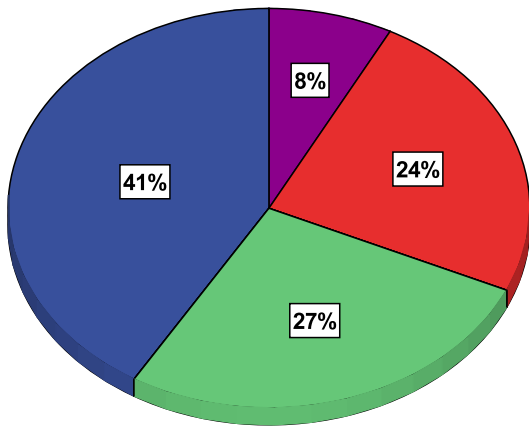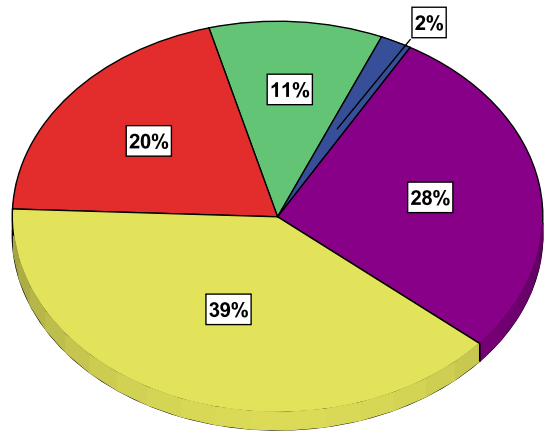Fig.H1.2 Summary of services and resources new for international students
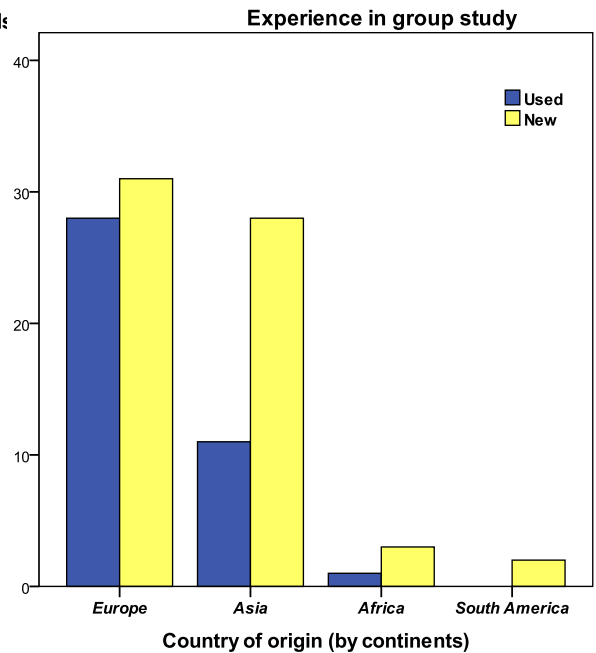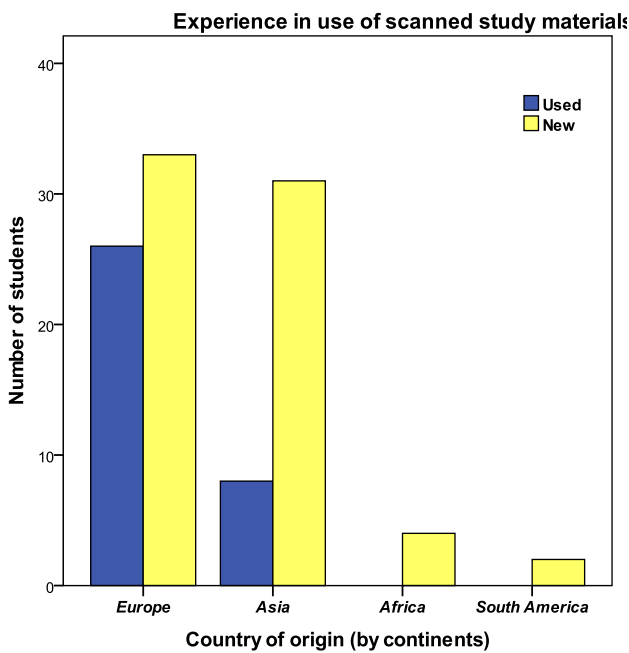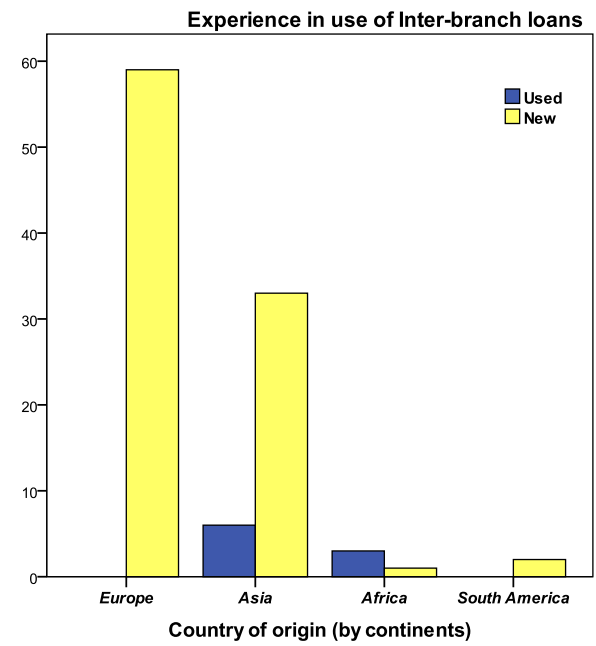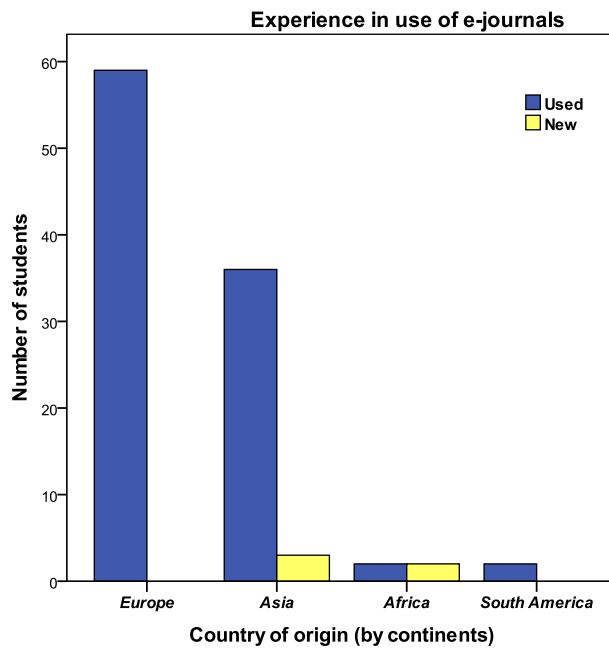
Fig.H1.3 Previous experience using various library resources and services – results presented by students' country of origin
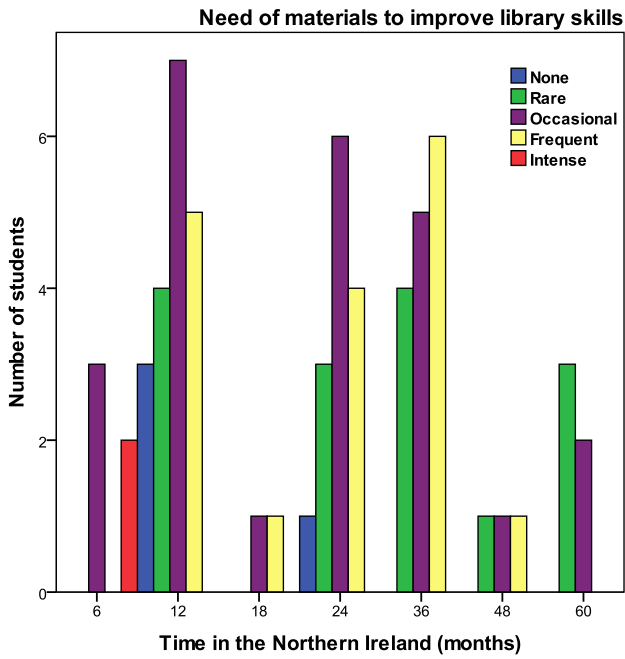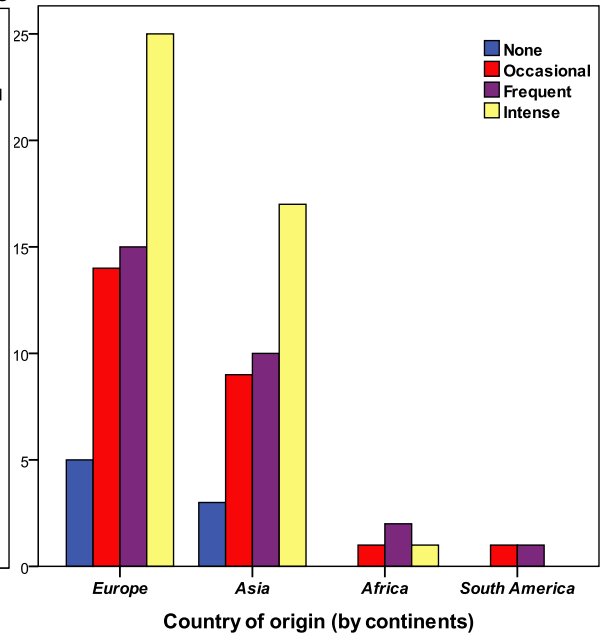
**Need of materials to improve library skills**

- None
- Rare
- Occasional
- Frequent
- Intense

5% | 8% | 20% | 39% | 28%
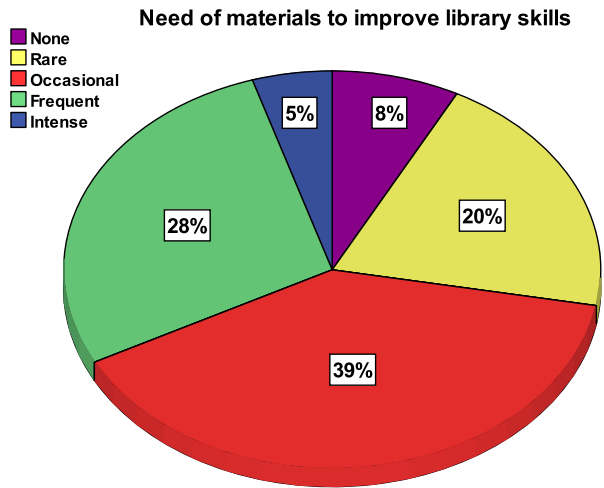
Need of materials for academic studies

8% | 24% | 27% | 41%

Need of foreign language materials

2% | 11% | 20% | 28% | 39%

a/

Need of materials to improve library skills

- None
- Rare
- Occasional
- Frequent
- Intense

Number of students

Time in the Northern Ireland (months)

Need of materials on academic studies

- None
- Occasional
- Frequent
- Intense

Country of origin (by continents)

Europe | *Asia* | *Africa* | *South America*

b/

Fig.H1.4 Information needs of UG & PG1 students – results for: a/individual services and resources; b/needs of materials introduced by time spent in Northern Ireland and students' country of origin
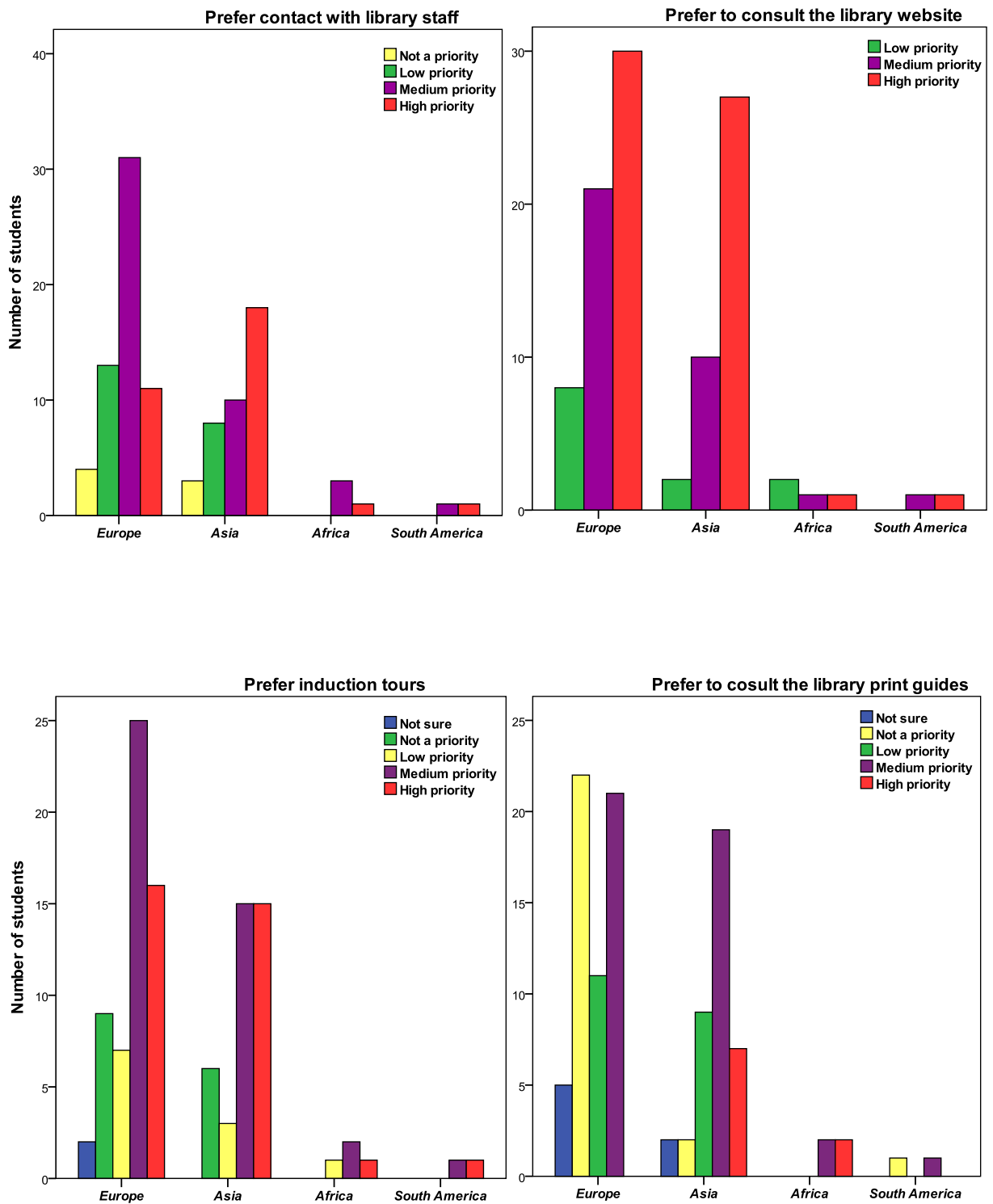
Fig.H1.5 Preferred methods to learn about library services, shown by students' country of origin
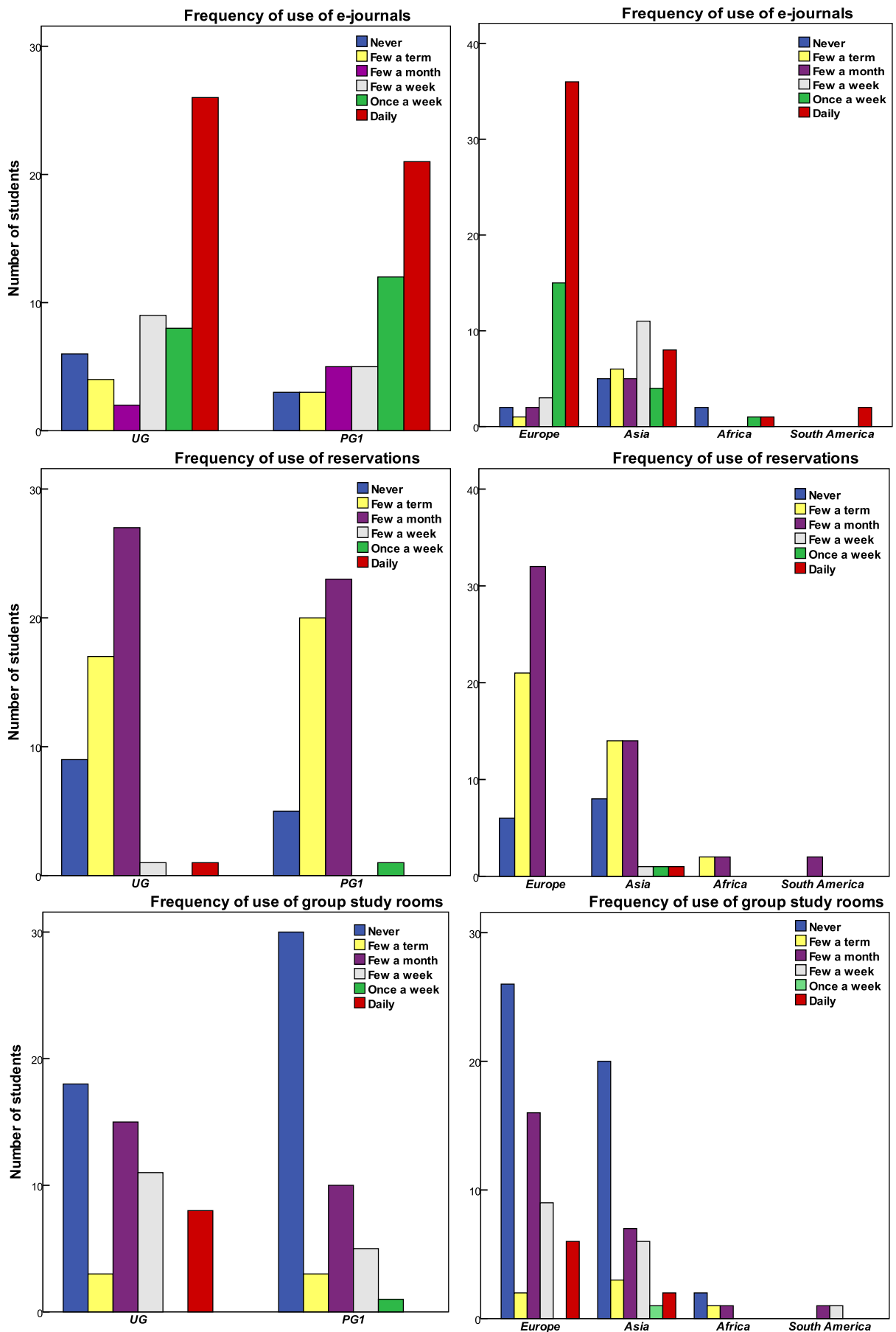
Fig.H1.6 Frequency of use of services and resources presented by students' educational level and country of origin
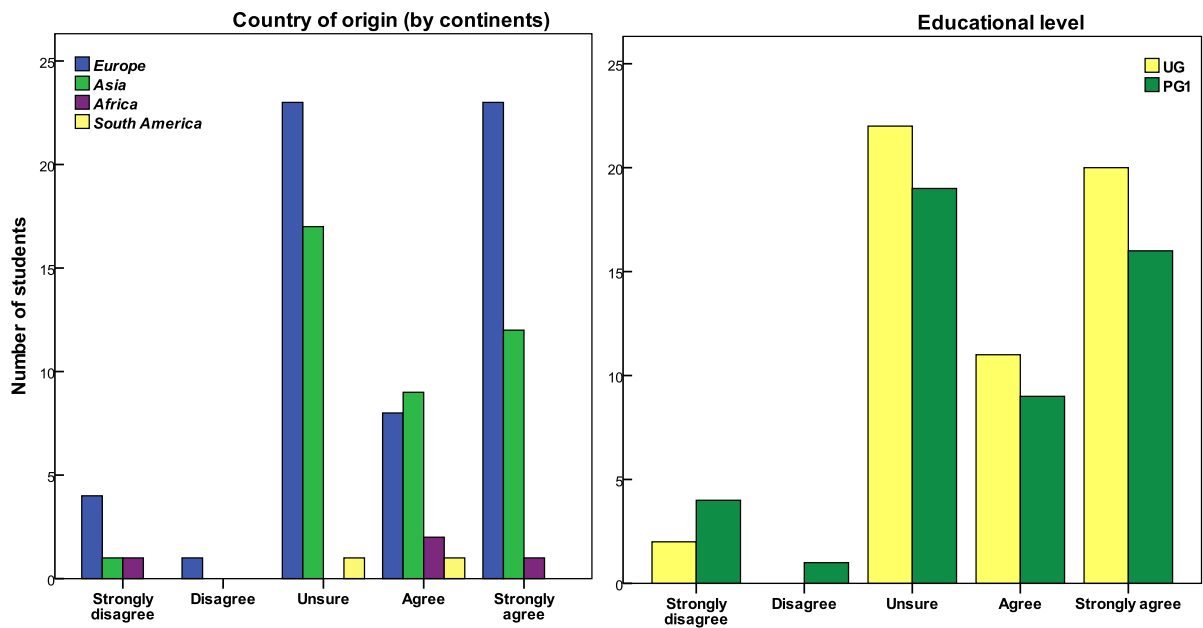
Fig.H1.7 Overall students' satisfaction from the library website, illustrated by educational level and country of origin

0- Neutral; 1- Strongly disagree; 2- Disagree; 3- Unsure; 4- Agree; 5- Strongly agree
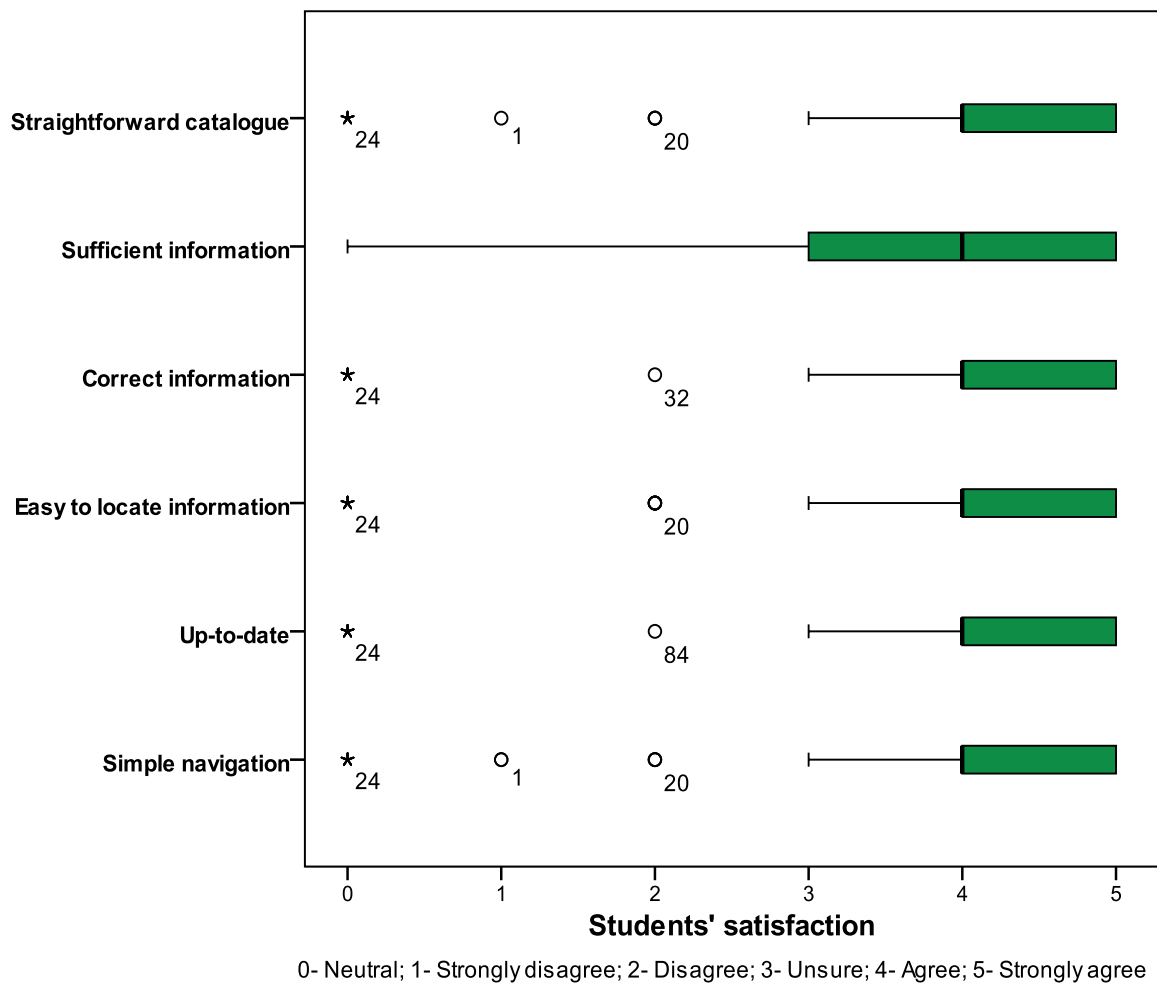
Fig.H1.8 Students' satisfaction from the library website
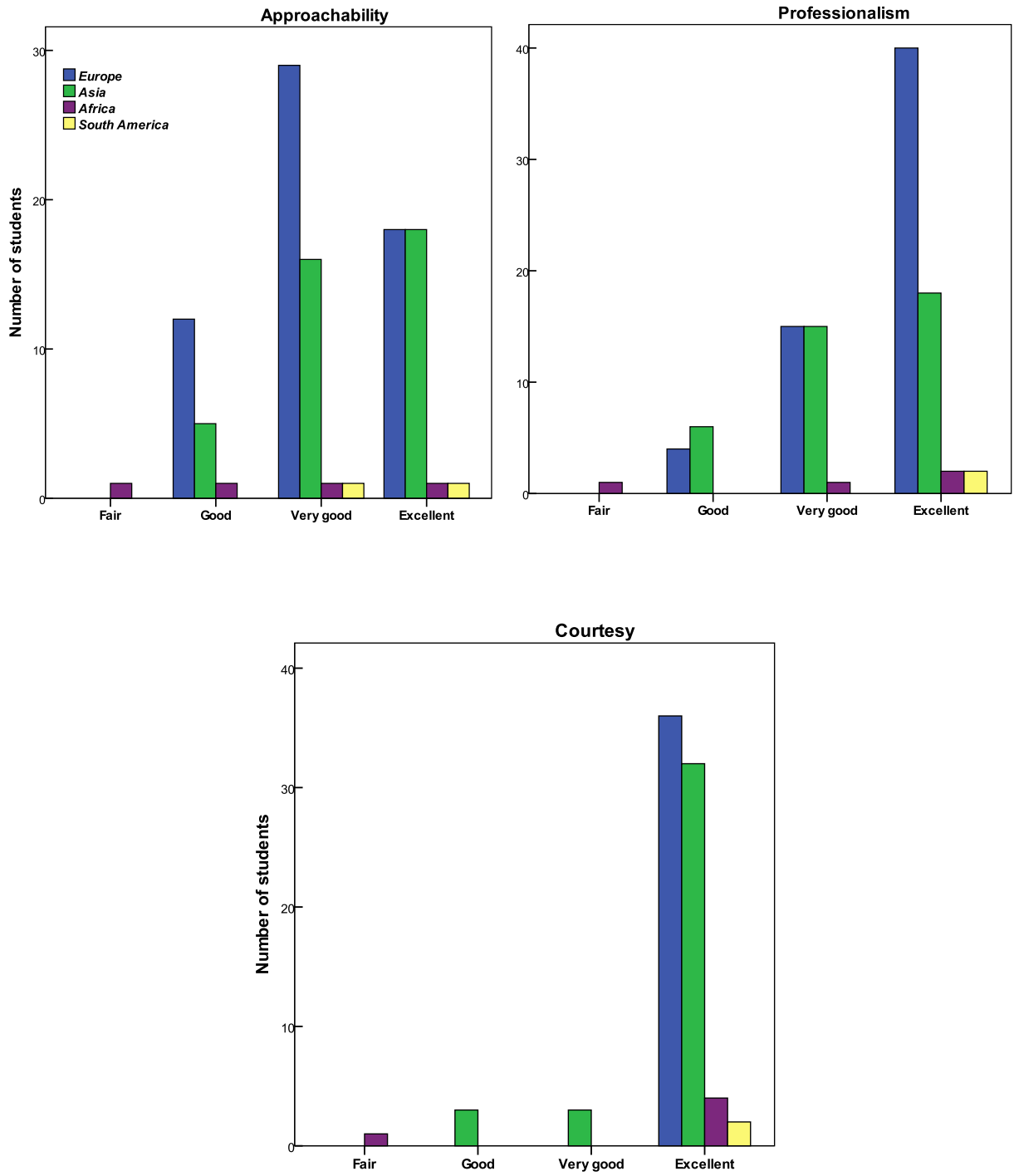
Fig.H1.9 Students' evaluation of the library staff skills, broken-down by countries of origin

Appendix H2: Analysis of the results from the survey for PG2 students
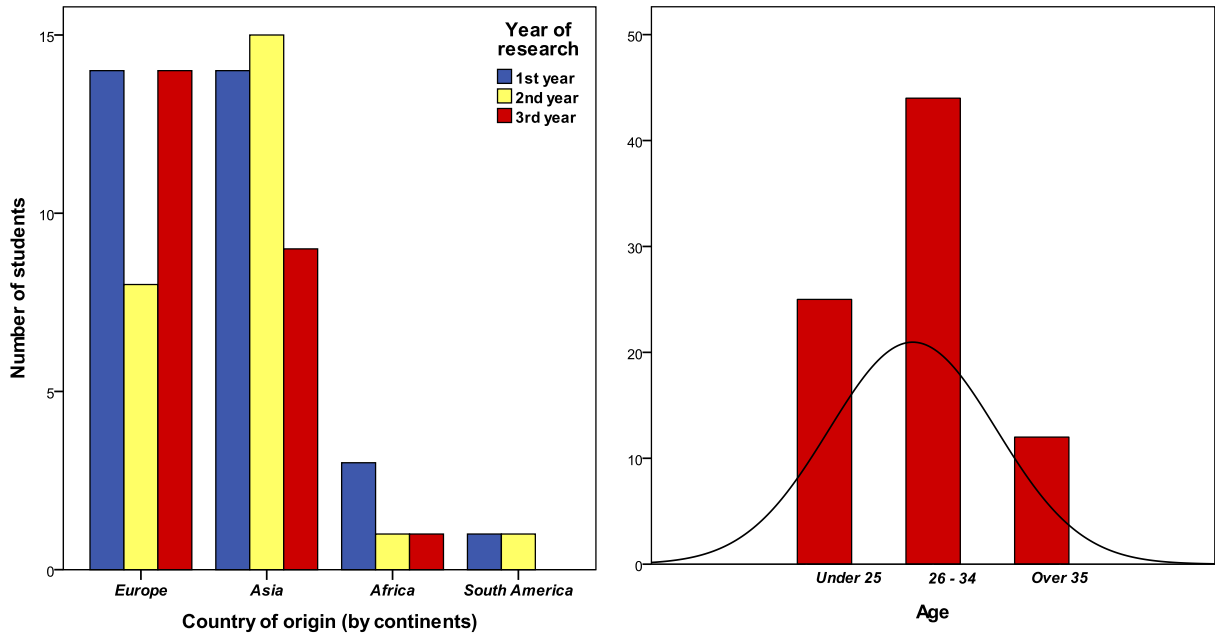
Fig.H2.1 Distribution of the PG2 population by students' country of origin and age groups
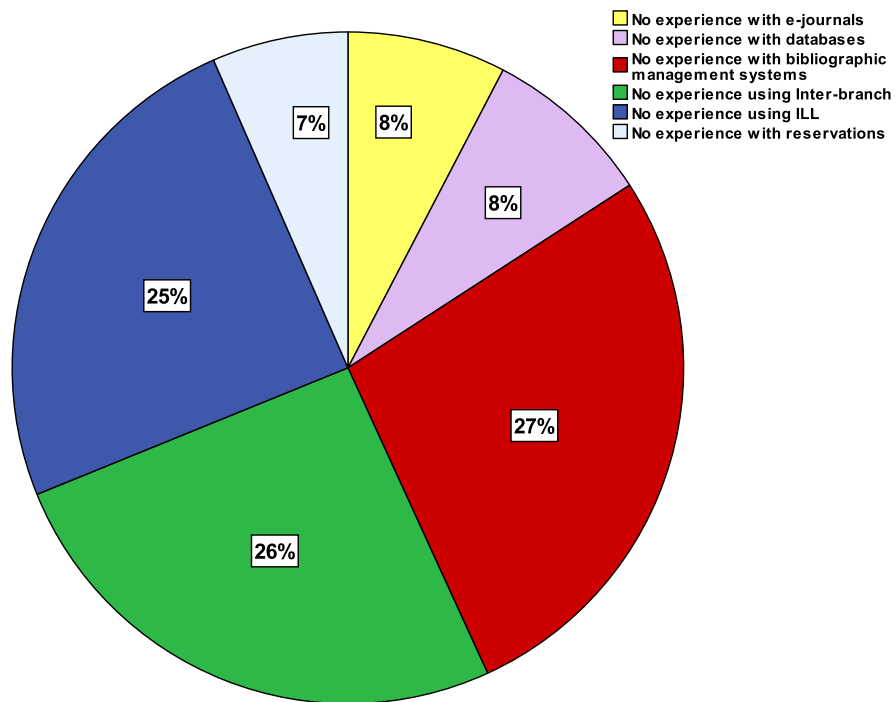
Fig.H2.2 Summary of services and resources new for PG2 students
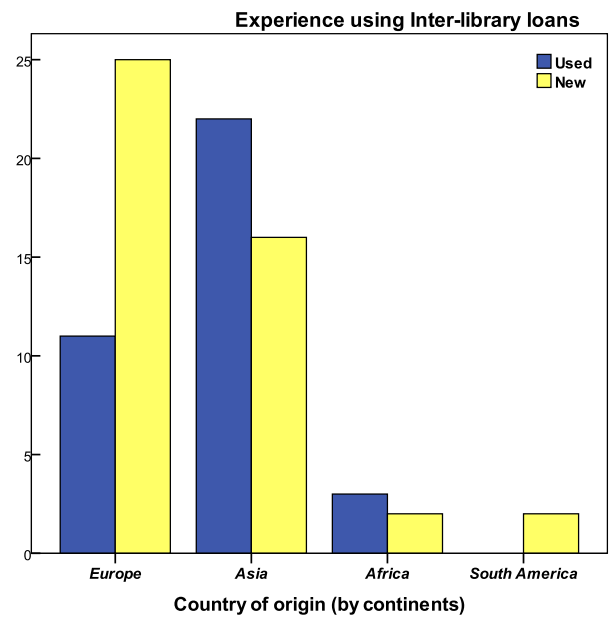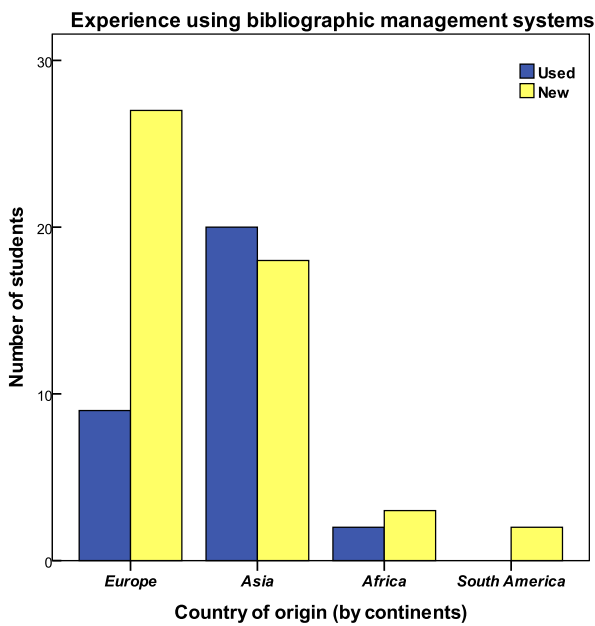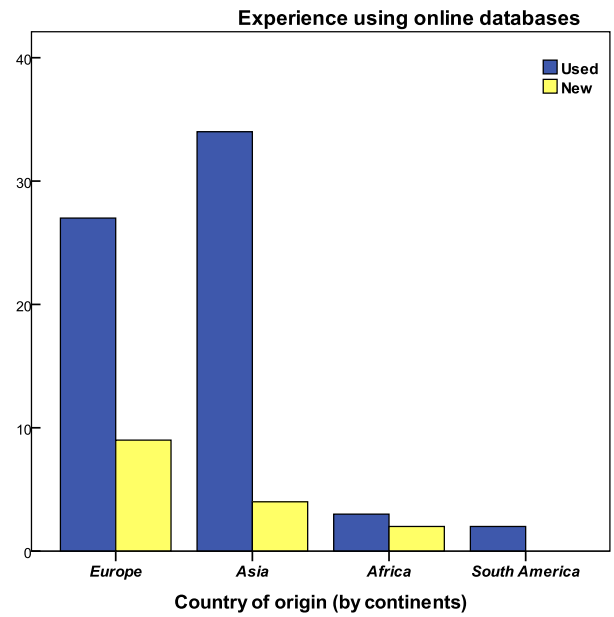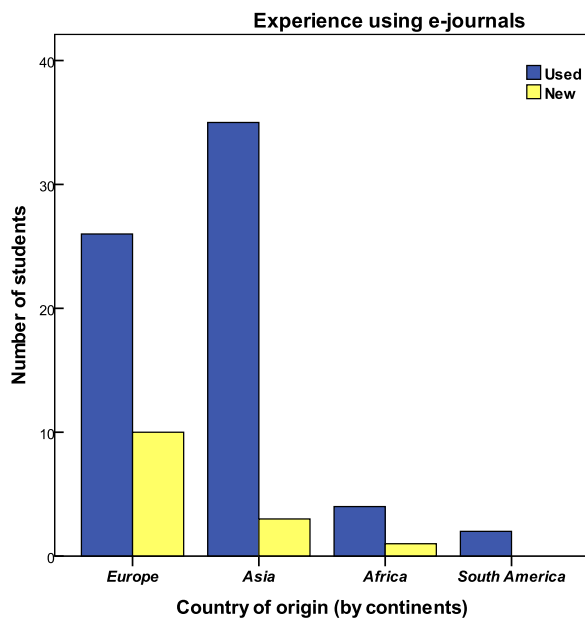
Fig.H2.3 Previous experience using various library resources and services – results presented by students' country of origin
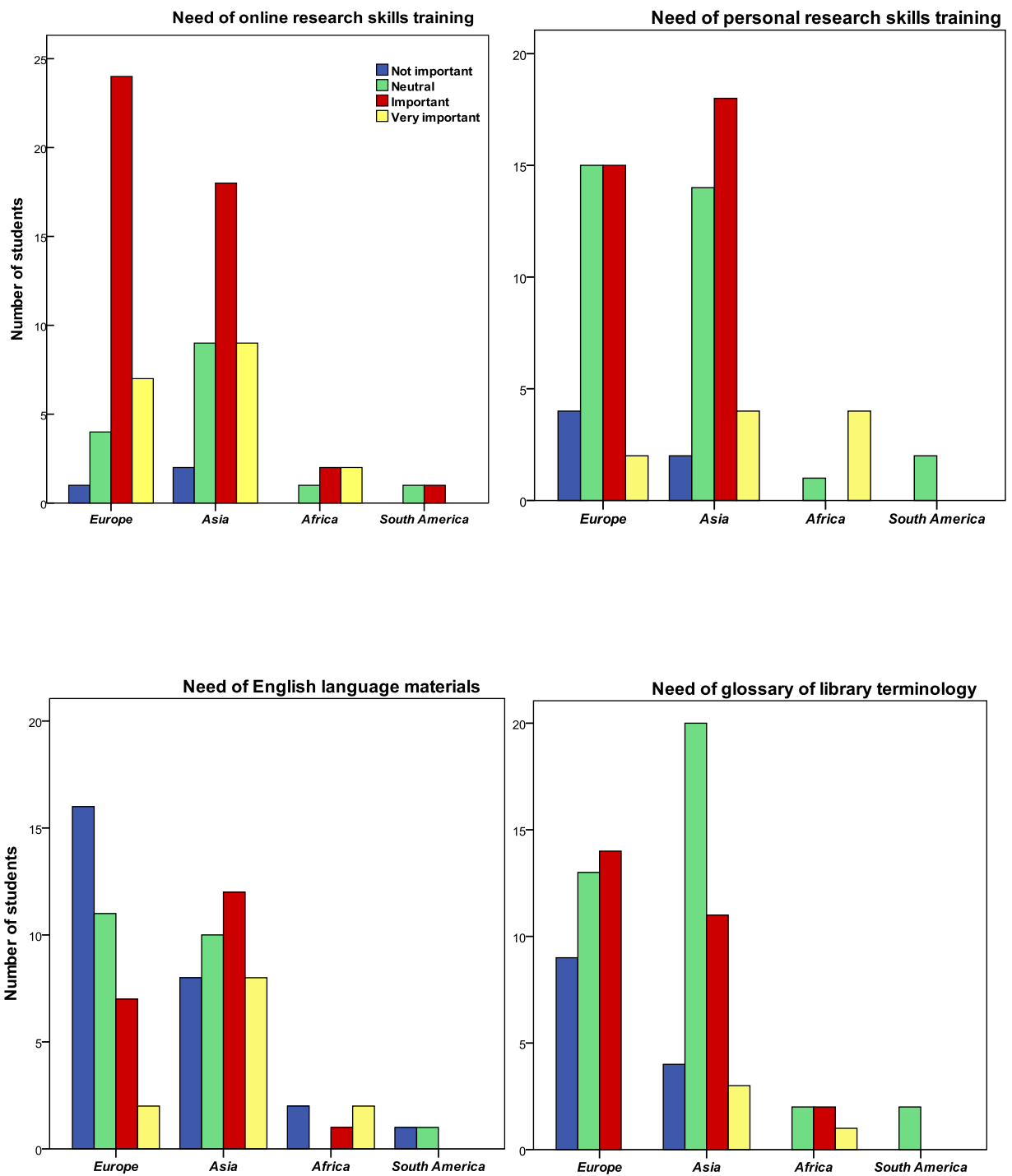
Fig.H2.4 Information needs of PG2 students, introduced by students' country of origin
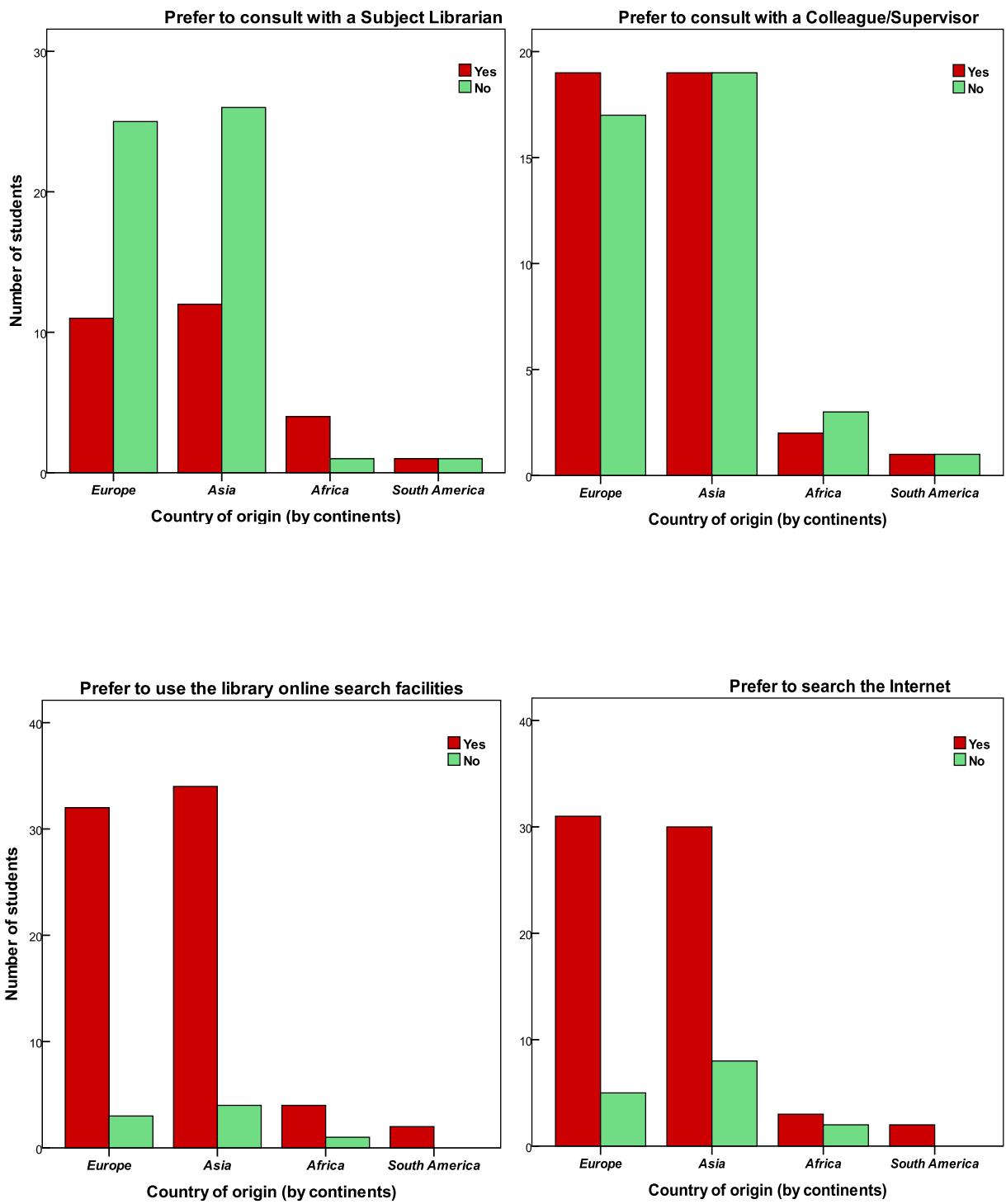
Fig.H2.5 Preferred methods for acquiring information, shown by students' country of origin

Adequate information for resources and services
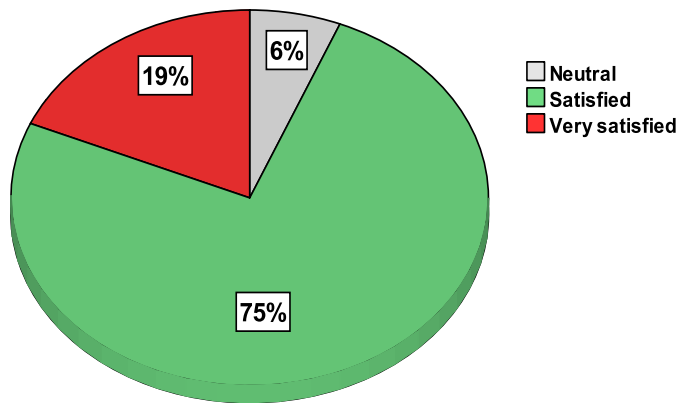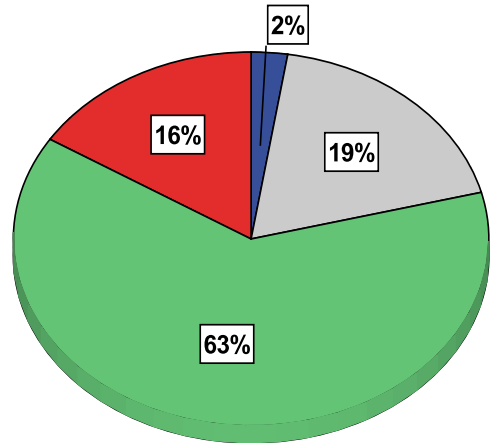
Neutral
Satisfied
Very satisfied

6%
19%
75%

Training sufficiency

2%
16%
19%
63%

Comprehensiveness of resources

Dissatisfied
Neutral
Satisfied
Very satisfied

4%
11%
19%
67%

Opportunity for feedback

4%
16%
36%
44%

Library opening hours

Very dissatisfied
Dissatisfied
Neutral
Satisfied
Very satisfied

2%
20%
14%
11%
53%
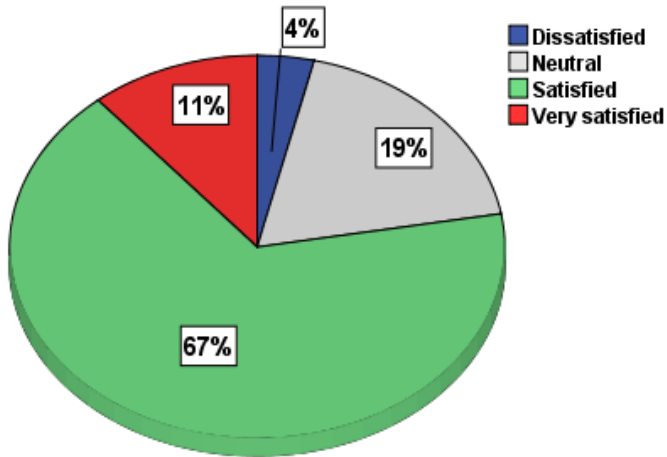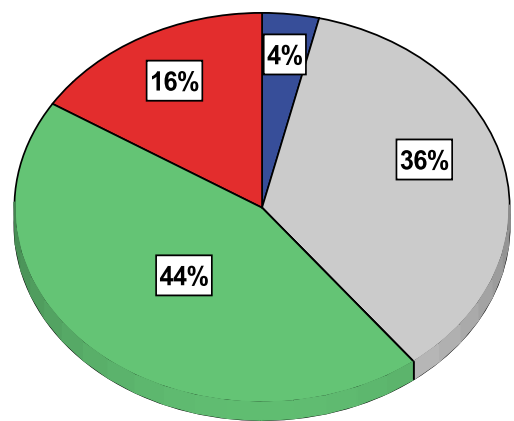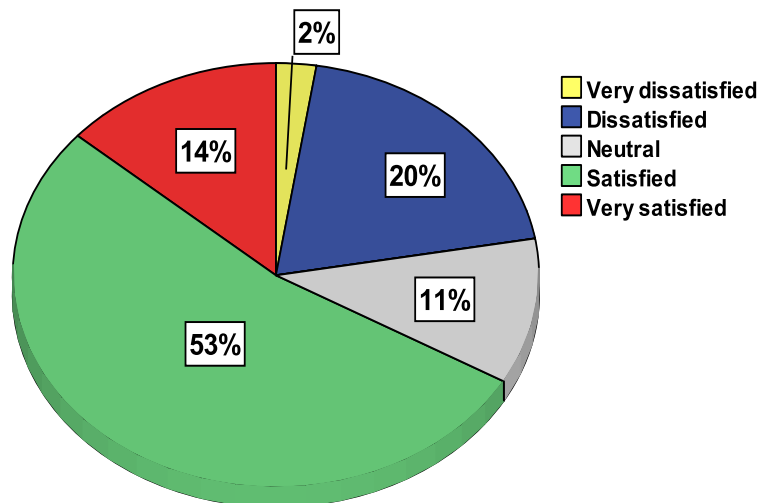
Fig.H2.6 PG2 students' satisfaction from library services
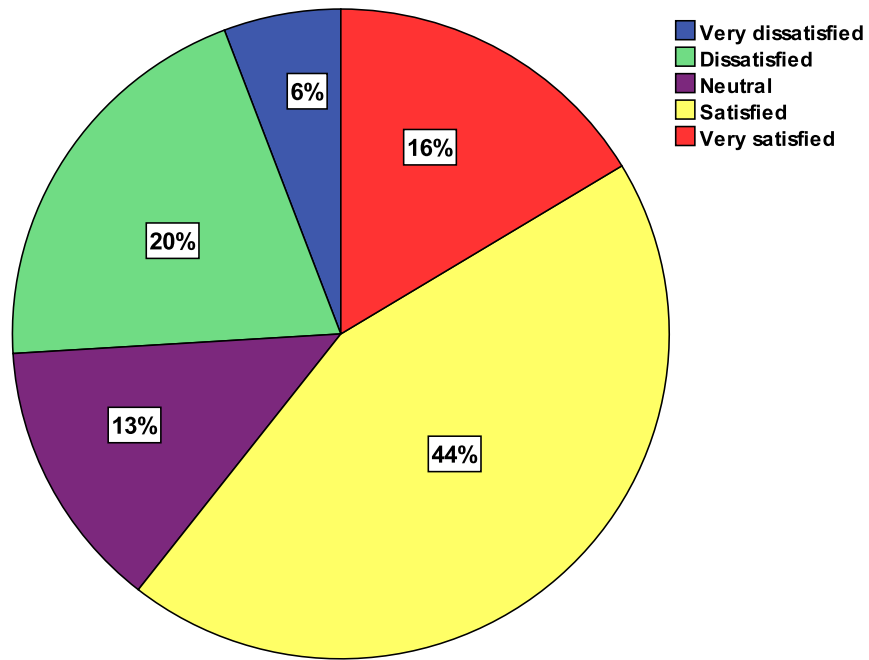
a/
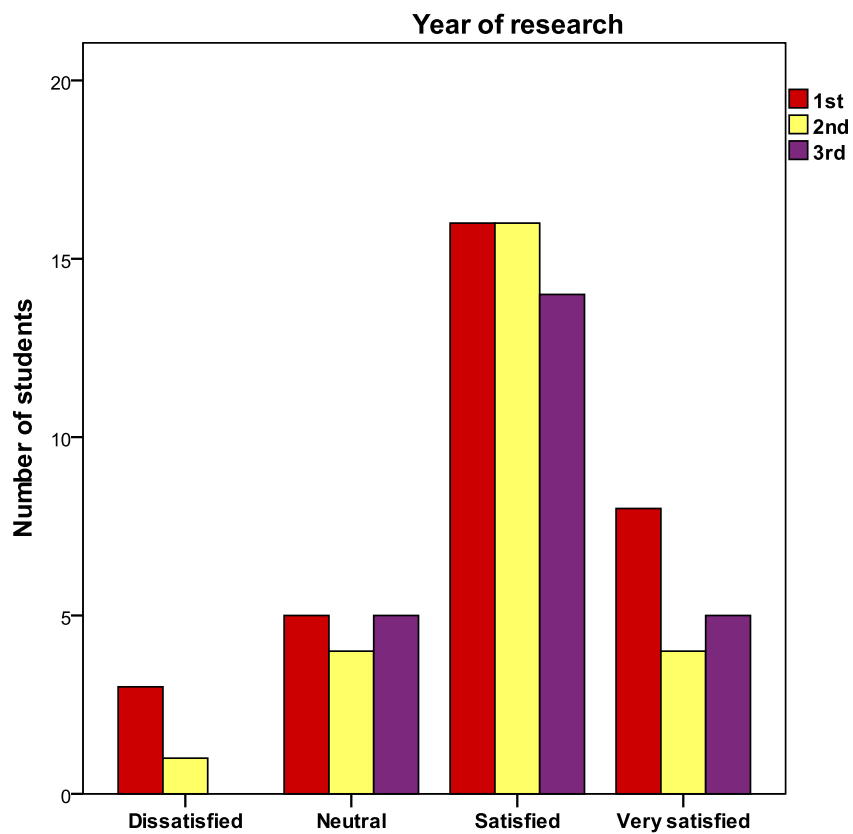
b/

Fig.H2.7 Library website evaluation: a/Overall students' satisfaction from the website and b/Students's satisfaction from information sufficiency broken-down by the year of research
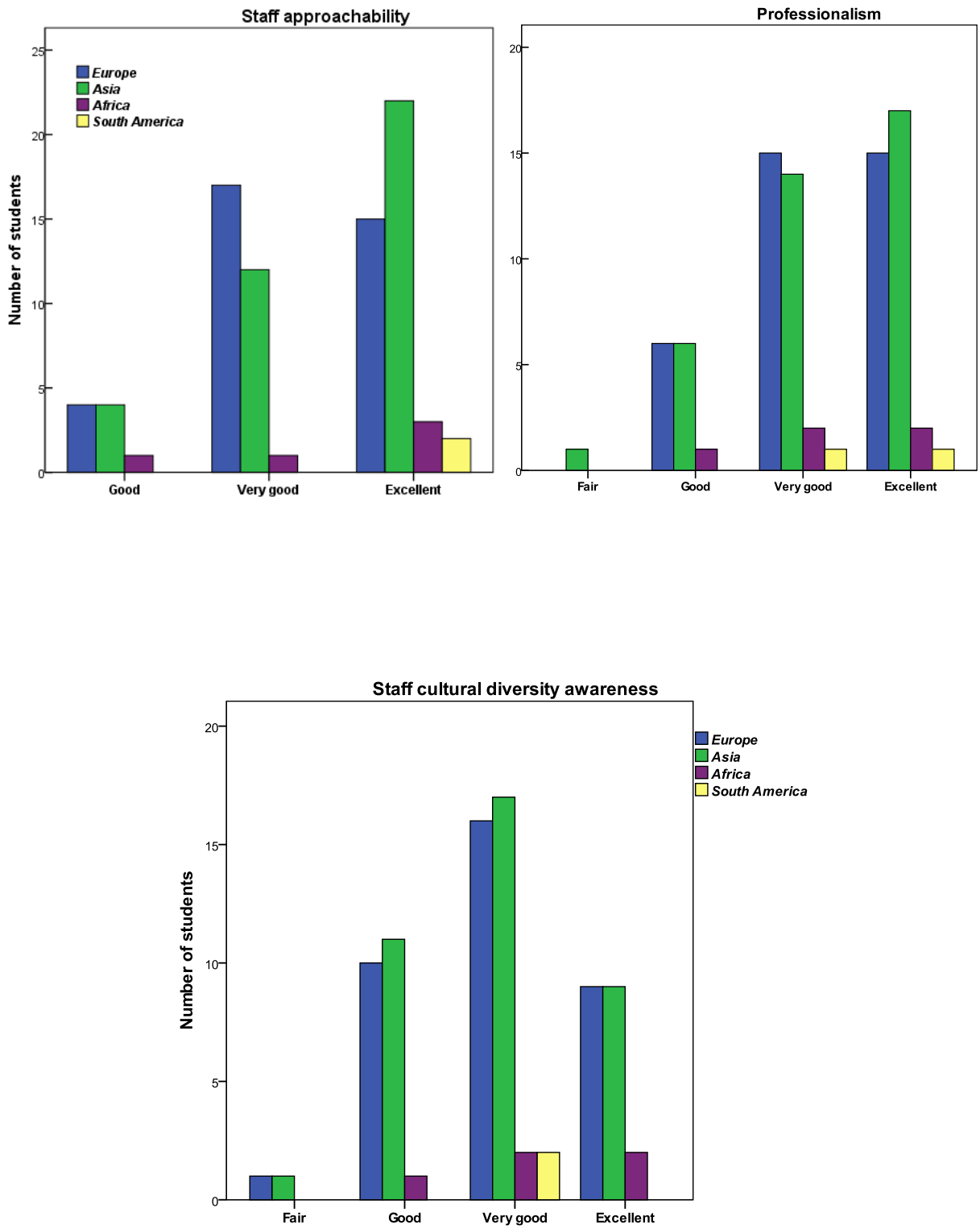
Fig.H2.8 9 Students' rating of the library staff skills, broken-down by countries of origin

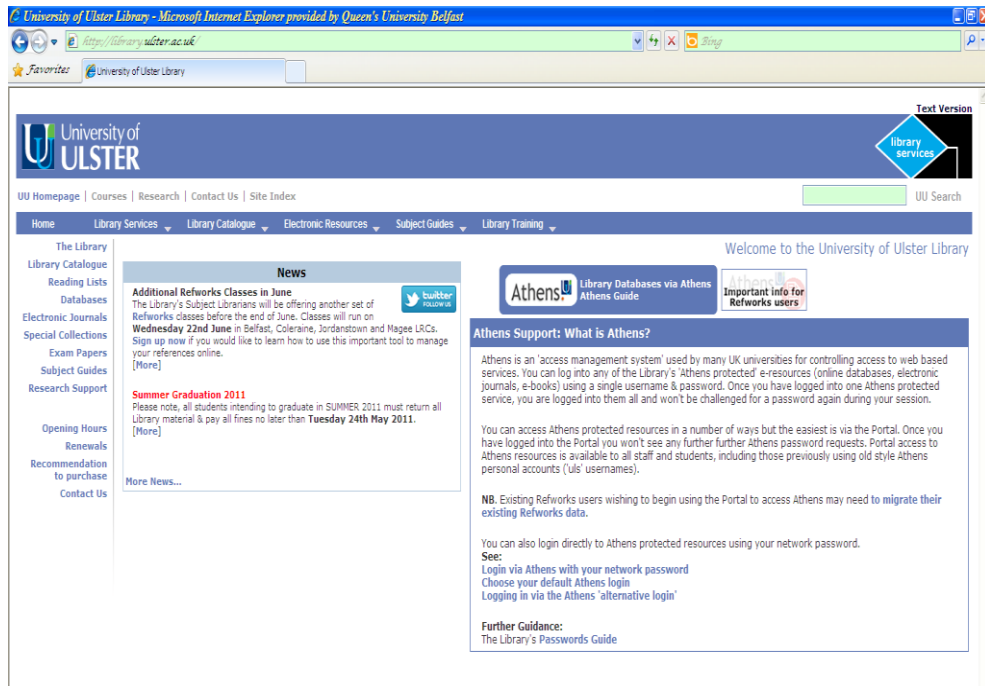# Appendix J: Screenshots of the observed Irish academic libraries' websites

Fig.J.1 University of Ulster Library website

Fig.J.2 Trinity College Dublin Library website

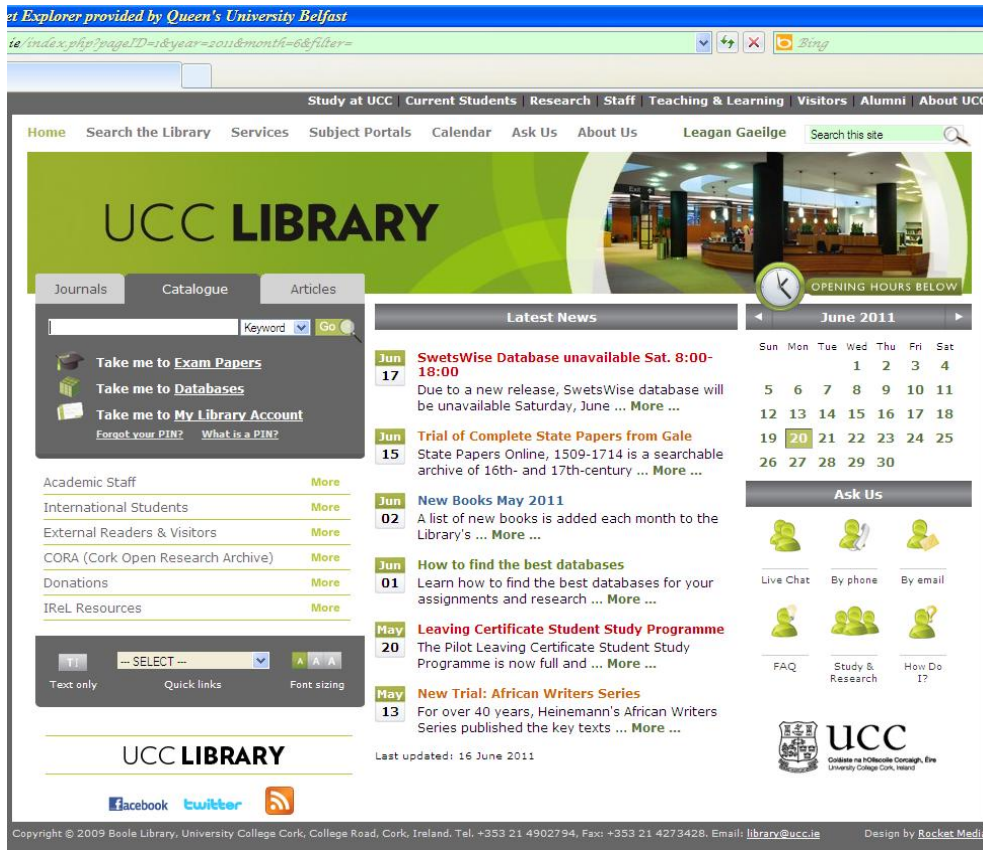Fig.J.3 University College Dublin Library website

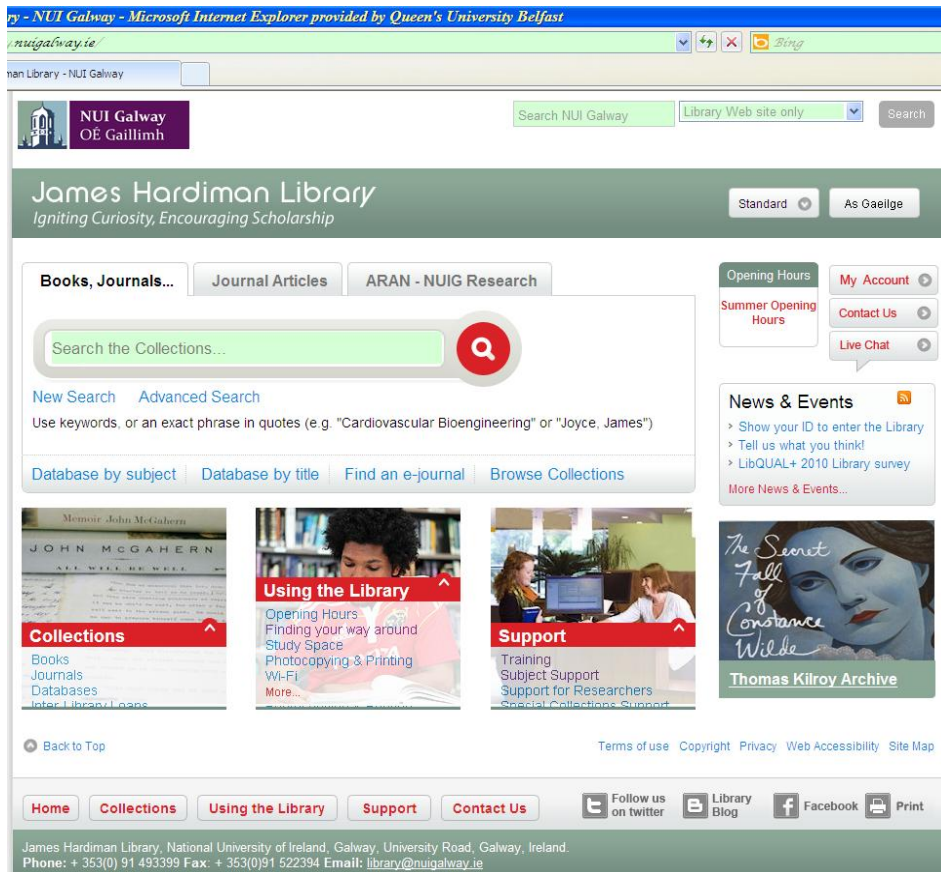Fig.J.4 University College Cork Library website

Fig.J.5 National University of Ireland at Galway Library website