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Exploring faculty consideration of instructional resource cost to students

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Purpose

Investigate how instructors consider resource cost and availability when compiling assignments in their course syllabi

Explore approaches to lower costs of educational materials for students

Methods

Critical incident technique survey (Flanagan, 1954) to ensure faculty had a specific course and syllabus in mind

Disciplinary categories outlined by Biglan (1973)

Based on Ellis' (1989) and Meho and Tibbo's (2003) lists of common information seeking habits of faculty, we asked faculty how they discovered the resources they asked their students to study for their courses

References

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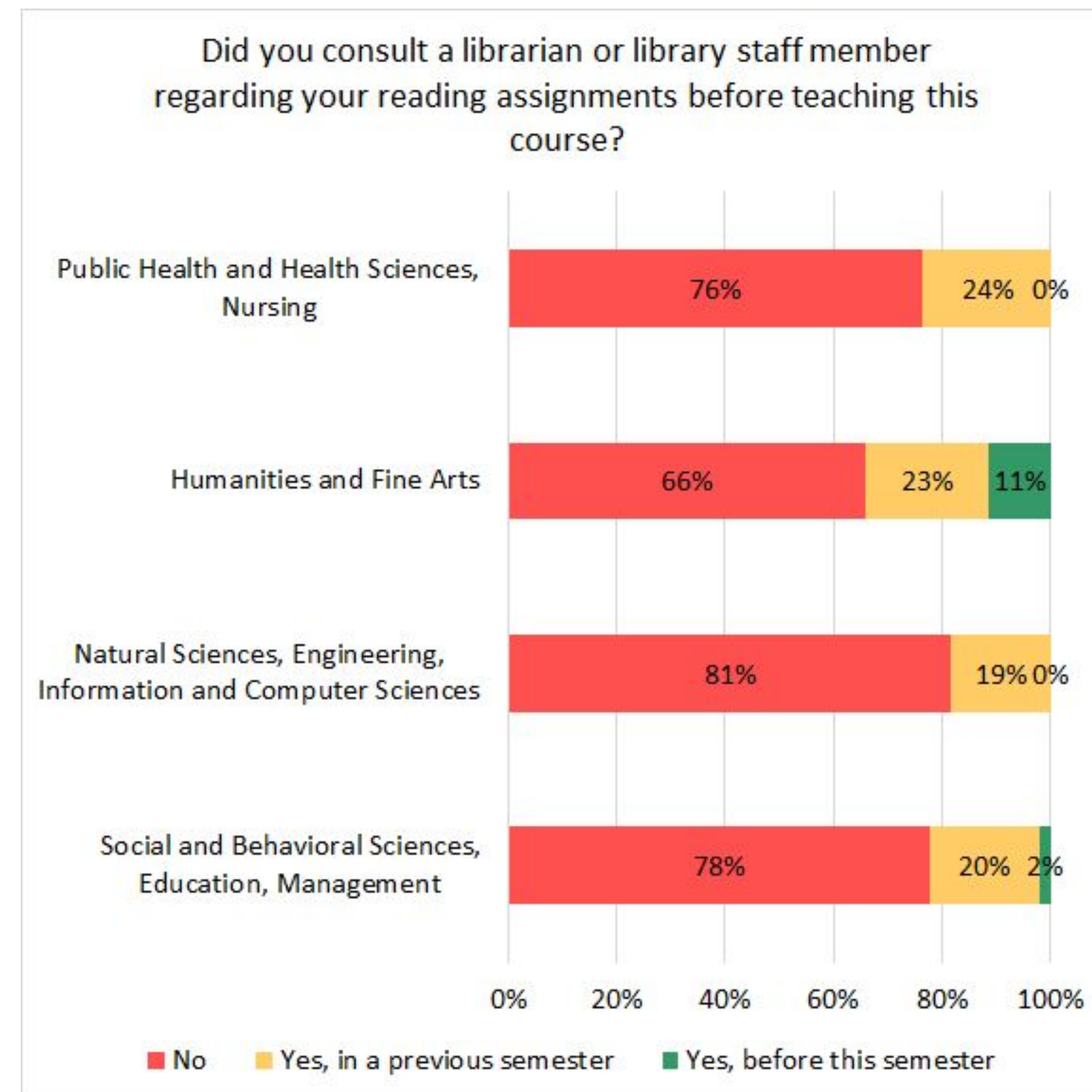
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Meho, L. I., & Tibbo, H. R. (2003). Modeling the information-seeking behavior of social scientists: Ellis's study revisited. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, 54*(6), 570-587. https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.10244

Findings

Most syllabi created (15%) or updated (48%) for the semester the course was taught

76% of faculty never consulted library staff regarding their course materials

Did you consult a librarian or library staff member regarding your reading assignments before teaching this course?

Implications

Significant opportunity for greater librarian-faculty engagement on educational material costs & selection.

Frequency of faculty's syllabus review signals need for more librarian availability for consultation.

Findings - Format

Most faculty assigned at least one article

In the natural sciences and engineering, articles are significantly more likely to be assigned than other formats

63% of respondents assigned media such as videos, music, or podcasts on their syllabi

Formats Assigned by Discipline
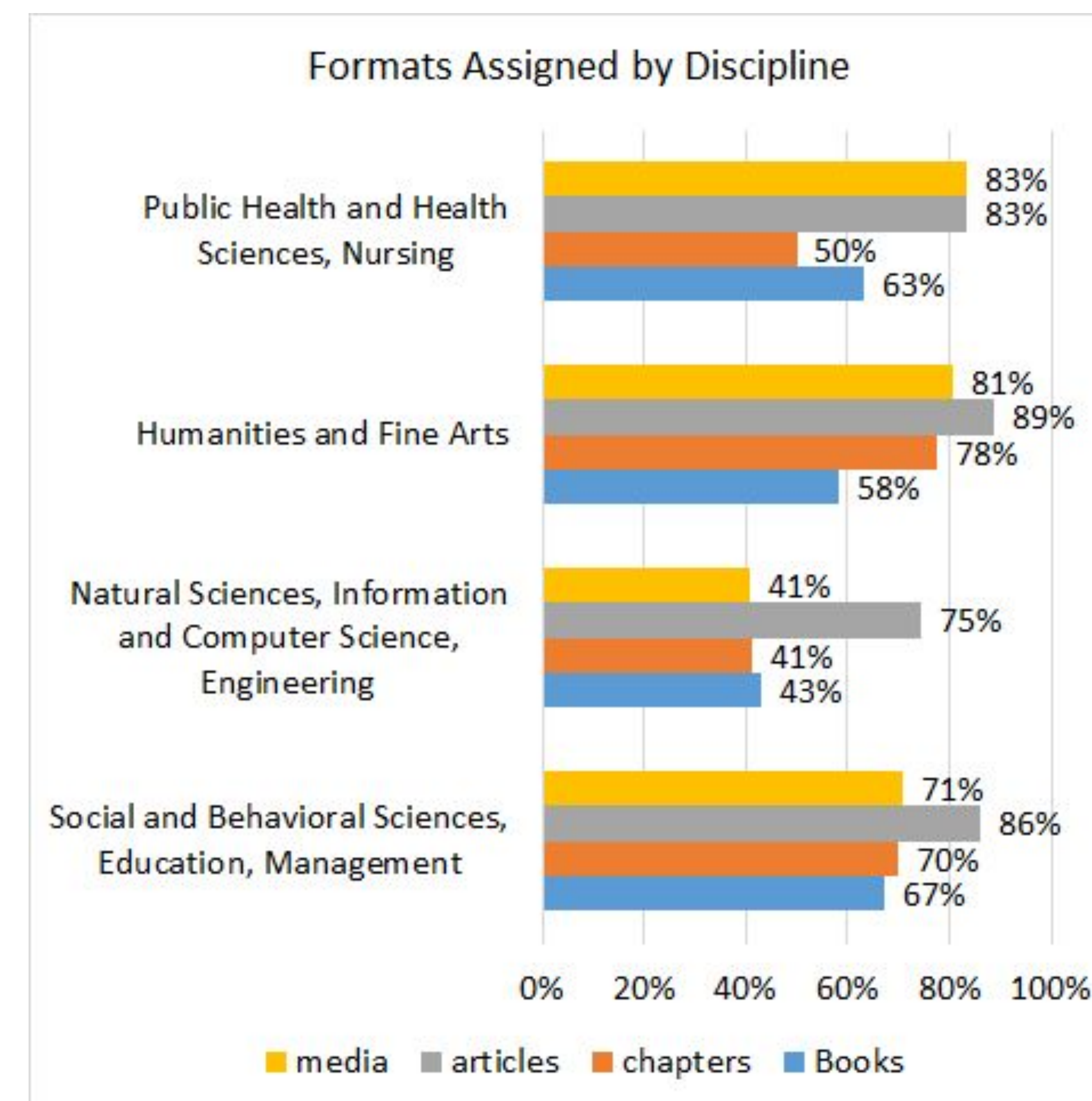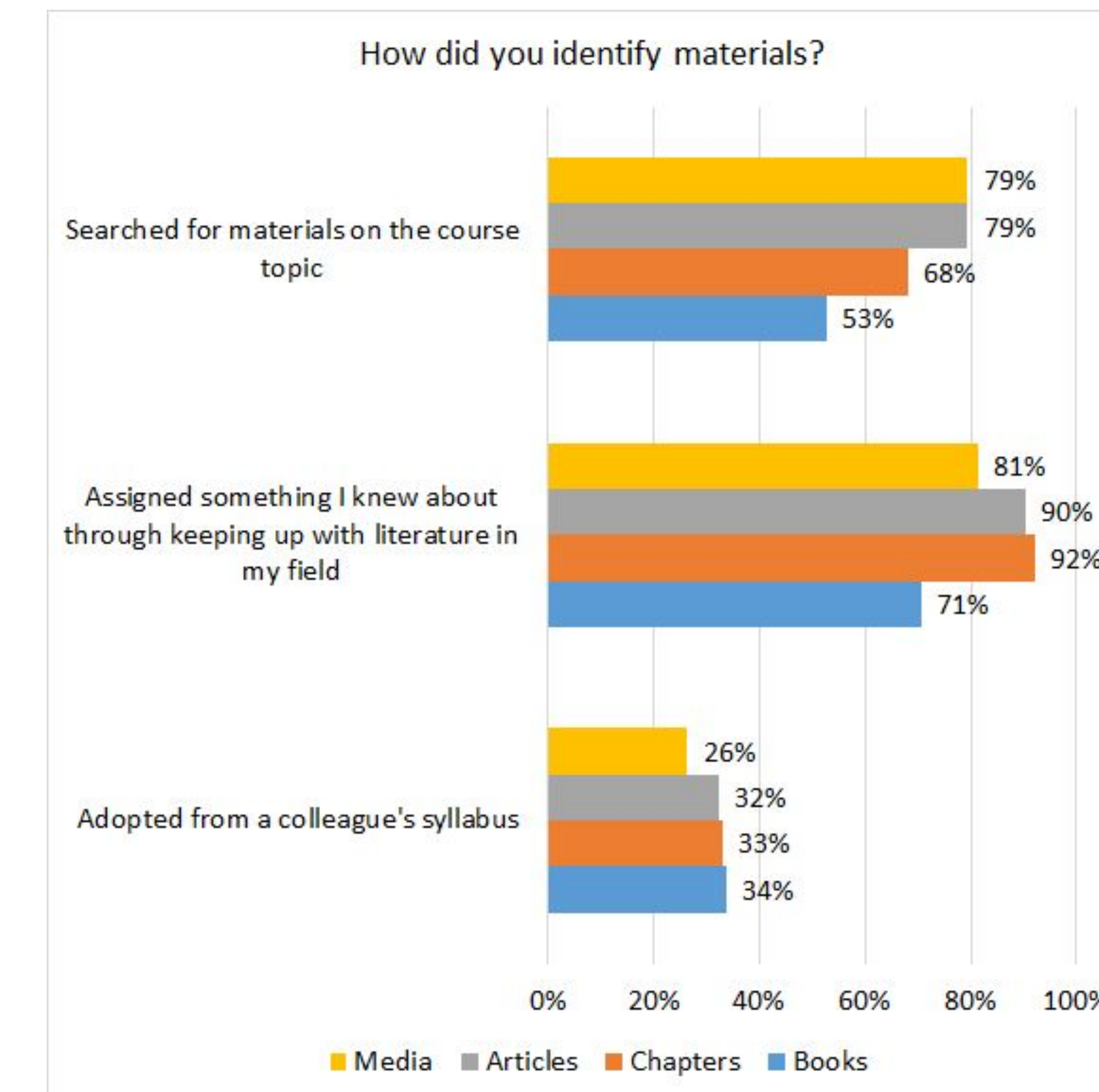
Implications - Format

Growing importance of media, and faculty understanding of licenses, requires more financial resources and outreach from libraries.

Findings - Discovery

Faculty are most likely to select materials relying on their own knowledge of the field or their own searches

More faculty reported adopting books from a colleague's syllabus than the other material types

92% located chapters by keeping up with literature in their field

How did you identify materials?

Implications - Discovery

As faculty are mostly self-reliant in discovery process, building collaboration with library staff will necessitate trust and behavioral changes.

Book chapters are not as well indexed in discovery tools. Librarians can promote citation "chaining" from reference lists as an alternative.

Books are one of the resources that we found faculty consider the cost of or availability through the libraries. By strengthening our relationships with faculty librarians can promote materials that are low or no cost to students.

Findings - Affordability

Most faculty indicated that open access availability, availability through the library, or cost to purchase are priorities when they consider choosing course materials

19-23% considered "none" of the affordability factors

The proportions of those who considered affordability are lower than those found by Blankstein and Wolff-Eisenberg (2019) when not employing critical incident technique

Which of these factors did you consider when choosing materials for this course?
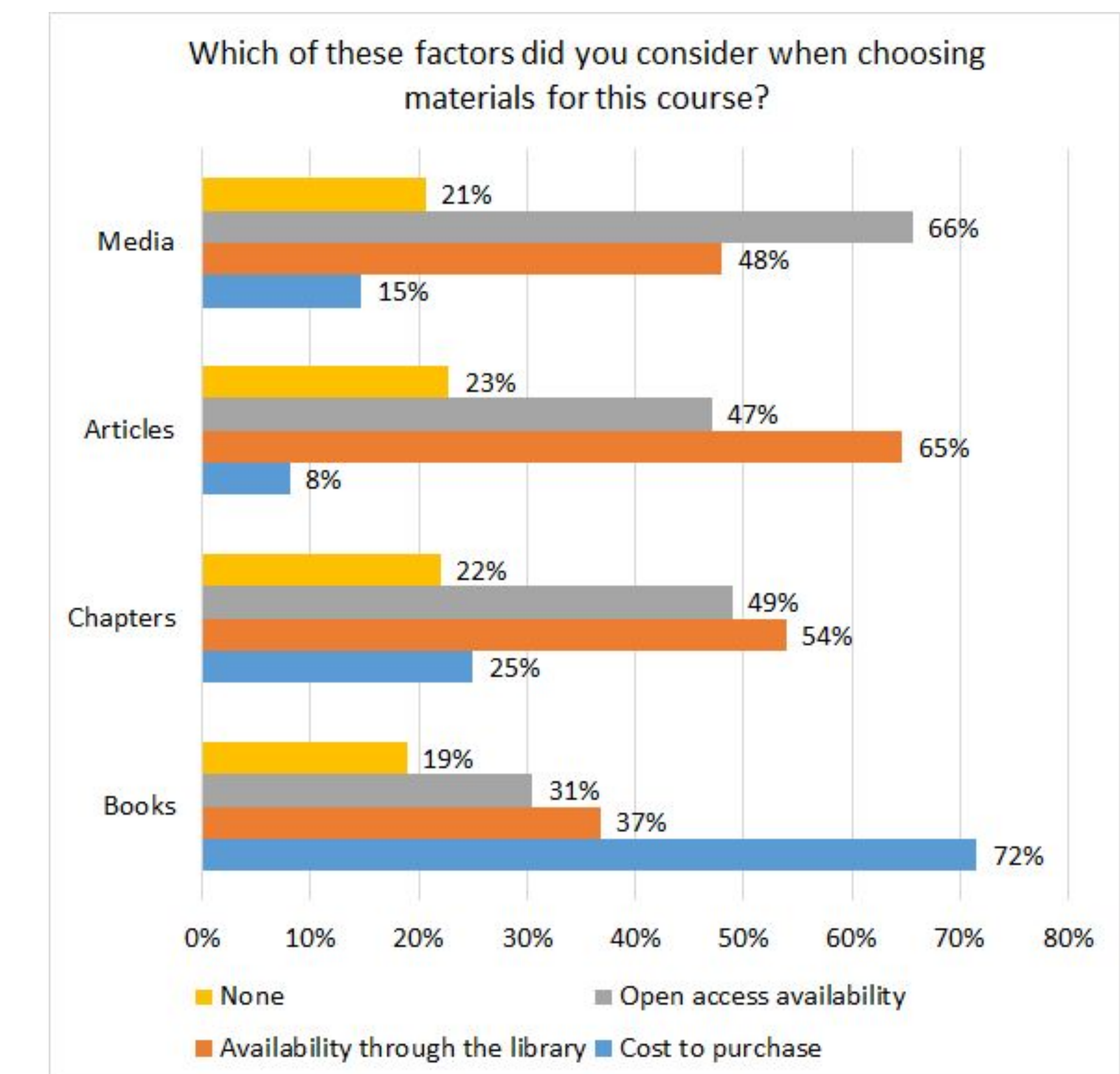
Implications - Affordability

When discussing costs of course materials with faculty, focusing on a specific course is more likely to reveal choices and behaviors regarding affordability.

Promoting strategies and building networks for using affordable course materials may help reach the roughly 20% of faculty who do not consider cost factors.