

Course Readings: How Libraries Provide Value

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ANALYSIS

Abstract

Academic libraries are continually being asked to demonstrate their value. To do this, libraries analyze and assess their services and resources using a variety of tools and methods. A source of data that is overlooked in this analysis is the course syllabus and, more specifically, course readings. Purchasing these readings on their own would add an additional financial burden on students. Focusing on journal articles, the authors have analyzed syllabi to determine the cost savings students received based on library access to readings. Additionally, the authors searched the web to ascertain how many of the readings are freely available, legally or otherwise.

Methodology

The authors reviewed the course readings for 16 graduate-level syllabi from the Department of Psychology covering 2011-2014. Only 13 syllabi included journal articles among mandatory readings. Journal articles were compared to library holdings to determine availability. Article costs were gathered from the article publisher's website. Free access was determined by performing a Google search using the article title and reviewing the first page of results.

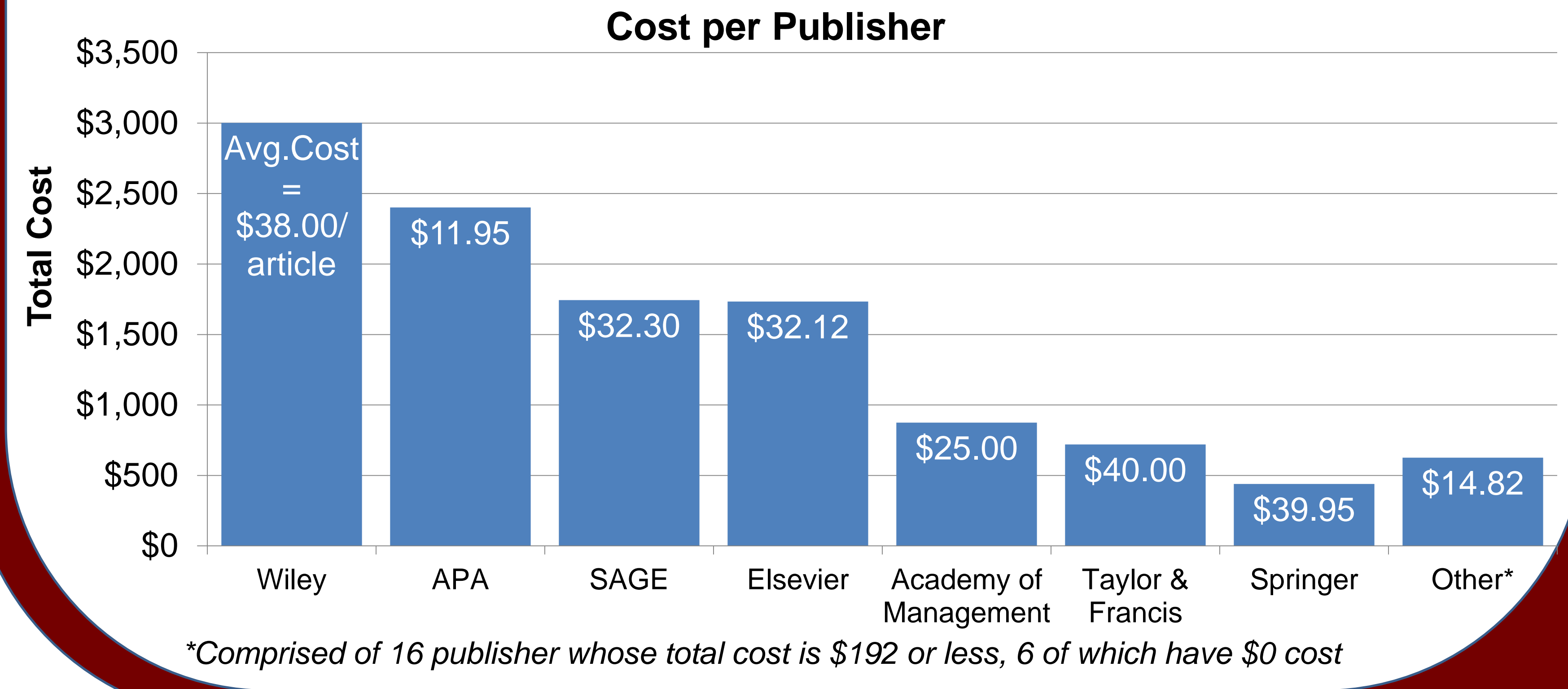
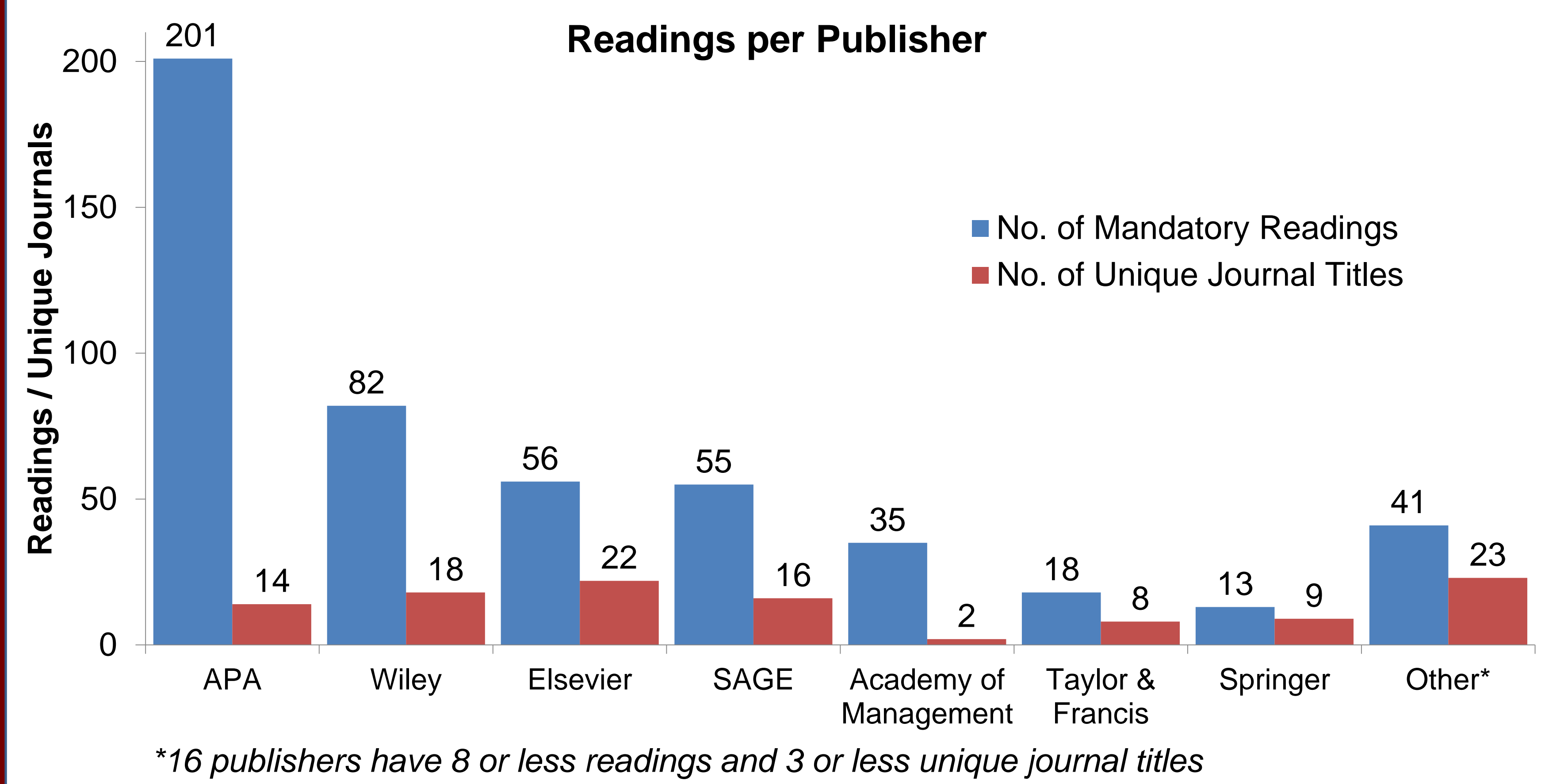
Limitations:

- There is not a centralized location for graduate-level syllabi so this study is based on syllabi the authors procured from faculty and represent only a sampling of the total number of psychology courses taught at Texas A&M University.
- Only the first page of Google results was checked for free access - the articles may possibly be found freely on subsequent page results.

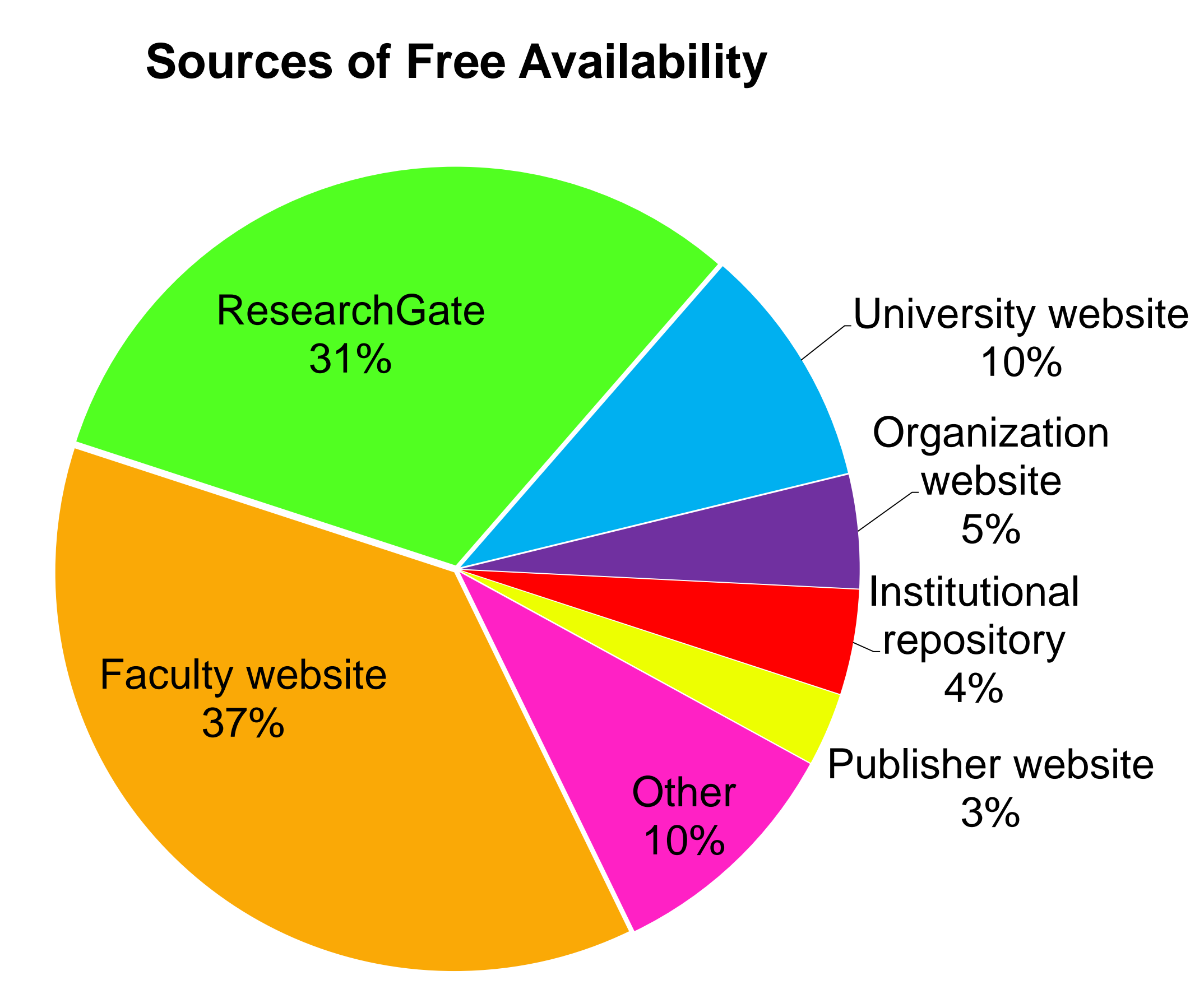
Student Cost Savings per Course

| Course | Semester | No. of Mandatory Readings (Journal Articles) | % of Articles Available for a Fee | Savings per Student* |
|---|-------------|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| PSYC 682: Individual Differences | Spring 2011 | 67 | 97% | \$1,717.35 |
| PSYC 680: Current Directions in Commitment | Fall 2011 | 40 | 98% | \$963.95 |
| PSYC 611: Personnel Psychology | Fall 2011 | 31 | 84% | \$707.50 |
| PSYC 682: Advanced Selection and Placement | Spring 2012 | 15 | 93% | \$290.50 |
| PSYC 680: Workplace Abuse and Mistreatment | Fall 2012 | 43 | 100% | \$1,040.95 |
| PSYC 618: Psychology of Persuasion | Fall 2012 | 59 | 97% | \$1,261.15 |
| PSYC 682: Performance Appraisal/Management | Spring 2013 | 50 | 98% | \$1,211.70 |
| PSYC 610: Organizational Psychology | Spring 2013 | 47 | 96% | \$992.10 |
| PSYC 621: Seminar - Social Psychology | Spring 2013 | 72 | 92% | \$1,605.55 |
| PSYC 697: Seminar - Teaching of Psychology | Spring 2013 | 7 | 57% | \$156.00 |
| PSYC 680: Occupational Health Psychology | Fall 2013 | 49 | 92% | \$970.55 |
| PSYC 682: Personnel Selection and Placement | Spring 2014 | 20 | 100% | \$470.45 |
| PSYC 611: Personnel Psychology | Fall 2014 | 39 | 85% | \$891.30 |

* Savings per student is calculated using publishers' cost per journal article



> 60% free



Student Cost Savings per Course Factoring in Freely Available Articles

| Course | Semester | No. of Mandatory Readings (Journal Articles) | Savings per Student* | No. of Readings Freely Available on the Web | Savings per Student Factoring in Freely Available Articles |
|----------|-------------|--|----------------------|---|--|
| PSYC 682 | Spring 2011 | 67 | \$1,717.35 | 33 | \$940.15 |
| PSYC 680 | Fall 2011 | 40 | \$963.95 | 22 | \$434.60 |
| PSYC 611 | Fall 2011 | 31 | \$707.50 | 24 | \$204.90 |
| PSYC 682 | Spring 2012 | 15 | \$290.50 | 8 | \$172.75 |
| PSYC 680 | Fall 2012 | 43 | \$1,040.95 | 23 | \$547.60 |
| PSYC 618 | Fall 2012 | 59 | \$1,261.15 | 43 | \$353.45 |
| PSYC 682 | Spring 2013 | 50 | \$1,211.70 | 29 | \$555.50 |
| PSYC 610 | Spring 2013 | 47 | \$992.10 | 32 | \$354.70 |
| PSYC 621 | Spring 2013 | 72 | \$1,605.55 | 43 | \$630.05 |
| PSYC 697 | Spring 2013 | 7 | \$156.00 | 7 | \$0.00 |
| PSYC 680 | Fall 2013 | 49 | \$970.55 | 24 | \$631.35 |
| PSYC 682 | Spring 2014 | 20 | \$470.45 | 17 | \$55.90 |
| PSYC 611 | Fall 2014 | 39 | \$891.30 | 27 | \$336.80 |

*Savings per student is calculated using publishers' cost per journal article

Results/Observations

- Texas A&M University Libraries provide access, either online or in print, to all course readings in the syllabi analyzed.
- While their legality is unclear, the number of articles freely hosted on faculty and university websites would seem to indicate that more copyright education is needed in higher education.
- Open access use has been very limited (2 articles out of 505).
- Only 0.03% of content is being hosted in institutional repositories.

Future Research

- The research can be expanded to include:
- all psychology courses
 - monograph titles
 - additionally assigned readings
 - other disciplines