English literature students' perspectives on digital resources in a Spanish university

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

Digital resources have been more widely used in the university classroom since the Spring semester of 2020, but the reality is that Covid-19 simply accelerated an already leading tendency in education. The pedagogical potential of teaching with digital resources, editions and collections remains largely unexplored in the Spanish university context, especially in relation to the study of literary and historical texts. This article reports on a case study at the University of Alicante. An online questionnaire was dispensed to 134 English Studies undergraduates at Alicante in order to elicit the students' responses to electronic resources, their knowledge, uses and attitudes towards them. We also attempted to gauge their engagement with the library services at Alicante and beyond. The results indicate a statistically significant preference for electronic over print resources. Nevertheless, they also suggest the students' low degree of awareness of digital resources and their inability to discriminate between digital resources and general Internet sources. A lack of familiarity with the full potential that libraries offer is also reported, which stresses the need for further training in what seems to be a neglected but crucial area of their studies.

1. Introduction

When the Covid-19 crisis put all our non-digital lives on hold in March 2020, technology became more indispensable than ever. In education, learning and teaching strategies were adapted in speed-record time to the new digital environment. Libraries facilitated access to knowledge and opened their digital doors: they provided instructors, researchers, and students with the necessary resources to carry on with their academic lives, offering free access to online journals and e-books, and promoting the use of their digital collections. Digital resources have, consequently, been more widely used in the university classroom since the Spring semester of 2020. Yet, Covid-19 simply accelerated an already leading tendency in such fields as literary studies.

This study seeks to open ground for discussion on the potentialities of using digital library resources (mainly but not exclusively, editions, hypertexts and digitized manuscripts) among undergraduates, with special attention to those studying the history of literature written in English. Such a topic is usually addressed from the teachers' perspective (see, e.g., Goodwyn (2000) on English and ICT or Brayman Hackel and Moulton (2015) on teaching early modern literature using both traditional and electronic archives), but the students' attitudes towards and knowledge of these digital resources still remains a largely unexplored topic, especially in contexts or countries (like Spain) where English is not the students' first language. Hence, the need for the present study.

Our context focuses on the BA in English Studies from the University of Alicante (UA), Spain, but it could be applicable to other degree programs. Our goal was to assess the viability of integrating digital resources into this undergraduate degree, as well as to examine students' reactions and opinions when confronted with new digital tools and resources in both face-to-face and online lectures and seminars. For this purpose, we first compiled a list of digital resources that were available via the University of Alicante Library (*Biblioteca de la Universidad de Alicante*; henceforth, BUA) and as open-access resources from national and international libraries and digital archives, such as the Digital Texts section "Literature in English" library guide from the University of California, Berkeley (University of California, n.d.), and designed a series of practical sessions to test them in our classes. Some examples of such resources are found in the following subsections. We then devised and distributed an online questionnaire. Section 2 describes the context and participants involved in the study, and Section 3 details the materials and methods. In Section 4, we report on the results obtained and Section 5 discusses the main findings of this study. Finally, Section 6

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concludes with some implications of this study and includes avenues for future research.

1.1. Digital texts and library collections for the study of literature in English

Electronic and/or interactive editions of English texts are increasingly common. These editions facilitate a more holistic approach to texts in their original format and may provide translations or glosses, hyperlinked annotations, and curated information about the text's production and reception context.[1] There are also hypertexts that facilitate the study and understanding of the original text, allowing students to listen to excerpts, find out about word definitions and idioms or navigate different editions in different languages.[2] To these electronic and interactive editions, we must add the digitization of library collections. For the past twenty years, libraries and archives have speeded up the digitization of their holdings, thus facilitating students' and researchers' access to knowledge, who can now check unique library collections from the comfort of their homes.[3]

All these initiatives enable English literature students from the four corners of the world to easily navigate myriads of collections and engage with them (see Cotton and Sharron's (2011) guidelines on how librarians can work in liaison with archivists to address users' needs and connect students with both their archival and digital collections; and Mitchell et al. (2012) for a compilation of forty-seven case studies addressing undergraduate involvement with archives and special collections from a wide range of perspectives). This can often be facilitated by joint efforts, as in the case of the "Emily Dickinson Archive", which involved thirteen American institutions, or the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays, which are available online in high definition thanks to the work of the digital team at the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, and the support of many donors (The Bodleian First Folio).

The creation of digital collections has been a gradual but steady process. Back in 2002, the American scholar Jerome J. McGann (2002) forecasted that "in the next 50 years, the entirety of our inherited archive of cultural works will have to be re-edited within a network of digital storage, access, and dissemination". We are yet far from reaching McGann's predictions, mostly due to the economic cost and the investment on Human Resources that digitization entails, but twenty years later, the advances in digitization are very much palpable in the editorial and bibliographic world.

1.2. The role of digital resources in English degree programs: a literature review

Digital resources have also become more relevant in the classroom. In the English-speaking context, a significant number of studies have addressed the potential of digital pedagogy in Higher Education (Battershill & Ross, 2017; Frost et al., 2015; Hirsch, 2012; Travis & DeSpain, 2018). Using digital resources "can enrich student experiences of reading, writing, and researching" (Travis & DeSpain, 2018, p. ix). Moreover, through the use of these digital resources, professors "bring their research into the classroom and bring their students into their research" (p. x). Therefore, our classes can become "visible, our pedagogy accountable, and our research meaningful and accessible" (p. x). In addition, the Covid-19 crisis has forced us to go digital in our classrooms. One of the few positive effects of this crisis is that it has led us to rethink and reshape the structure of our teaching and our understanding of the potentialities of teaching with digital resources. It has allowed professors and students to reconsider what going digital means, and it has finally proven, as Showalter (2003) already argued almost twenty years ago, that "the new technology is no panacea or shortcut to success" (p. 42).

There is a significant number of studies dealing with students' perceptions on the use of digital vs print resources in other university systems (Bagudu & Sadiq, 2013; Grossnickle Peterson & Alexander, 2020; Liu & Luo, 2011; Zell, 2020) and students' attitudes towards electronic resources (Dukić & Strišković, 2015; Kim, 2010; Liu & Yang, 2004; Millawithanachchi, 2012; Nicholas et al., 2008). However, no study has, to our knowledge, addressed how Spanish universities and their libraries are engaging with these electronic resources; neither how Spanish university students perceive the potentialities of digital collections nor how good students are—or not—at working with them. The only exception is Guzmán-Simón et al. (2017) research into undergraduate students' perspectives on digital competence, which considers a sample of 786 students in the School of Education (354 studying the Degree in Early Childhood Education and 432 the Degree in Primary Education) at a Spanish university. There are, however, no counterparts for School of English undergraduates in Spain.

Back in 2000, the contributors to *English in the Digital Age: Information and Communications Technology (ITC) and the Teaching of English* reflected on the changes that digital resources could bring to the English classroom and examined the benefits of incorporating ICT into the teaching of literature (Goodwyn, 2000, p. 4). The volume also tried to predict the effects that this technological change could bring to our classrooms (Andrews, 2000, p. 22-33). In the last years, more studies have moved in this direction, and current scholarship has proven the potential of digital resources for most periods and contexts of literatures in English, presenting a wide array of case studies on how and why these digital archives and resources should be incorporated into the classroom (see, e.g., McMahon & Frantzen, 2011, Lee, 2012, Smith & Brandolino, 2013, Gudmanian & Sydorenko, 2020 on the history of the English language and medieval literature; Clarke, 2011, Ehrlich, 2015, Bell & Borsuk, 2020 on the Early Modern period; Klein, 2014, Hubbard & Ryan, 2015, and Kim, 2020 on the long eighteenth century; Whitson, 2013, and Cadwallader & Mazzeno, 2017 for examples on the use of digital resources in the English nineteenth-century literature classroom, Travis & DeSpain, 2018 on the American nineteenth century; or Nunes, 2015 on the use of digital archives in the teaching of World literatures). These studies provide methodological background on different applications of digital resources into the study of English such as the incorporation of texts written by women into the curriculum through the use of digital libraries and catalogues (Klein, 2014), the potential uses of social media in the study of Dickens (Fleming, 2017) or how digital archives and mapping technologies can be applied in the classroom to study nineteenth-century literature about London (Swafford, 2017). In spite of

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[1] Among those relevant electronic and interactive editions for English literature scholars and students are TEAMS Middle English Texts Series, the Early English Books Online (EEBO), the Yale Digital Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, the Victorian Plays Project, or Literature and Culture Collection (Rotunda).

[2] Some practical examples of hypertexts are "The Old English Aerobics Anthology", an "easy-to-use" online edition of Peter S. Baker's (2003) *Introduction to Old English* which allows students to listen to some of the excerpts or to find out about word definitions and idioms, among other significant aspects; or the "IWP - WhitmanWeb", a collaboration between the International Writing Program from the University of Iowa and the Walt Whitman Archive, featuring Walt Whitman's writings from the American Civil War, as well as annotated editions of Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" in more than fifteen languages.

[3] As recent as June 2021, Huw Jones (Cambridge Digital Humanities) and Dr Laura McCormick Kilbride (Research Fellow in English, Cambridge University) started working on the digitization of the correspondence between the poet and First World War veteran David Jones and his patron Harold Stanley (Jim) Ede, founder of the Kettle's Yard Museum, and there are many other projects well underway. One of them is CLASP (A Consolidated Library of Anglo-Saxon Poetry) funded by the European Research Council (H2020-EU.1.1, 2016-2022) and hosted by the University of Oxford. CLASP has the intention of producing "for the first time an online and interactive consolidated library" on all surviving verse on Anglo-Saxon England. The project will "use the full panoply of digital resources, including sound- and image-files where relevant, to make the oldest surviving poetry in England available to a modern audience for unprecedented kinds of exploration, comprehensive analysis, and interrogation".

this consolidation of research into digital resources in English literature courses, specific studies on the Spanish context are lacking.

In addition, the multimodal nature of digital resources, including interactive and complementary material such as audio, images or videos, may increase students' motivation when dealing with literary and historical texts. In her study "Literary English and the Challenge of Multimodality", Beavis (2013) argues that recognizing literature as "a wider and more diverse range of forms […] is consistent with the recognition of the diverse and multiple ways in which contemporary meaning is made, and the need for students to be critical, capable *and* creative users of digital and multimodal forms of literacy, alongside traditional print-based forms." (p. 244, emphasis in the original). Beavis's study focuses on how multimodal resources for the study of literature may be integrated into the Australian curriculum at primary and secondary school level, but it can be extrapolated to higher education. In her words,

> to argue for the inclusion of a broader range of texts alongside picture-books, novels, and other forms of traditional literature is not to deride the value of those forms. Rather, it is to recognise […] the ways in which new technologies and possibilities for meaning-making are creating new textual forms. […]. There are new forms of narrative, new ways of telling stories, new ways of positioning readers, and new forms of participation and engagement, through a range of emergent, digitally enabled cultural sites and forms, that would seem to repay close study of what might be thought of as a 'literary' kind.
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> Beavis (2013, p. 245)

However, we must not lose sight of two significant aspects that may have an effect on how students approach digital resources. First, the fact that students are used to navigating the digital world, but they often lack the knowledge to handle these digital resources or are even unaware of their existence. Students today are considered to be digital natives and multitaskers, but authors like Kirschner and De Bruyckere (2017) have debunked this myth: the actual digital skills and knowledge of this technified generation are much more limited than what is often assumed (see also Jenkins (2009, p. 15), who addresses the problem of digital literacy with a special focus on American primary and secondary school students, a pitfall that also applies to higher education). Second, students often have a deficient knowledge on how to use library resources and how to search library websites. This is one of the handicaps of higher education today and several studies have addressed this problematic in an attempt to determine how student engagement with library resources may be increased (for recent studies on library usage, see Krier (2021) on the use of library services and its connection to student learning, LeMire et al. (2021) on first-year students' library training and their ability to carry out research, Shehata and Elgllab (2019) on how to train students to reduce anxiety when using the library, Montenegro et al. (2016) on how different library resources impact student learning, and Ariew (2014) on the changing role of teaching libraries and the teacher librarian).

One of the most comprehensive articles on users' perceptions of university library websites, Kim's (2011), evaluated the user perspective, the website design perspective and the library service quality perspective. A total of 315 respondents (148 undergraduate students, 101 master's students, and 66 doctoral candidates/faculty members) participated in this study, which highlighted differences across user groups (a) undergraduates, b) master's and c) doctoral candidates/faculty staff) in most parameters except for library website design, which was perceived as challenging by all groups (Kim, 2011, p. 69). Undergraduate students were the least frequent library website visitors and were less likely to make use of the different sources of information services available on the library website than the other user groups. Kim (2011) also reported how "undergraduate students' domain knowledge, database knowledge, and searching skills are relatively low compared to

their two counterparts" (p. 69), a finding which is particularly relevant to the present study, as will become apparent in the discussion of the results. Some studies have also measured the variables involved in the students' first impression of a library website, often foregrounding the role of the aesthetic perception of the library website in their judgments (see Tella & Bashorun, 2012; Tella, 2019 and the references therein). However, such impressionistic reactions are beyond the scope of the present article.

Suspecting our students may have limited knowledge and skills to use digital collections, we wondered if it would be possible to use digital collections in our history of English literature courses, and to what extent this would benefit our students' learning process. We already explored the benefits of guiding students through the use of traditional bibliographies (Prieto et al., 2019; Sánchez Martí, López Ropero, & Kerslake Young, 2017; Sánchez Martí, Roig-Marín, Díaz Sánchez, Perni Llorente, & Prieto García-Cañedo, 2019), but we had not yet determined whether our students had received sufficient training in the use of electronic and digital tools and resources. A pressing question was whether our students knew how to take advantage of digital resources and how to tackle the difficulties they may encounter when using them.

2. Context and participants

This study was carried out during the second semester of the academic year 2020/2021 and was limited to English undergraduate students from the UA, Spain. The English language and literature undergraduate degree is a four-year program which introduces students to the main areas of English linguistics and to the whole history of English and US literature in different course modules arranged in reverse chronological order, starting with 20th- and 21st-century literature in their first year and ending with medieval literature in their final year. We selected online resources (including libraries' websites with digitized textual materials such as the Parker Library, Cambridge University Library, the Bodleian, the British Library, and Folger Shakespeare Library) that could enhance the students' understanding of literary history in the English-speaking world, and shared them in class with second-year, third-year and fourth-year students. First-year students were excluded from the present study because of (1) the synchronous approach of the subjects they take during their first year and (2) their more limited experience with library and subject complementary resources, a situation particularly exacerbated over the last year in which face-to-face teaching and library visits were kept to a minimum. All students at our Faculty (*Facultad de Filosofía y Letras*) receive general library instruction both in their first years through a tutorial program (known as *PAT*) and in their fourth year through preparatory seminars for their final-year undergraduate thesis. There is no subject-specific training in most courses since it is not part of the official curriculum although lecturers attempt to integrate some individual sessions into their classes. The participants in the questionnaire, 134 students, were 36 second-year students, 44 third-year students and 54 fourth-year students.

3. Materials and methods

The data collection instrument used for this study was an online, anonymous questionnaire (via Google Forms). Its completion was not a course requirement. Students were asked to complete it in class but two difficulties must be accounted for: not all the students were physically present in the classroom given COVID-19 restrictions (which meant that many of them were attending the lectures online) and attendance at these courses is not compulsory. However, the number of students answering this survey mostly correlates with those students who regularly followed the classes. The link to the questionnaire was dispensed to English undergraduate students at Alicante in March 2021-April 2021 in order to elicit the students' responses to electronic resources, their knowledge, uses and attitudes towards them. This was done after having held in-class sessions in which we explicitly showed our students a series

of online resources. We also attempted to gauge their engagement with the library services at Alicante and beyond. In October 2020, the BUA implemented a next generation library software system, Alma (see Ex Libris, 2021 for details), with a new catalogue which, for the first time, integrated both the print and digital collections of the BUA. Alma allows the user to find records of online articles and other electronic scholarly publications on a given topic and to request the digitization of materials. In line with other universities' catalogues in Spain and abroad, it includes advanced features like the possibility of generating citations, exporting bibliographical results to a reference manager, saving particular searches and creating alerts for similar items. All of these functions, which were not available in the previous version of the BUA catalogue, are milestones in the library services offered to staff and students alike.

The questionnaire was made up of 10 questions (see Appendix A) on the following issues: whether students thought they were given appropriate resources for the study of English-speaking literature and culture (questions (Qs) 1 and 2); whether they preferred print or online resources (Q3); if they could name any electronic resources (Q4); their opinion on the online resources shared by their lecturers (Q5); if they ever used them and if so, whether they found them user-friendly or difficult to use (Q6); if they wanted to spend more time learning how they operate in class (Q7); if they had ever accessed the BUA *online* library resources (Q8), and other libraries' resources (Bodleian, Cambridge UL, Folger, etc.); (Q9) and what kinds materials (apart from books and articles) they expected to find in library websites (Q10). 4 were open-ended questions and 6 semi-closed questions (the options given being "yes", "no" and "other/no opinion" in which they could type in their answers). All the questions were compulsory, that is, they had to be answered in order to be able to submit the questionnaire. The statistical method employed was a Chi-Squared test. A p-value <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

4. Results

Overall, students in all years were satisfied with the resources they are given for the study of anglophone literatures (77.78% of second-year students, 77.27% of third-year students and 83.33% of fourth-year students) and cultures (52.78% of second-year students, 70.45% of third-year students and 83.33% of fourth-year students) (see Tables 1 and 2 for a break-up of the results). There is a slight increase in the average satisfaction of students' bibliographical needs in the study of literature vs. culture (79.46% vs. 68.85% respectively), which is statistically significant (p = 0.0477). It was worth pointing out that the provision of resources for the study of anglophone cultures did not seem satisfactory to 44.44% of second-year students.

As for their preference for print or online resources (Table 3), 47.22% of second-year students, 50% of third-year students and 53.7% of fourth-year students indicated that they preferred online resources. As expected, the students took advantage of the "other" option to generate a third option (a combination of both print and online resources) by 16.67% (second-year), 25% (third-year) and 3.7% (fourth-year) and a further fourth option, "no opinion", was selected by 5.56% of fourth-year students. The total of students opting for online resources amounts to 50.31% vs. 32.70% for print resources, which is also a statistically significant result (p = 0.0035).

Yet, when asked to justify their answers to this question (the second

part of Q3), our students' responses were consistent with those described in large-scale studies on reading preferences such as the one carried out by the Academic Reading Format International Study (ARFIS), which comprised more than 21,000 university students in 33 countries (Mizrachi & Salaz, 2020). According to Mizrachi and Salaz (2020, p. 817):

> In general, participants here prefer print for reasons related to learning, and prefer electronic formats for reasons related to cost and convenience. Comments from p-students show a higher priority for learning outcomes and engagement over convenience and cost when choosing a format. E-students did display enthusiasm for engaging with digital texts using the "find," "search," and other features not possible with print, but only a minority actually said they learn better with electronic.

Most of our students preferring online over print indeed cited convenience on several fronts. As far as students with a preference for print are concerned, they noted improved reading processing or learning gains when accessing physical materials and disliked the headaches and physiological discomfort often associated with the use of screens. These perceptions on the use of print material were likewise reported by Mizrachi and Salaz (2020).

The following question enquired about any electronic resources that students could mention. While some students recognized electronic resources (e.g. databases, books, and journals in the abstract), many were unable to name specific examples. Some students, particularly in their second year but also in the third and fourth year, confused resources with general Internet sources (Google, Google Scholar, Google Drive, etc.) or software (Excel and Word (second-year students), and Adobe Acrobat (third-year students)). The wording of this question was straightforward and provided some examples of types of electronic resources in order to avoid any potential confusion or ambiguity (see Appendix). Table 4 lists the resources as provided by the students. Our previous study (Sánchez Martí et al., 2019) on students' knowledge about either print or electronic journals yielded similar results: students were either unable to mention any (68.42%) or among those who did, 66.67% mistakenly assumed that websites like Google Scholar and networking sites like Academia.edu or ResearchGate, among others, were journals (see Sánchez Martí et al., 2019, p. 155).

In the present study, 30.56% of the second-year students, 36.36% of the third-year and 20.37% of the fourth-year students did not know/could not recall any—29.10% on average (p < 0.0001), hence, a statistically significant difference—while a few students did name relevant, subject-specific resources (e.g. the Middle English Compendium).

Most students stated they found the resources the lecturers shared with them "useful" and/or "interesting" (Q5), and claimed to have used them and found them user-friendly (Q6). All of these resources are

Table 1
Responses to Q1. "Do you think you are given appropriate resources for the study of anglophone literatures?" (n = 134).

	Yes		No		Other	
2nd year	28	77.78%	6	16.67%	2	5.56%
3rd year	34	77.27%	10	22.73%	/	
4th year	45	83.33%	7	12.96%	2	3.7%

Table 2
Responses to Q2. "Do you think you are given appropriate resources for the study of anglophone cultures?" (n = 134).

	Yes		No		Other	
2nd year	19	52.78%	16	44.44%	1	2.78%
3rd year	31	70.45%	13	29.55%	/	
4th year	45	83.33%	8	14.81%	1	1.85%

Table 3
Responses to the first part of Q3. "Do you prefer online or print resources?" (n = 134).

	Print		Online		Both		No preference	
2nd year	13	36.11%	17	47.22%	6	16.67%		
3rd year	11	25%	22	50%	11	25%		
4th year	20	37.04%	29	53.7%	2	3.7%	3	5.56%

Table 4

Answers classified by resource to Q4. "Can you name any electronic resources (hypertexts, databases, etc.) you have heard of?"

2nd year	3rd year	4th year
8 Chawton House	6 Google Scholar	8 Parker Library/1
5 The Yale Digital Edition of	4 JSTOR	Corpus Christi College
the Works of Samuel Johnson	2 websites	8 JSTOR
2 Word	2 Old English	6 Middle English
2 Dialnet	Aerobics	Dictionary/
12 Female Tatler	2 Emily Dickinson	Compendium
1 Wikipedia	Archive	4 websites
1 websites	2 e-books	4 ProQuest
1 the Online Library of Liberty.	11 Dialnet	4 Google Scholar
1 online encyclopaedias	1 software	4 electronic journals
1 OLL	1 Project	4 electronic books
1 Kindle	Gutenberg	2 Muse
1 JSTOR	1 online BUA	2 Merriam-Webster
1 hypertexts	1 national libraries	Thesaurus
1 History of England in the	and archives	2 databases
eighteenth century online	1 Moodle	2 Cambridge University
1 Google Books	1 Mendeley	Library
1 Google	1 Linguistics and	2 British Library
1 Excel	Language	1 RUA
1 e-journals and e-books	Behavior Abstracts	1 RUA
1 Cervantes Virtual	1 hypertexts	1 Research Gate
1 Academia.edu	1 Humanities	1 Online encyclopaedias
1 A Vindication of the Rights of	Source	and
Woman in the British Library	1 dictionaries	dictionaries
	1 databases	1 newspapers
	1 Adobe Acrobat	1 Microsoft SQL Server
	1 Academia.edu	1 Manuscripts
		1 hypertexts
		1 Huntington Digital
		Library
		1 How to read Medieval
		handwriting
		1 Google Drive
		1 English library
		1 Corpora
		1 CORPES XXI
		1 BUA
		1 BAL
		1 archive.org

available either open access or through the University's library services. Only a small percentage of students were not able to figure out how they worked (18.18% of third-year students and 14.81% of fourth-year students) and a slightly higher number of them had not used them (44.44% (second-year), 22.73% (third-year) and 35.19% (fourth-year)), that is, an average of 34.12% (p < 0.0001). Given the discrepancy between the students' notions of electronic *resources*, our concern is whether all the students indeed identified the resources available to them or if they merged them with their category of regular Internet sources of information. The majority of them (55.56% (second-year), 65.91% (third-year), 74.07% (fourth-year), that is, an average of 65.18%) also expressed their willingness to learn more about how they operate in class (Q7), which was a statistically significant result (p < 0.0001) in comparison to those who did not (Tables 5 and 6).

The three final questions (Q8-Q10) aimed to obtain information about whether the students had accessed either the BUA (Q8) or other libraries' *online* resources (Q9) (see Tables 7 and 8) and to check if they

Table 5

Responses to Q6. "Have you ever used them [the resources that the lecturers shared with them] yourself?" (n = 134).

	Yes, and I found them user-friendly.		Yes, but I was not able to figure out how they worked.		No	
2nd year	20	55.56%	/		16	44.44%
3rd year	26	59.09%	8	18.18%	10	22.73%
4th year	28	51.85%	8	14.81%	19	35.19%

Table 6

Responses to Q7. "Would you like to spend more time learning how they operate in class?" (n = 134).

	Yes		No		Other
2nd year	20	55.56%	16	44.44%	
3rd year	29	65.91%	15	34.09%	
4th year	40	74.07%	14	25.93%	

actually made use of them by asking the respondents to cite what kinds of materials they can find on the library websites (Q10). Our premise is that students may regularly use the BUA library catalogue but not necessarily all the electronic resources available through this catalogue. An average of 71.64% claimed to had accessed the BUA electronic resources (vs. 28.36% who had not) and 55.22% had explored other libraries' (vs. 47.78%). Hence, as expected, there is a statistically significant difference between those groups of students accessing their own university library's vs other libraries' e-collections (p = 0.0053).

Table 9 shows the ample variety of responses obtained to the question about what kinds of materials are available on library websites. The top-cited answers varied depending on the year and included books (eight second-year and third-year students) and articles (thirteen fourth-year students). Some of them indicated copyright material which unfortunately is not available online (only included in the catalogue for reference purposes) such as films and audiobooks. Other responses, in a similar fashion to those from Q4, were as generic as "information" (about authors/periods/etc.), "analyses", "videos", "research", "essays", "notes" or "papers". Yet, for instance, only four third-year students and six fourth-year students referred to manuscripts, even if they had been specifically introduced to them (on different library websites) in class; and four second-year students, seven third-year students and six fourth-year students (a total of 12.69%) said they had no idea.

5. Discussion of the results

The slightly higher percentage of dissatisfied students with the provision of resources for the study of anglophone cultures (in contrast to anglophone literature) can be hypothesized to be connected to the lack of library training and the structure of the curriculum, since second-year students have not taken any culture-specific subjects yet and, at this stage, may not be aware of culture-related resources shared in their literature courses.

As for the preference for online resources, it is symptomatic of a larger trend long identified by some researchers (e.g. Agboola, 2010; Dukić & Strišković, 2015; Holaday et al., 2013; Ji et al., 2014; Pandita, 2012; Ranganadham & Babu, 2012; Thanuskodi, 2011): the way in which information was traditionally accessed, via print scholarly sources, underwent a radical revolution with the use of ICT. More recently, some authors (see, e.g., Zell, 2020 and the references therein) underscore how access and reading preferences may vary across disciplines, but there seems to be a general preference for a mixture of electronic and print resources to meet both undergraduates' and graduates' needs. Other authors (e.g. Boumarafi, 2010; Hussain & Abalkhail, 2013; Shuling, 2007 and Swain, 2010), however, have stated how there is still a significant number of students expressing a preference for printed material. It is important to bear in mind that in our survey the students were not asked about access *and* reading preferences, as in Zell's (2020),

Table 7

Responses to Q8. "Have you ever accessed the UA *online* library resources?" (n = 134).

	Yes		No		Other
2nd year	17	47.22%	19	52.78%	
3rd year	36	81.82%	8	18.18%	
4th year	43	79.63%	11	20.37%	

Table 8
Responses to Q9. "Have you ever accessed other libraries' online resources?" (n = 134).

	Yes		No		Other
2nd year	21	58.33%	15	41.67%	
3rd year	25	56.82%	19	43.18%	
4th year	28	51.85%	26	48.15%	

but just about access. The UA students most likely had in mind resources of the kind they usually handle in class, that is, as supplementary materials to the course contents.

We reached the same conclusion as Zell's (2020) overview of previous studies (p. 7): "undergraduate students' level of awareness of the different electronic resources is low and some students tend to confuse electronic resources (*electronic* journals, books, and databases) with freely accessible Web-based Internet sources". This again proves a strong need to draw explicit attention to the resources available to students. Undergraduate students should be able to discriminate between resources and sources of information, a key distinction in research and bibliographical tasks in general. Similarly, a hands-on introduction to the new university catalogue would be of help since it now allows users to search for resources in the entirety of the BUA collections, just in the audiovisual collection, e-collection, RUA (that is, the UA repository) or EBSCO. We are confident this will be developed by the library team once in-person activities go back to normal. Finally, the students' lack of familiarity with library websites and the resources available on them is also in line with their limited knowledge of electronic resources and the findings reported in the previous literature (see Kim, 2011).

Table 9
Answers classified by resource to Q10 "Apart from traditional resources (e.g. books and articles), what kinds of materials do you think you can find and access on library websites?"

2nd year	3rd year	4th year
8 books	8 information about authors,	13 articles
4 newspapers	periods, etc.	7 videos
4 essays	8 books	7 newspapers
3 magazines	6 dictionaries	6 manuscripts
2 videos	5 papers	4 reviews
2 theses	5 magazines	4 databases
2 pictures	5 articles	3 movies
2 papers	4 manuscripts	3 essays
2 notes	4 essays	3 audiobooks
2 encyclopaedias	3 videos	2 theses
2 documents	3 research	2 research
(e.g. letters) about/by	2 websites	2 pictures
an author	2 movies	2 guides
2 documentaries	2 databases	2 encyclopaedias
2 dictionaries	2 biographies	2 conferences
2 audiobooks	1 theses	1 visual data
1 theater	1 TFGs [end-of-year projects]	1 theory
1 reviews	1 recited poems	1 same things but
1 resources	1 interactive and	in electronic
1 reports	dynamic materials	format
1 movies	1 instructions	1 pictures
1 manuscripts	1 historical documents	1 guidebooks
1 interviews	1 CDs/DVDs	1 e-resources
1 grammar or	1 bibliography	1 corpora
phonetics	1 analyses	1 catalogues
books		
1 artistic		
engravements		
1 analyses		

6. Implications and further research

The data collected for this article has not been as insightful as we expected it to be. The students' lack of familiarity with basic concepts (such as the word *resource* itself) proved particularly problematic and hindered the attainment of our aims. In light of our results, the library training students receive in their degrees in their first and fourth year does not seem to be satisfactory, so we would need to develop supplementary independent sessions on digital resources (what they are, how to find them, and why they are important in their studies) in collaboration with the library team. The contents of these sessions could be incorporated into our syllabi as part of the course objectives. Students could carry on two one-week projects throughout the semester (in a semester of 15 weeks) in which they are trained in the use of digital resources and they show and demonstrate how they could integrate them into their study of the different texts under consideration. Ideally, this should be delivered to second-year students after their initial training in their first year. Such a partnership beyond our classrooms would provide students with a sharper knowledge of resources while enabling us to better assess the students' needs without the usual time constraints on our course schedules. In order to collect more pointed data, in future research we aim to include a Pre-Test survey so that we can gather baseline data for each group and a Post-Test survey to monitor progress.

Overall, the present study has attempted to shed light on the need to further promote and instruct students in the use of digital collections in the English literature classroom. This could be done via the design of a student's handbook on good practices and tips about the use of online and digital resources in collaboration with the university library. The handbook could incorporate a decalogue of "do's and dont's" and a series of practical activities that could teach students how to search and work with digital texts and resources and how to select content. In addition, instructors may design their own digital bibliographies for their courses and work towards increasing the presence of multimodal texts and contents in their sessions, including specific units that explore the possibilities of digital resources and online collections. This would likely facilitate students' engagement in the courses and prepare them to handle digital content. Libraries and library training play a fundamental role in this enterprise, helping students to identify and take full advantage of the resources that are available to them. Further research, with information obtained from all the parties involved (students, instructors and librarians), is needed in order to optimize all the potential that the digital era—and electronic resources in particular—can offer. In the future, we hope to be able to conduct a larger comparative study, for which interuniversity and interlibrary cooperation will be essential.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Amanda Roig-Marín: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Writing-Original draft preparation and Reviewing and editing.
Sara Prieto: Conceptualization, Resources, Writing-Original draft preparation and Reviewing and editing.

Appendix A. List of survey questions

1. Do you think you are given appropriate resources for the study of anglophone literatures?

    Yes

    No

    Other

2. What about anglophone cultures?

    Yes

    No

    Other

3. Do you prefer online or 'traditional' (paper-based) resources? Why?

4. Can you name any electronic resources (hypertexts, databases, etc.) you have heard of?

5. What do you think about the resources the lecturer shared with you in class?

6. Have you used them yourself?

    Yes, and I found them user-friendly.

    Yes, but I was not able to figure out how they worked.

    No

    Other

7. Would you like to spend more time learning how they operate in class?

    Yes

    No

    Other

8. Have you ever accessed the UA *online* library resources?

    Yes

    No

    Other

9. Have you ever accessed other libraries' resources?

    Yes

    No

    Other

10. Apart from traditional books and/or electronic journals, what kinds of materials do you think you could find on library websites?

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