# What do you think NHS? A survey of NHS users' opinions of the library service provided by a Higher Education institution

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Abstract

Imperial College School of Medicine is one of five medical
schools in London, and has facilities at a number of NHS

hospitals, including libraries. Through Service Level Agreements, Imperial College London Library provides library and information services to a number of NHS Trusts, both acute and primary care. In order to ensure that the library is providing the best service possible to users, a survey was conducted intended to gather information about NHS users' opinions of the library, the service provided, the physical space and resources available to them. The information gathered has been collated and will be used to further enhance the service provision for the NHS.

## Background

In 2009, staff at Imperial College London (ICL) Library conducted a survey of students' attitudes and perceptions of the library. The survey produced a significant amount of interesting and useful information surrounding ICL Library services, staff and facilities (Imperial College Library, 2009). Following on from this undertaking, ICL Library's NHS Group, a working group composed of staff from across Imperial's five medical campus libraries, concluded that a similarly wide-ranging survey - only this time aimed specifically at ICL Library's NHS users - would be a useful endeavour.

## Devising and Running

The NHS Group met to brainstorm areas that could/should be addressed by the survey. A number of areas of interest emerged almost immediately, among them:

- The profile of the average library user: Who was using the library, how were they using it, why, when and how often?

- What were users' opinions surrounding the campus libraries' physical spaces/facilities?

- What were users' opinions surrounding the library website?

- What were library users' opinions of the print and electronic resources on offer? Were there any resources that they found particularly useful or not useful? How often were users making use of NHS-purchased resources, and what did they think of them?

- Did users regard library staff as knowledgeable, approachable, and helpful?

- What percentage of library users knew about the information literacy training sessions on offer? Did the users who had attended these sessions find them useful?

- Finally, was the library helping users in their studies or their professional role in any particular ways (for example, informing clinical decision making)?  If so, how?


Following these initial discussions, the Co-Chairs of the NHS Group liaised with members of ICL Library's Marketing and Website Steering Group (MWSG) who were responsible for creating and circulating the 2009 student survey. Over the course of several meetings early in the autumn of 2011, they created a rough draft of the survey questionnaire using Survey

Monkey software.  The questionnaire was then circulated to staff across the ICL Library for comments. This course of action that was very beneficial, as it resulted in a flurry of suggestions related to the survey's question ordering, wording, answer choices, and overall contents and direction.

Eventually, a questionnaire composed of fifteen questions, divided into four primary sections ('About You'; 'Library Services and Collections'; 'Training'; and 'Library Impact', respectively) was decided upon. Based on the experiences and recommendations of MWSG, the NHS Group Co-Chairs decided that the survey would be available for completion in both online and print formats for a month-long period, from early December 2011 to early January 2012.

The next, and most important, step was to promote the survey accordingly. With this goal in mind, the various members of the NHS Group brainstormed and subsequently implemented a number of promotional activities surrounding the survey, including:

- Sending short emails about the survey to NHS staff

- Creating promotional posters, flyers, leaflets and email signatures

- Placing publicity pieces in Trust newsletters and on Trust intranets

- Mentioning the survey during library inductions, sessions, and workshops

To entice users to fill in the survey, it was announced that participants would be eligible for a prize draw for three £50 Amazon.co.uk vouchers.

## Response

In the end, the survey attracted 348 responses. The highest response by user type was nurses (who made up 28.2% of the total respondents), followed by junior doctors (19.5%).   Allied Health Professionals came in a close third (19%). Staff from the Royal Brompton and Harefield NHS Foundation Trust provided the most responses (189, or 54.3% of the overall total).  After the responses from all the various medical campus libraries were collected, members of MWSG helped to prepare an initial report on the survey's findings, which itself was followed up by a fuller, more detailed report by the Medicine Team Leader.

## Conclusions

In looking at the results that came out of the survey a number of themes became apparent. The most prominent concerned access to electronic resources, with a focus on two major areas; the numbers of journals available for NHS staff to access, and allowing NHS staff to access Imperial College e-resources remotely. Taking numbers of e-journals, NHS staff have access to over 4,000 individual journal titles, which are available either through NHS Evidence, or via Imperial College's subscriptions (Regan et al, 2012). This should mean that users will be able to

access most of the content they require directly. In the event that a user requires material that is not available via one of these methods, then the library's document delivery service is available (Imperial College Library, 2012a). In terms of remote access, the licenses for resources that Imperial College subscribes to allow NHS staff walk-in access using the computers in the library – because the NHS does not pay for these resources, any greater access would not be permissible. (Regan et al, 2012) There are though moves to try and improve access that Imperial is part of, with one such being the JISC sponsored year-long pilot to have the HE elements of the five Academic Health Science Centres extend access of their subscribed content from a number of publishers to their partner NHS trusts (Earney, 2011). The presence of the OCLC Link Resolver, which allows content to be added to the NHS Evidence interface, gives us the option of allowing remote access to the library's resources fairly simply, if the licensing issues can be resolved (NHS Library Services, 2012).

While these were the two major themes, other key areas that were noted included resource suggestions, and comments about facilities and opening hours. The library has various means set up to receive suggestions for new resources, with a dedicated page on the library's website for NHS users to give book suggestions (Imperial College Library, 2012b), as well as contact details of each campus's NHS support librarian (Imperial College Library, 2012c). Suggestions about the purchase of resources are reviewed and acted upon having given consideration to both collection suitability and budgetary

factors. Likewise are suggestions over facilities – numbers of PCs, printing etc all tend to be decisions for each site library to take (Regan et al, 2012).

The responses to the survey show that there appears to be a high degree of satisfaction from NHS users about the library service provided by Imperial College London. Of course, we cannot be complacent, and must continue to maintain and enhance the service level and environment to ensure NHS users are able to gain as much benefit from the library as possible.

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