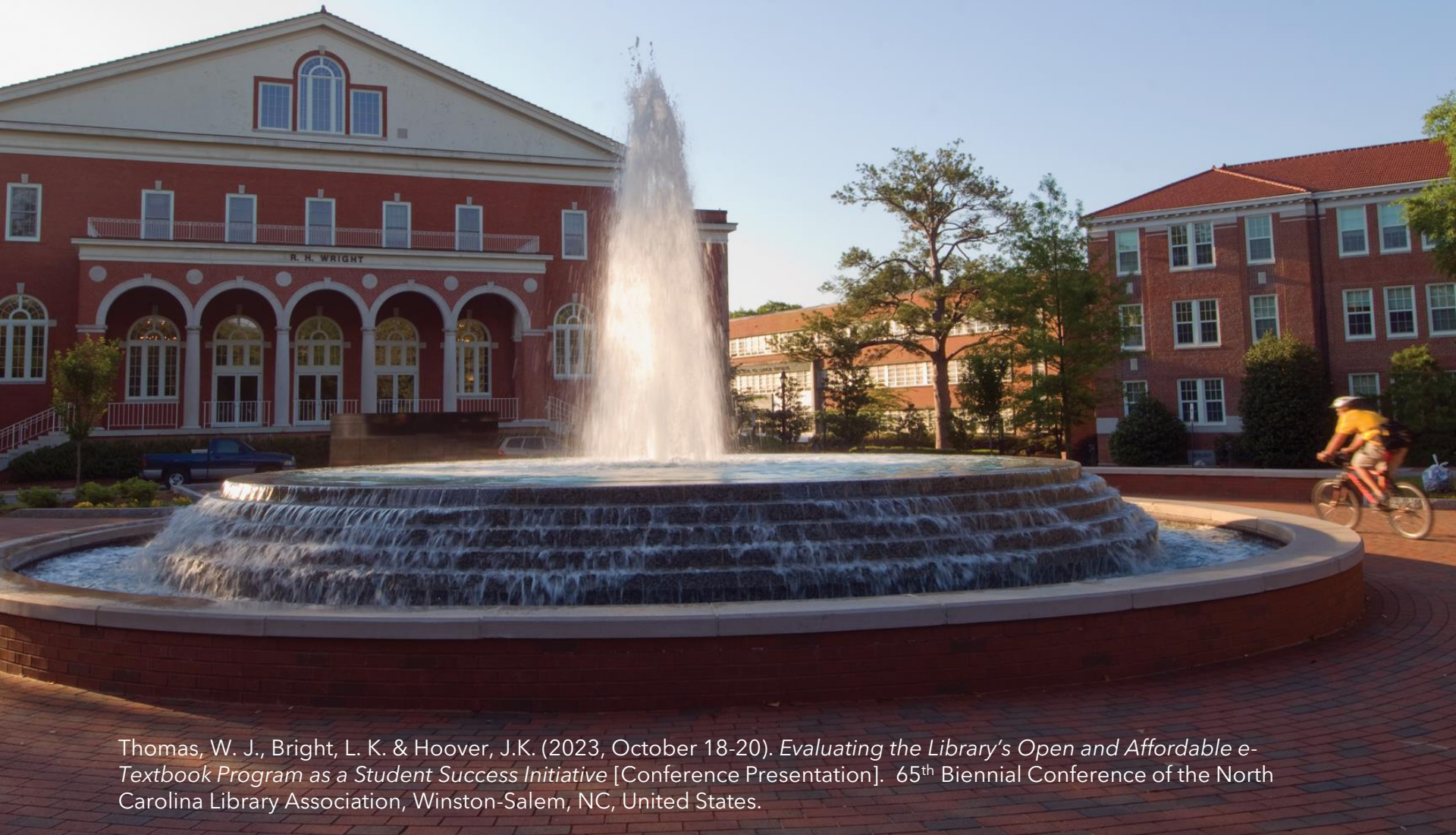# Evaluating the Library's Open and Affordable e-Textbook Program as a Student Success Initiative

Thomas, W. J., Bright, L. K. & Hoover, J.K. (2023, October 18-20). *Evaluating the Library's Open and Affordable e-Textbook Program as a Student Success Initiative* [Conference Presentation]. 65th Biennial Conference of the North Carolina Library Association, Winston-Salem, NC, United States.

Agenda:

- Setting and Purpose

- Background

- Data Collection

- Results

- Next Steps

- Q&A / Discussion

Setting: East Carolina University

REGIONAL R2 IN UNC SYSTEM

~28K STUDENTS
~2K FACULTY MEMBERS

~$85.6M IN FUNDED RESEARCH FY2023

86 BACHELORS, 68 MASTERS, 19 DOC/PROF PROGRAMS

Purposes:

- Evaluate our alternative/affordable textbook initiatives, including:
- Calculating potential cost savings for students
- Identifying the subject areas and classes most served
- Identifying patterns of ebook use and growth of OA adoption
- Discovering perceptions and motivations of faculty members
- Consider future directions for programs

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Joyner Library 2017-2022 Strategic Framework

MAXIMIZE STUDENT SUCCESS
Support excellence, expand opportunity, and celebrate achievement.

Lead textbook affordability initiatives

- Engage effectively with underserved students, including those from low-income families and rural counties, transfer students, and active military and veterans

- Champion student excellence in research, writing and creative activity

- Foster graduate student success

- Provide physical and online environments that facilitate and inspire learning and knowledge creation

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Course Adopted eTextbook (CAT) Program
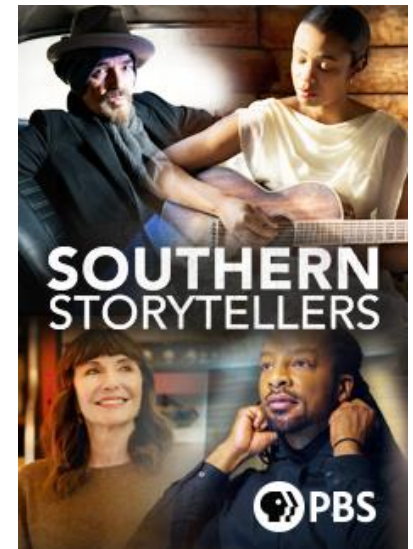
Textbooks:

- Review the required textbook list (provided by the bookstore)
- Determine which ebooks we already own for unlimited users
- Select and acquire additional ebooks
- List on Free E-Textbooks webpage: https://lib.ecu.edu/alt-texts
- Notify faculty members

Course Adopted eTextbook (CAT) Program

Streaming Media:

- Open request form and notify faculty
- Check existing licenses and availability of new films
- Acquire/renew films as needed (esp. Kanopy and Swank)
- Notify faculty members

Alternative Textbook Program

- Provides awards of $1,000 to faculty to move to free or low-cost materials (about 10/year)

  - o Open Educational Resources (OER)
  - o Library materials

- Faculty are assigned a personal librarian

- Optional summer workshops and a Canvas course are provided

CAT Program Evaluation

Interested in the COUP Framework, but…

COUP Elements
A. Cost: Calculate max potential savings
B. Outcomes: Number students served and courses/departments most impacted
C. (Use)
D. Perceptions: Survey faculty about their perceptions of student engagement, willingness to contact library, most significant benefits of the program, and suggestions

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CAT Impacts

- Fall 2015 – Spring 2023 (17 terms)
- LSTA grant from 2016-2018 (with UNCG)
- Over the most recent five years, nearly $2.8M in savings:

Metric	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Max Savings	$453,860	$622,990	$480,506	$640,248	$586,112
Course Sections	353	457	351	595	614
No. Students	8,603	12,807	10,811	12,108	11,583
Expenditures	$3,409	$10,135	$7,812	$13,573	$14,622

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CAT Impacts

- Top Books used in about 110 sections across 12 terms (6 years)
  - *Developing Reading Comprehension,* maximum potential savings more than $60,000
  - *Developing Word Recognition,* maximum potential savings topping $70,000

- Of 1,101 titles, across editions:
  - Used more than 2 terms on average
  - 27 books used 10 or more terms

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CAT Impacts

Top 10 Programs	Course Sections
English	209
History	106
Nursing	66
HDFS	48
Psychology	48
Theatre	42
Religious Studies	39
Political Science	36
Special Education	36
Library Science	33

Top LC Classes for CAT Books	Count of Books
LB	85
PS	56
RC	53
E	40
QA	39
LC	39
HD	37
RA	33
PN	31
PR	31

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CAT Impacts

- Streaming Media:
  - Began reporting 2019-2020
  - For 2022-2023: 227 film requests by faculty in 16 depts across 5 colleges
  - Student Tech Fees paid for AVON + Swank
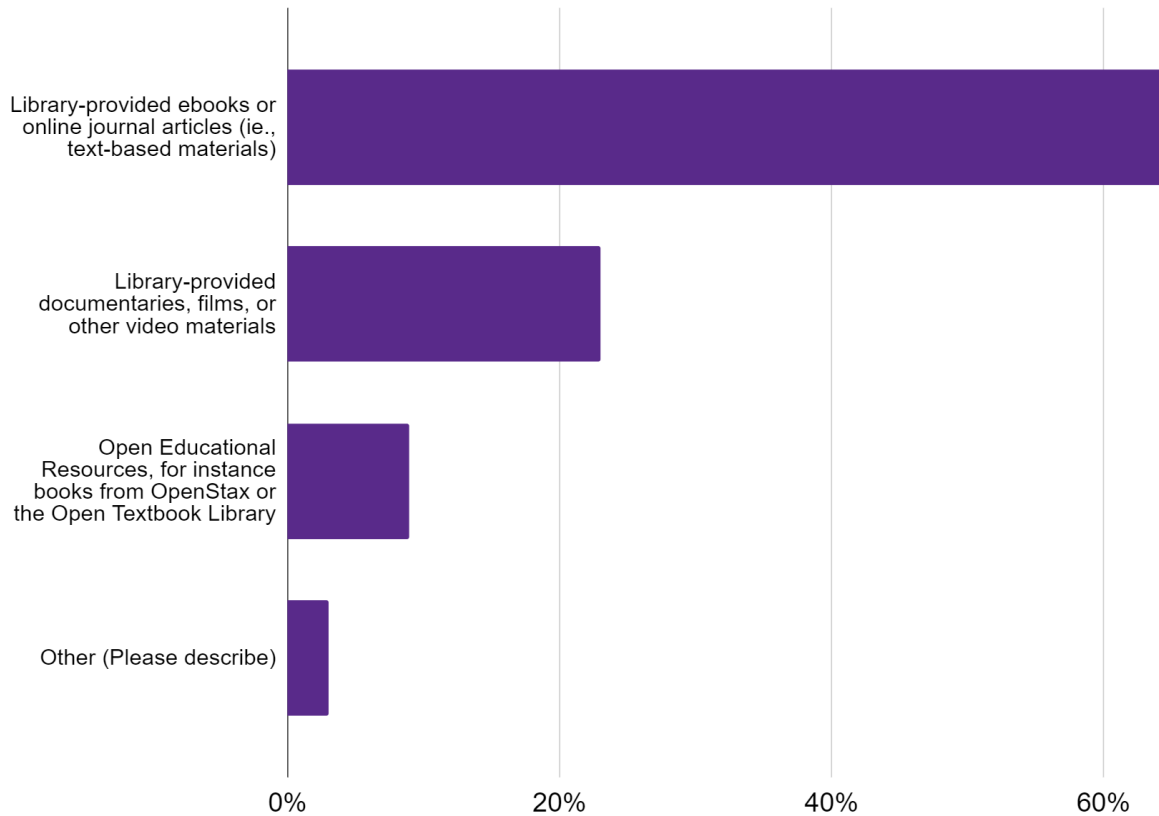 - Library funds for Kanopy and some others

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CAT Survey

Qualtrics survey sent to 354 faculty members, 88 responses (25%)

Appointment Type	
Tenured	59
Fixed Term	14
Tenure Track	13
Clinical and Other (Retired/Adjunct)	2

College/Discipline	
Arts & Sciences	48 (11 English)
Education	16 (5 Library Science)
Fine Arts & Communication	7
Health & Human Performance	7
Engineering & Technology	3
Allied Health	3
Business, Nursing, Medicine	4

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CAT Survey Results (1)

Course Content

Aware of Library Access?

Notify Students?

Category	
Library-provided ebooks or online journal articles (ie., text-based materials)	
Library-provided documentaries, films, or other video materials	
Open Educational Resources, for instance books from OpenStax or the Open Textbook Library	
Other (Please describe)	

0%   20%   40%   60%

Aware of Library Access?
No 24%
Yes 76%

Notify Students?
No 6%
Yes 94%

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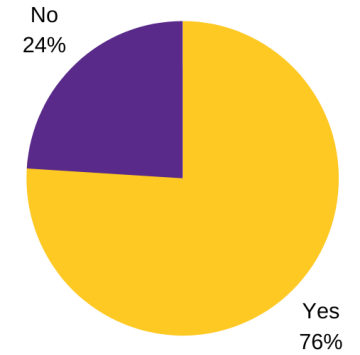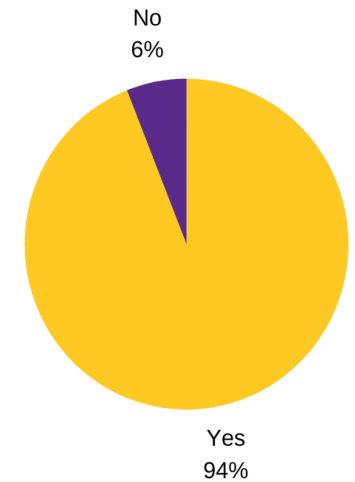
CAT Survey Results (2)

| Impacts on Students	
Engagement with Course Content	77% moderate/high positive impact
Engagement with Professor	55% positive, 45% no discernible impact
Improved Student Learning Overall	78% moderate/high positive impact
Perception of Reduced D/F/W Rates	55% no discernible impact, 45% positive

| Impacts for Professors	
Own Engagement with Content	68% moderate/high positive impact
Own Engagement with Students	65% moderate/high positive impact

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CAT Survey Results (3)

- ## Most important benefits? 73 responses:
  - 56 mention cost savings
  - 35 mention access* and/or format

- ## Suggestions? 51 responses
  - 21 were N/A or "Thanks"
  - Improved communication (16)
    - Earlier notification
    - More publicity
  - Include more courses/texts (8)

Reach out about additional materials?

No 53%

Yes 47%
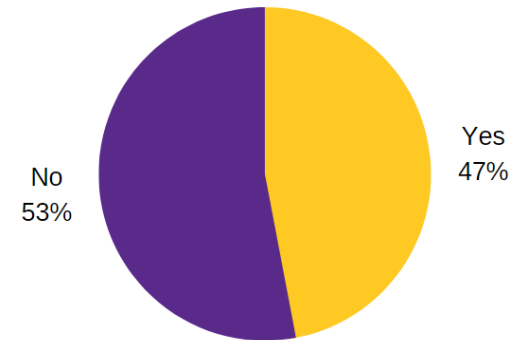
Future contact about course materials?

No 12.8%

Yes 87.2%

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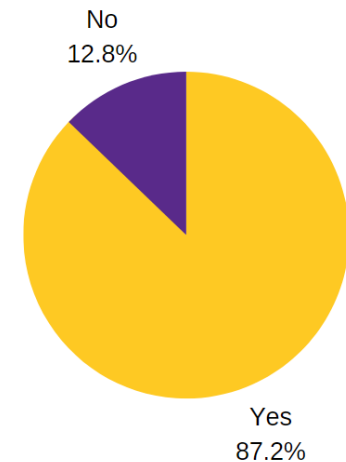
Alt-Text Program Evaluation

COUP Elements
A. Costs: Students' cost avoidance by switching texts
B. Outcomes: Number students served and courses/departments most impacted
C. (Use)
D. Perceptions: Survey faculty about student engagement, effectiveness of materials, successes, challenges, and suggestions

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Alt-Text Impacts

- Over 7 years, awards for 72 faculty members from 34 departments in all 6 Main Campus colleges
- Significant changes: BIOL, ECON, & PSYC switched to OER
- Faculty select free texts for NEW courses

Metric	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Max Savings (Per Semester)	$115,925	$74,533	$23,596	$119,003	$37,122
No. Courses	15	7	9	10	7
No. Students	1,034	551	617	1,033	292
Expenditures	$15,000	$7,000	$9,000	$10,000	$7,000

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Alt-Text Survey

Qualtrics survey to 49 faculty members, 29 responses (59%)

Appointment Type	
Tenured	20
Fixed Term	3
Tenure Track	5
Visiting	1

College/Discipline	
Arts & Sciences	18 (11 diff depts)
Business	3
Education	3
Fine Arts & Communication	2
Health & Human Performance	2
Engineering & Technology	1

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Alt-Text Survey Results (1)
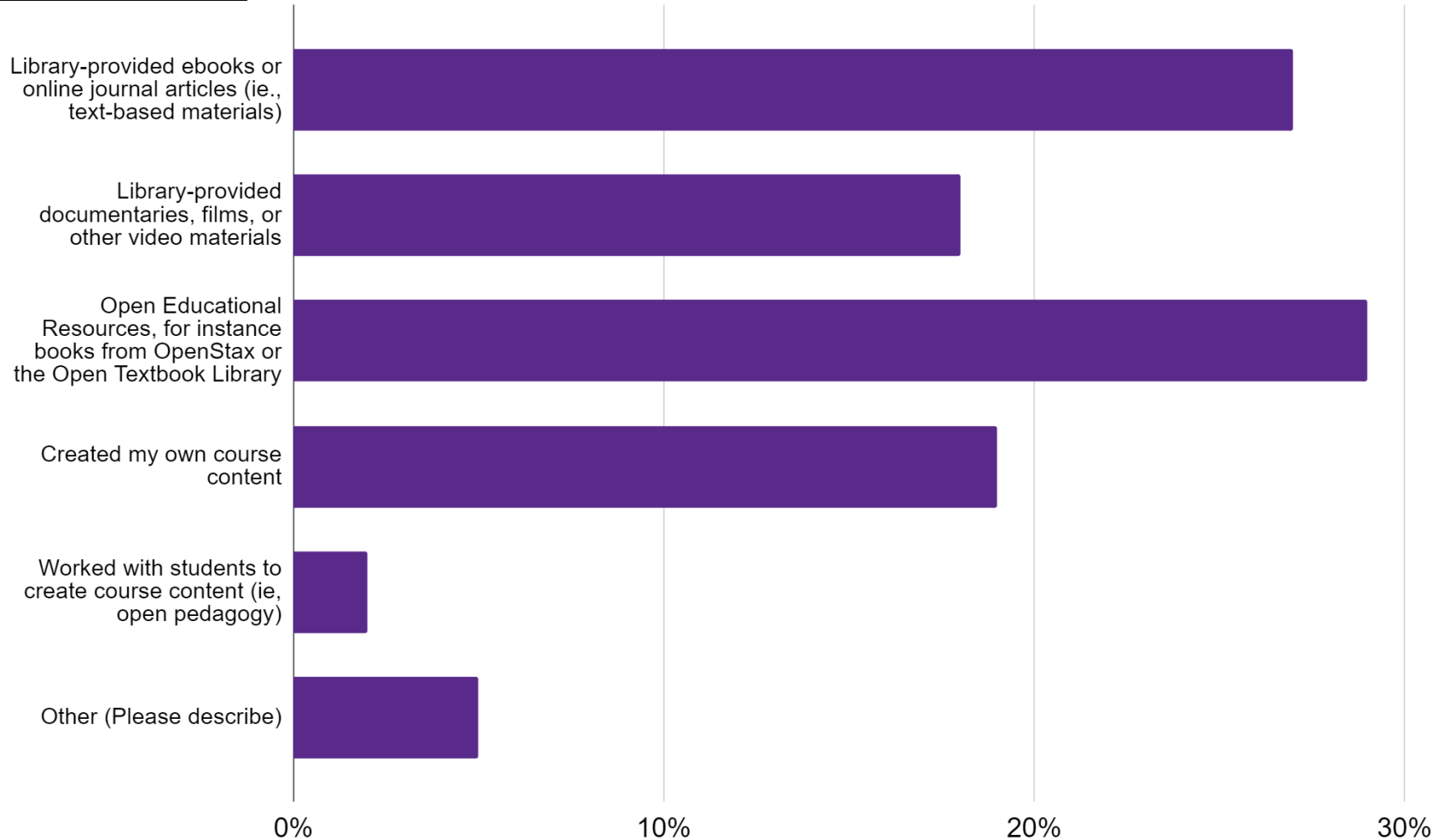
Course Content

Alt-Text Survey Results (2)

Impacts on Students	
Engagement with Course Content	86% moderate/high positive impact
Engagement with Professor	57% positive, 43% no discernible impact
Improving Student Learning Overall	79% moderate/high positive impact
Perception of Reduced D/F/W Rates	52% positive, 48% no discernible impact

Impacts for Professors	
Own Engagement with Content	86% moderate/high positive impact
Own Engagement with Students	79% moderate/high positive impact

Alt-Text Survey Results (3)

Primary motivations for participating
35% Saving students money on materials
25% Alt. textbook stipend
15% Course redesign / experimentation
11% Curricular needs

Importance of reasons for participation (1 most important)					
	1	2	3	4	5
Cost savings on course materials	65%	27%	4%	0%	4%
Curricular or subject matter needs	12%	27%	15%	8%	35%
Course redesign/ experimentation	0%	31%	19%	38%	12%
Pedagogical design/ experimentation	4%	12%	23%	27%	35%
Library's Alt Textbook Program stipend	19%	4%	38%	27%	12%

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Alt-Text Survey Results (4)

HOW MANY TIMES DID YOU WORK WITH YOUR LIBRARIAN?

■ 1 or 2 times ■ 3 - 5 times ■ More than 5 times ■ None

- 14%
- 38%
- 27%
- 21%
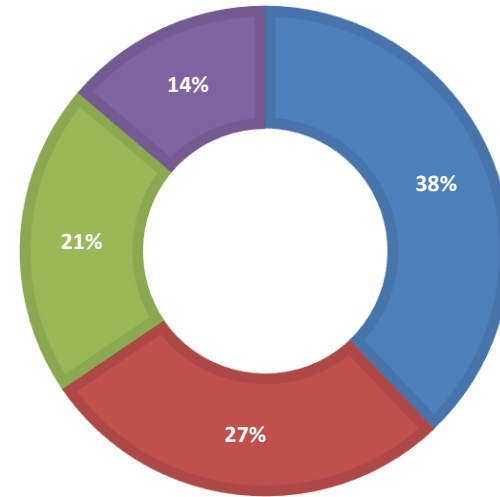
IN TOUCH WITH LIBRARIANS AFTER THE ALT-TEXT PROGRAM
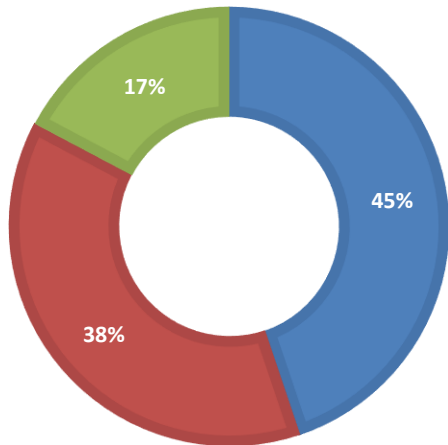
■ About the same ■ Less ■ More

- 41%
- 31%
- 28%

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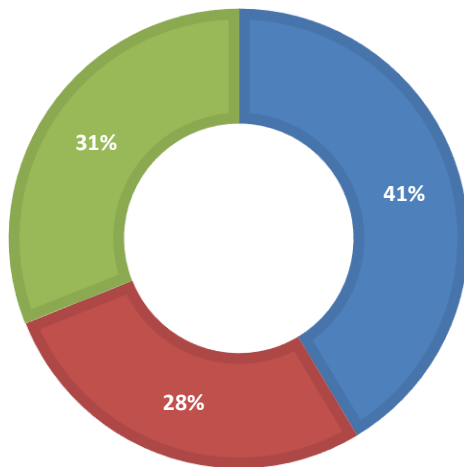
Alt-Text Survey Results (5)

QUALITY OF MATERIALS
COMPARED TO PREVIOUS RESOURCES

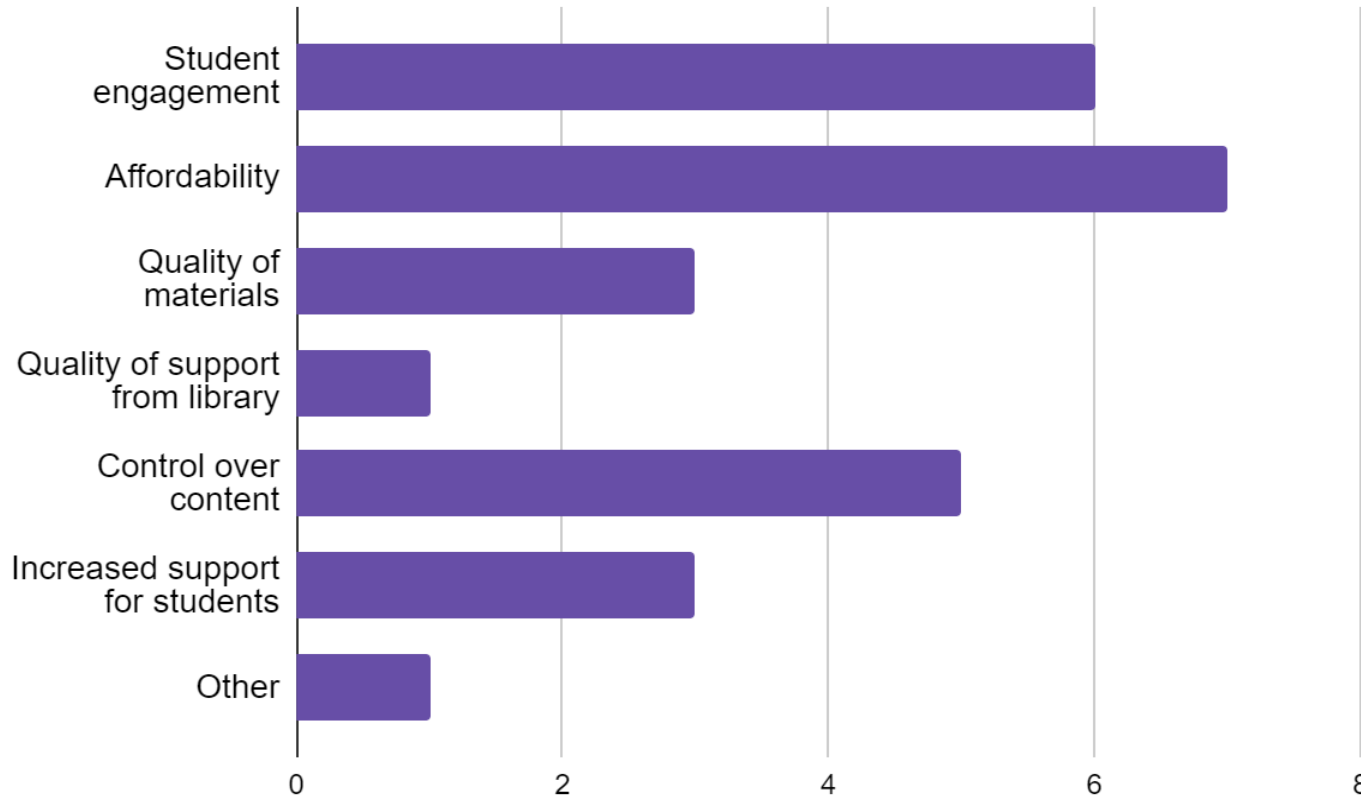■ About the Same   ■ Better   ■ Lower

45%

38%

17%

USE ALT-TEXTS IN FUTURE?
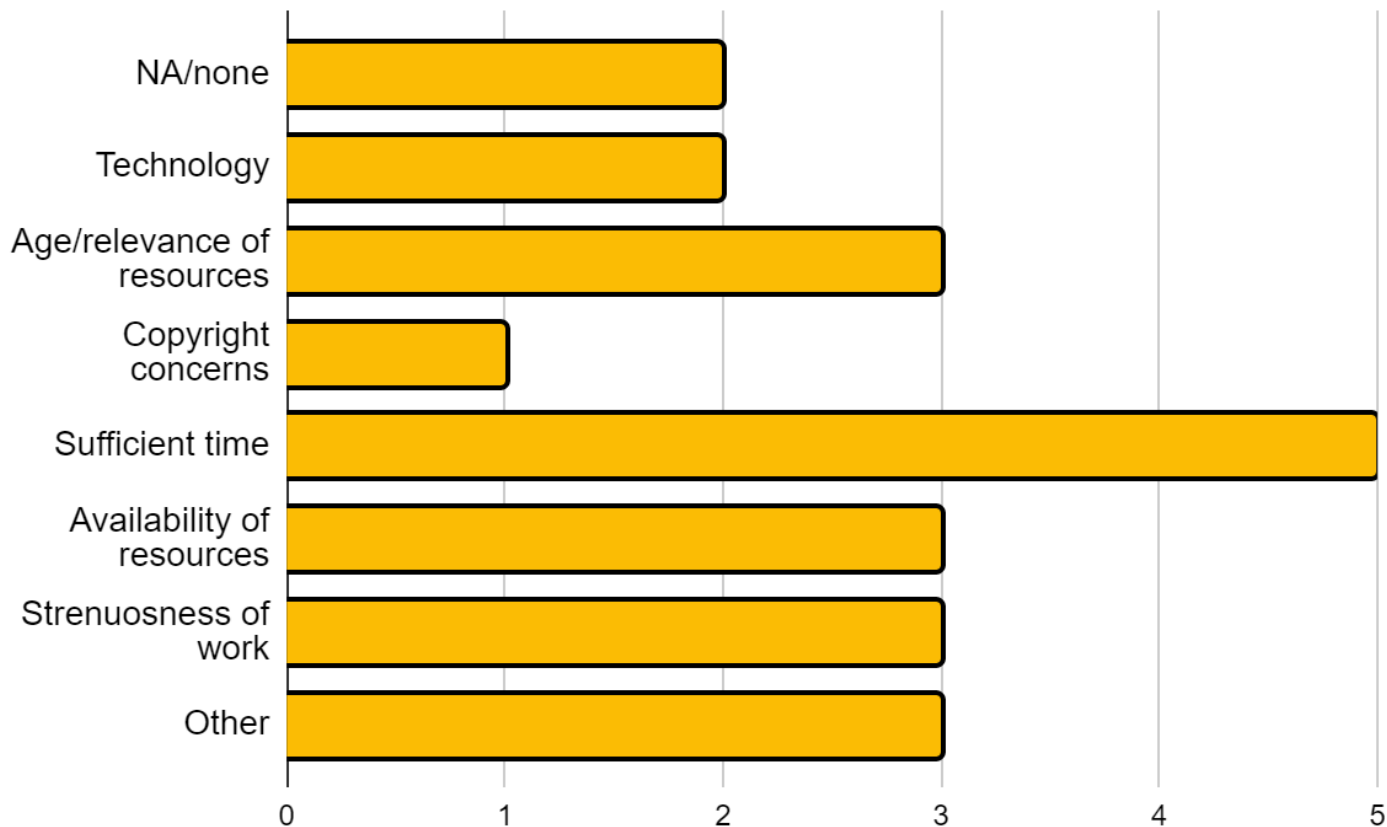
■ Yes   ■ Maybe   ■ No

86%

10%

4%
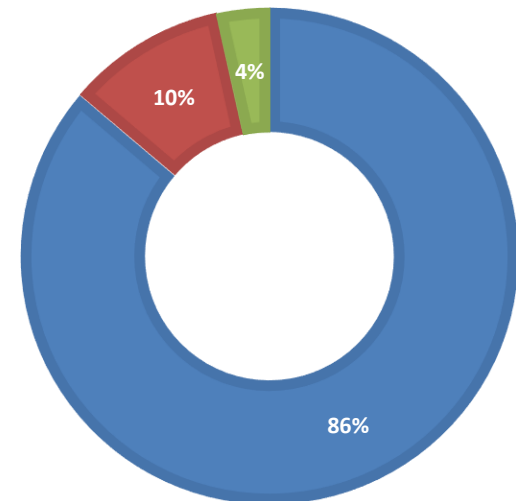
Alt-Text Survey Results (6)

Greatest success(es) in modifying class for Alternative Textbook Program:

Alt-Text Survey Results (7)

Greatest challenge(s) in modifying class for Alternative Textbook Program:

Alt-Text Survey Results (8)

Comments/suggestions about Alternative Textbook Program:

- **20%** suggested **specific additional resources**
- **17%** suggested **improved communication**
- **38%** made **positive comments**

"This is a great program and I am grateful that I was selected to participate in it. I intend to continue working with 'my librarian' during the school year and find more useful resources to improve the quality of my course materials."

"My experience was very positive. I worked with two librarians who were well-versed in my content area and they provided me with selections that fit my needs and parameters."
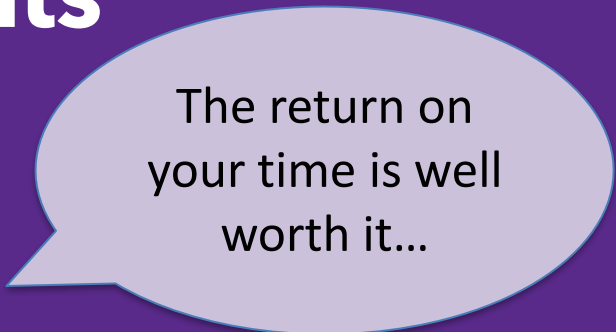
"I would have done this without the stipend, but it was nice to be recognized for my efforts."

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Interview Insights

- Invited 24 faculty members, both CAT and Alt-Text, 8 interviews (33%)

- Included faculty from Arts & Humanities, Social Sciences, and Sciences

- Questions included advice for others, how they would evaluate success, and how we could improve to increase participation

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Interview Insights

- Links in syllabus and on Canvas

- It takes longer than anticipated….but

- Focus on learning objectives, then find resources to support those goals

- To encourage participation:
  - Take OER suggestions to faculty
  - Work with chairs→"Take the show on the road"

The return on your time is well worth it…

You should totally do it!

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Interview Insights

Great opportunity to start from scratch

- Largely adopted existing OER
  - Swap out some materials over time
- Unsure if greater participation is because of free access to materials or redesigned class
- Feel successful: more engagement, more reading
- Like the "democratic aspect" / equity of materials being available to all

Affordability and inclusiveness

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Next Steps:

- Consider additional marketing methods

- Timing on CAT notices to professors

- Work with Institutional Research on student success impacts

- Monitor/measure changes as a result of bookstore taken on by Barnes & Noble

- Look for better ways to assess cost savings

Questions? Get in Touch!

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- Joseph Thomas: thomasw@ecu.edu