



Survey of Interest in Creating a Repository of Digital Information at the University of Rhode Island

March 23, 2006

Procedure

A survey of interest and attitudes about preserving and making available digital content for learning and research at the University of Rhode Island was conducted from February 10-25, 2005. Tenured and tenure-track faculty members were contacted by email and asked to respond to the online questionnaire. Of the 563 individuals invited to participate, 85 provided useable results giving a response rate of 15%.

Summary of Results:

Responses to this survey probably are skewed toward the individuals who have an immediate interest in digital materials and repositories as evidenced by the higher than expected number of Library faculty participating and the generally positive responses given to all questions. In general, though, the distribution by faculty rank and college/area is fairly representative of the University as a whole and includes responses from faculty in the science/technical areas as well as the humanities. At a minimum these results may be taken as an indication of a substantial level of interest and enthusiasm for the idea of central digital repository at the University that still is in the exploratory stage.

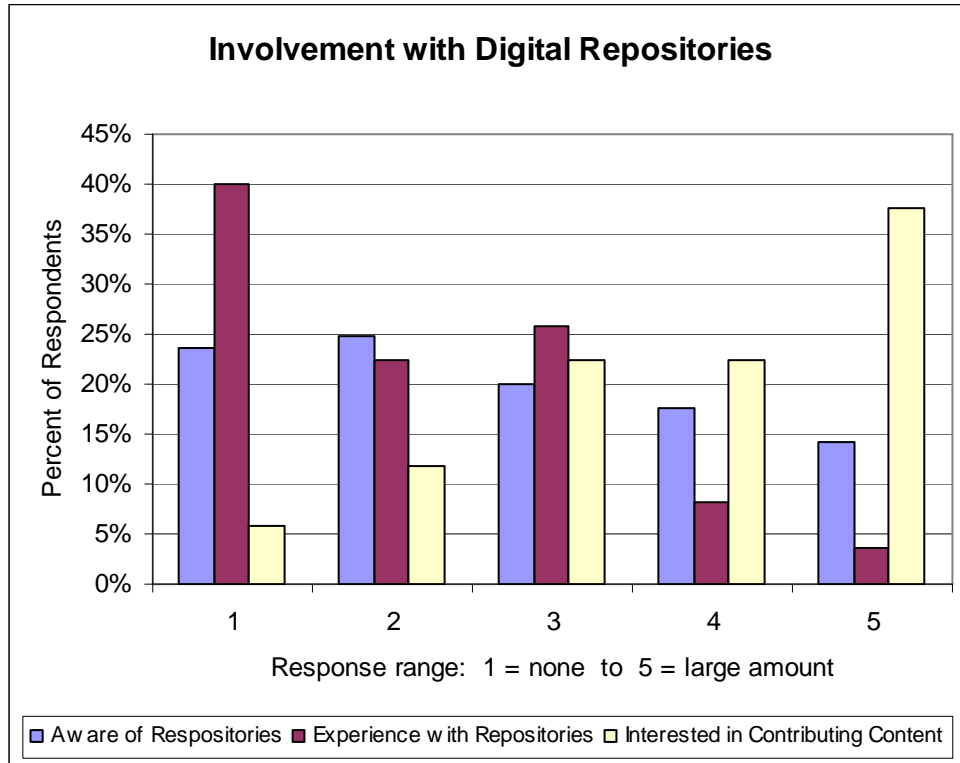
Even though awareness and experience with repositories is low, respondents are willing to investigate further and recognize a variety of benefits of a centralized system. Current storage methods and maintenance of digital materials is somewhat less than desirable and represents what is most convenient. This has been satisfactory for the typical materials created – course-related information and publications – which are generally small in size, but will be less so for large items such as video, audio, and datasets. These types of content will need better means of access for a wider audience and better long-term archiving than is currently provided.

Respondents recognize the need for assistance with creating the supporting metadata that describes and indexes their digital materials, but also wish to have a system that they can easily use themselves. Archiving to a digital repository should not be much harder than saving to backup media such as CDs and external hard drives. A significant number already make use of University servers for storage and probably would find a repository to be similar.

Copyright and intellectual property rights currently are not of great concern. The survey also indicates that it is important that a digital repository provides wider and quicker access to information and that it provides long-term preservation. While making preprints available is of lesser importance, giving access to materials traditionally harder to distribute – such as large datasets, video, and audio – is of greater importance.

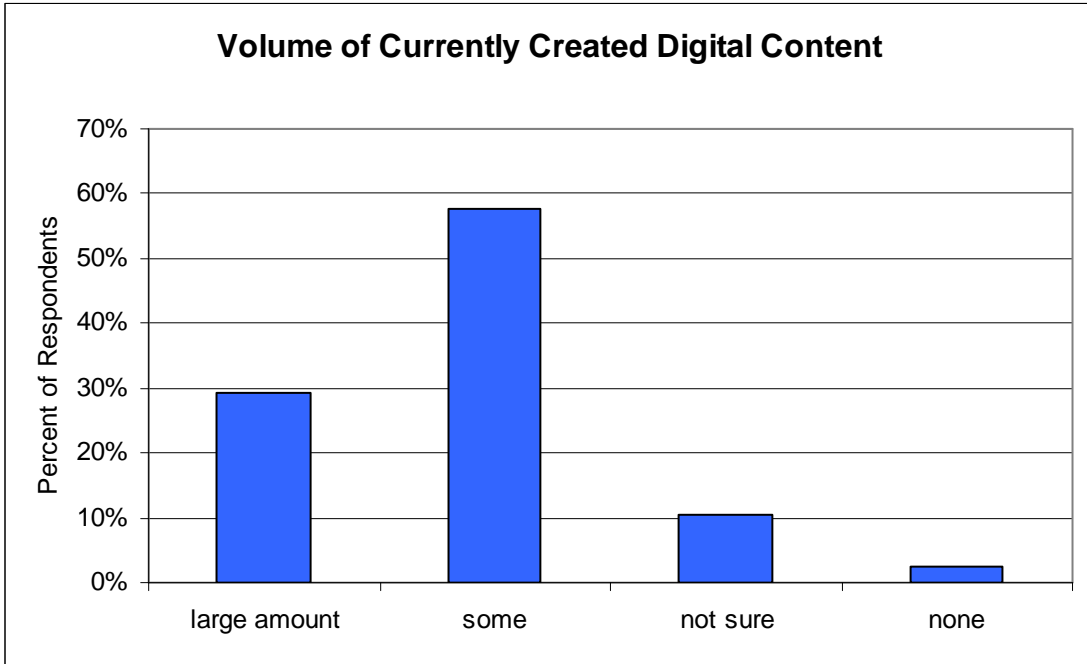
About one third of the respondents personally are willing to participate in discussions and a pilot project for a digital repository. Only 20% would not participate. Comments indicate enthusiasm for the idea and an urgency to get started. Thus, a core group of about 27 individuals would embrace the project and contribute to its development.

1. How aware are you about digital repositories at other institutions?
2. How much previous experience do you have with digital repositories?
3. How interested would you be in contributing content to a URI digital repository?

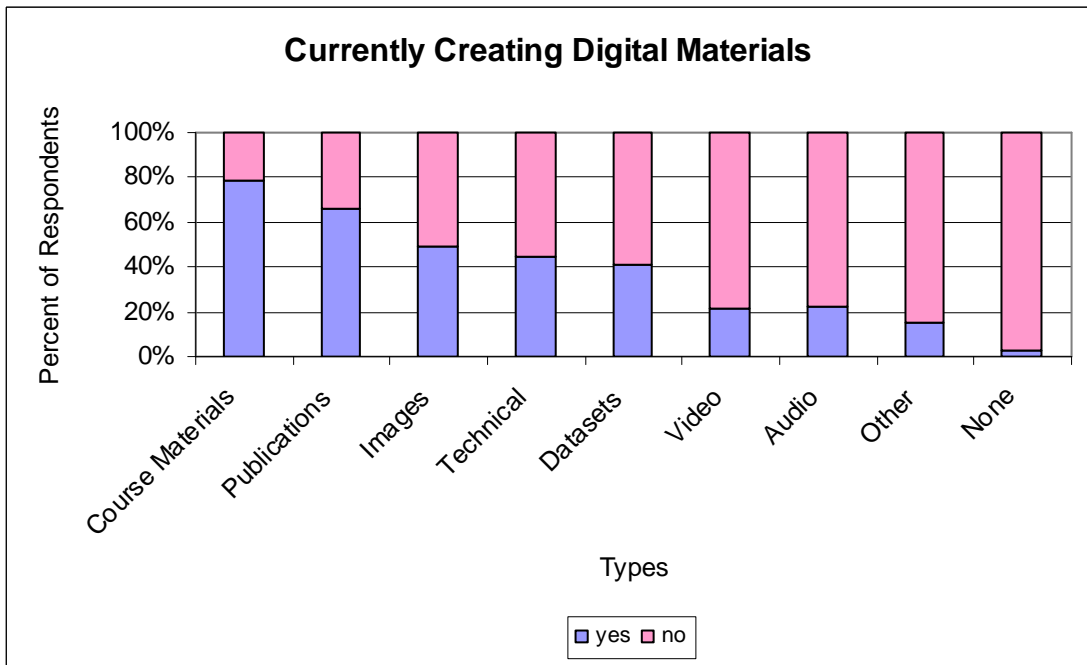


Interpretation of items 1, 2, and 3: The level of awareness of digital repositories elsewhere is uniformly distributed among respondents. Although there tends to be little personal experience with repositories, respondents express a distinct interest in contributing content to a URI repository.

4. How much digital content are you or your department creating at the present time?

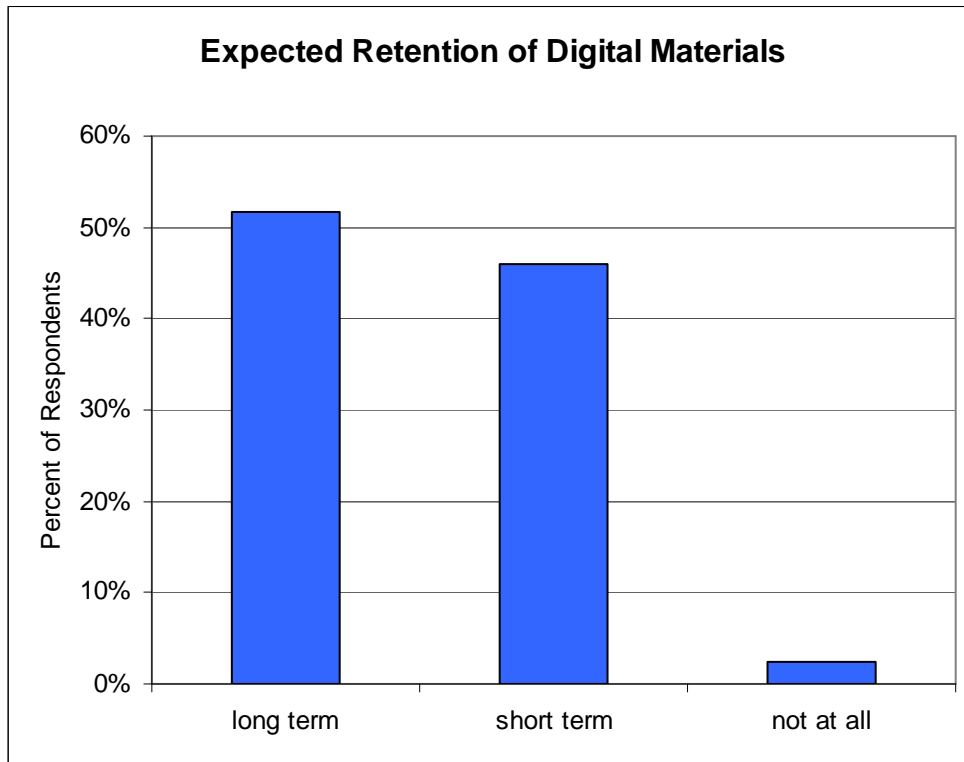


5. If you or your department creates digital materials, please indicate all types:
 Scholarly publications, Technical papers, Data sets, Digital moving images, Course materials,
 Audio, Digital still images.



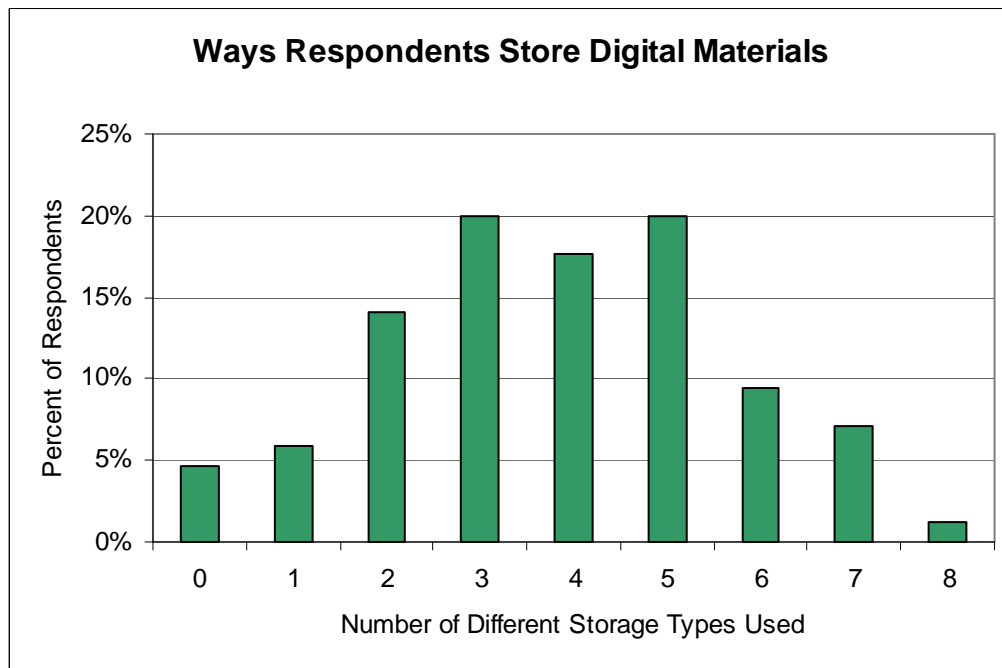
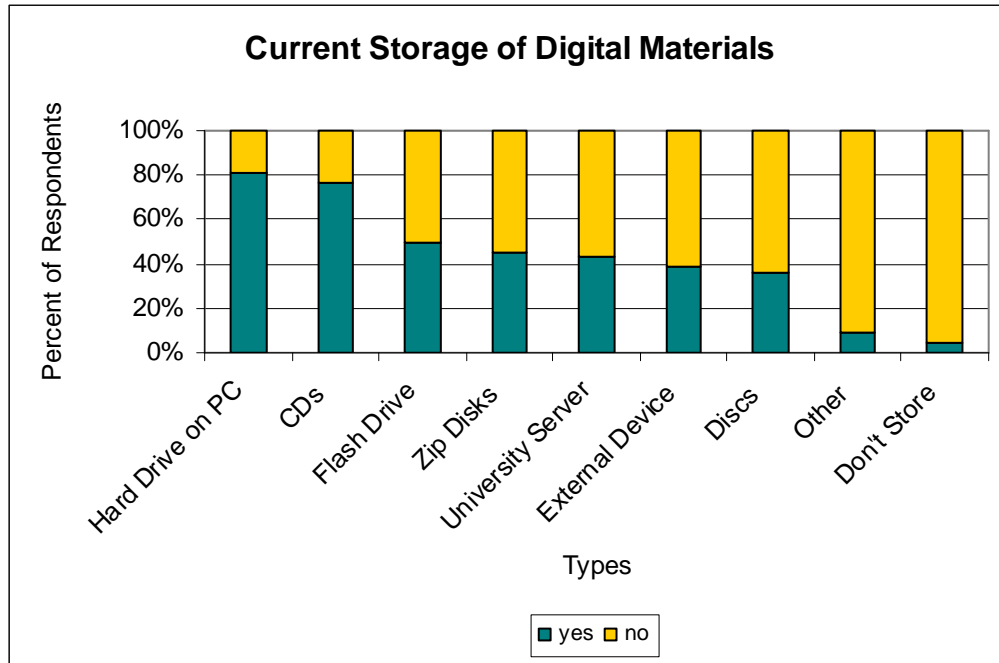
6. How long do you expect to keep these digital materials ?

- Short term 1-10 years
- Long term > 10 years



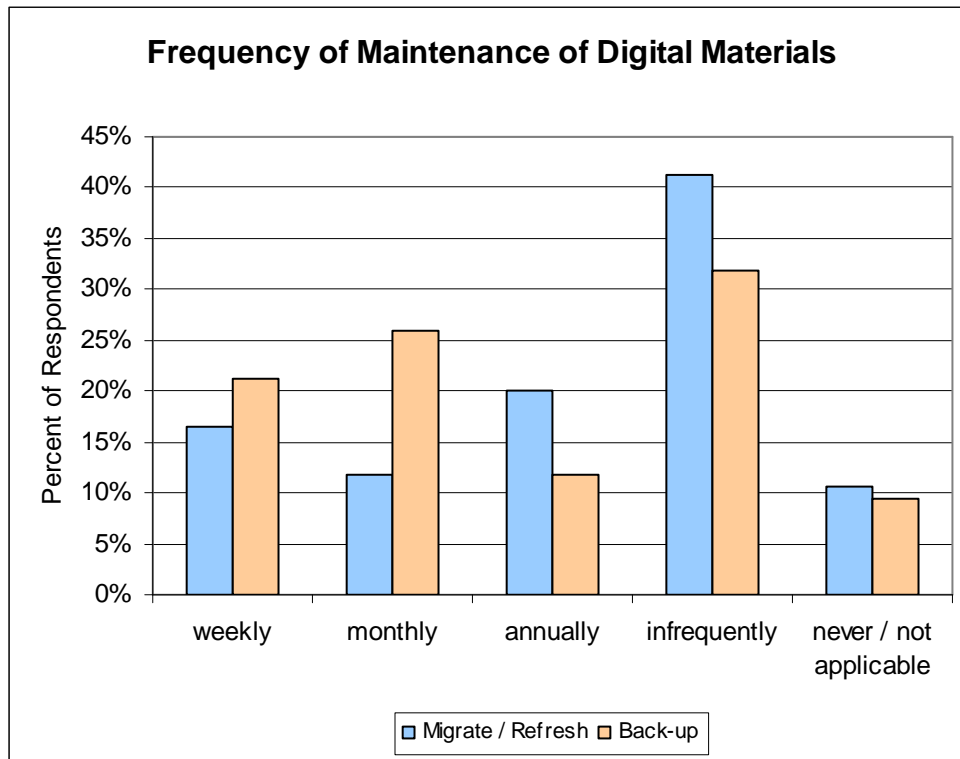
Interpretation of items 4, 5 and 6: Nearly all respondents expect their digital materials to be preserved beyond one year. The nearly equal split between shorter and longer than ten years probably reflects the types of materials currently being created. Whereas Course Materials are more likely to be out of date and replaced within a decade, other materials such as Publications and Datasets have needed and will continue to need permanent archiving.

7. Indicate all ways in which your digital materials are stored:
 CDs, Discs, Zip Disks, Hard Drive on PC, External Storage, University server, Flash Drive



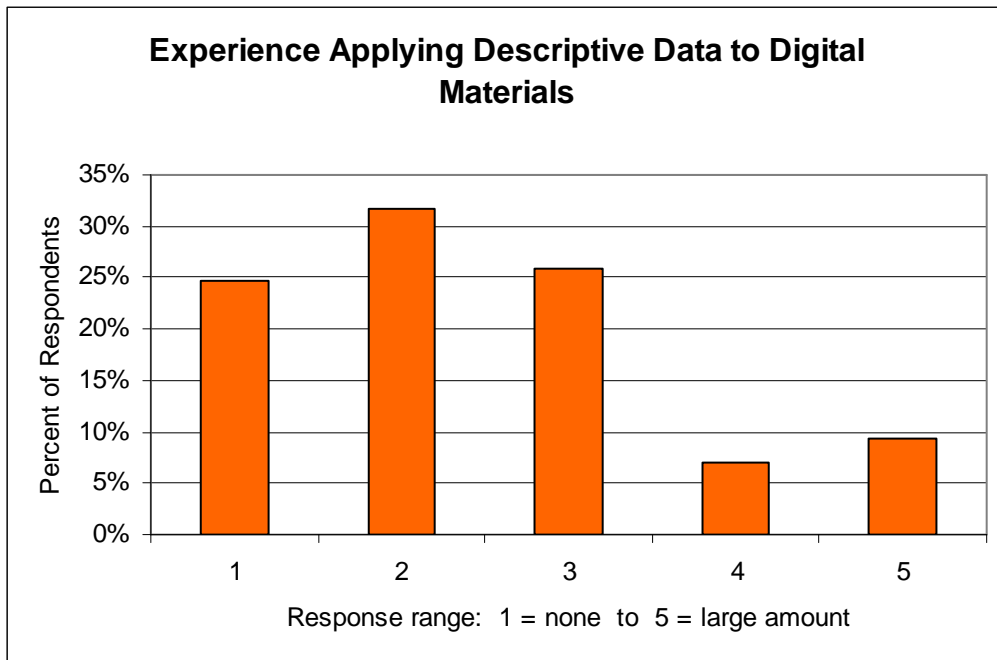
Interpretation of item 7: Current storage methods tend toward those that are convenient with most respondents using the local PC hard drive and CDs. A majority use from three to five different methods and over 40% use a University Server, suggesting that a central digital repository would be used if convenient.

8. On average how often do you migrate or refresh your digital material?
9. On average how often do you back up your digital material?

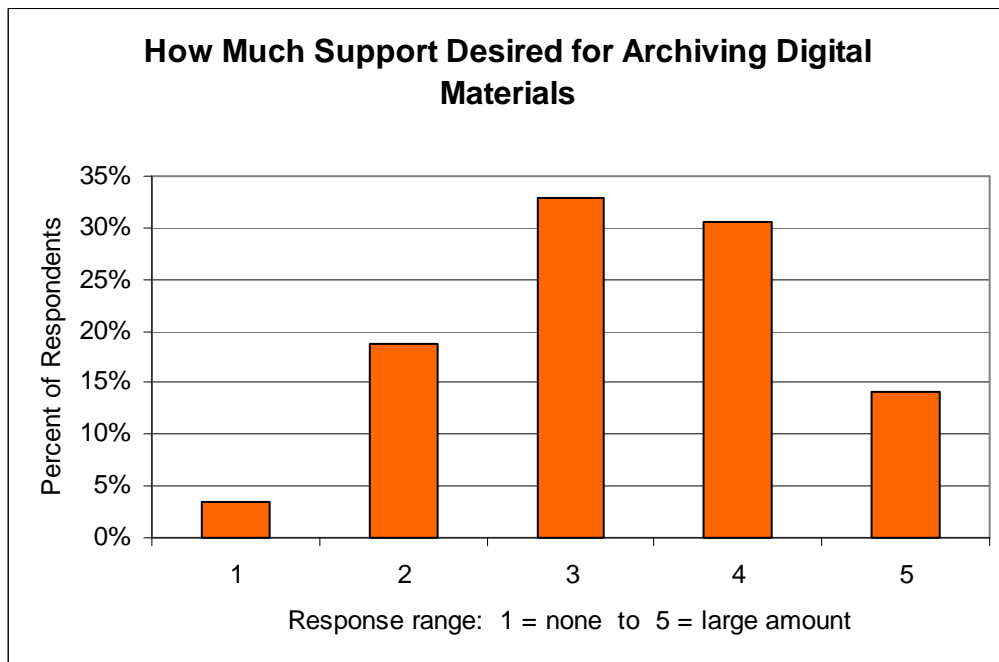


Interpretation of items 8 and 9: Nobody really likes to migrate, refresh, and back up information because it is tedious, requires concentration, and takes time away from productive new work. However, reasonably significant numbers of respondents maintain their digital materials on a periodic basis. A digital repository would relieve some of this burden as well as meet the requirement for the approximately one third of respondents who are more casual about maintenance.

10. How much experience with applying descriptive data (metadata) to the digital materials so you can access them more easily?

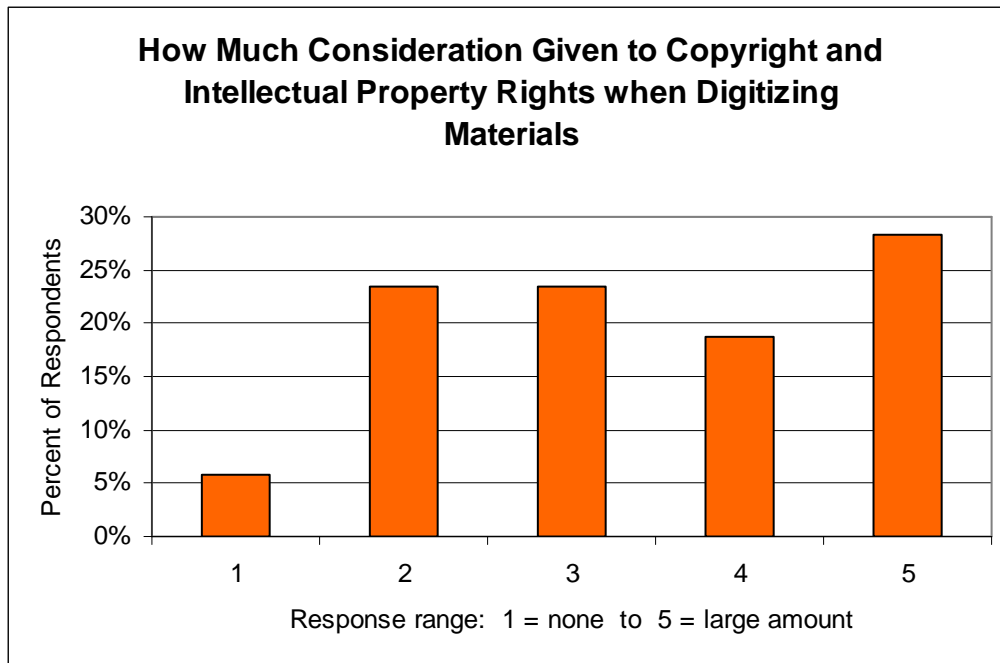


11. How much support would you like to have with archiving your digital materials?

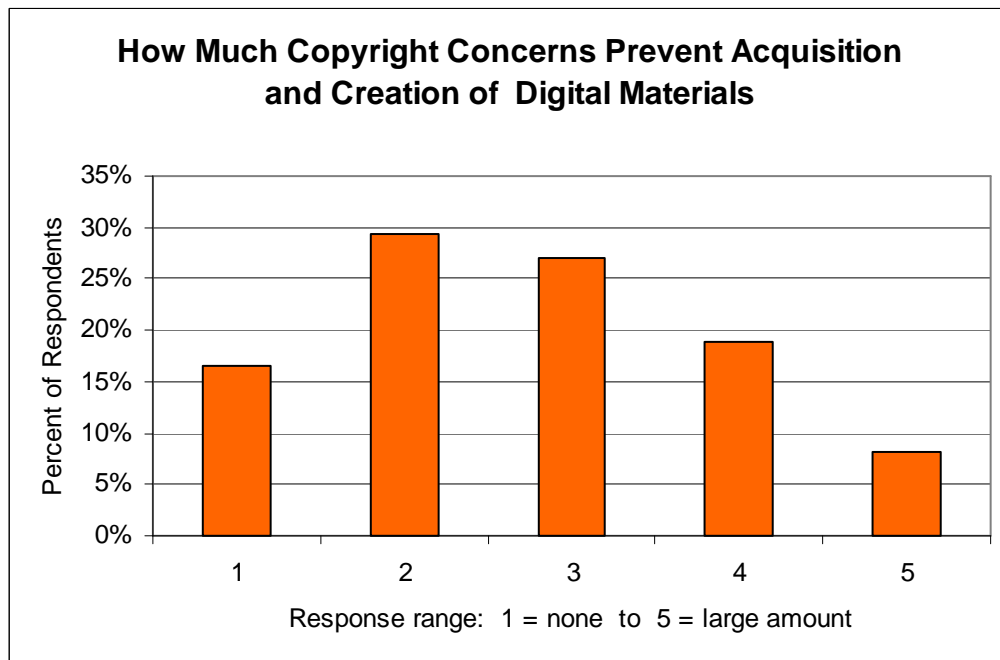


Interpretation of items 10 and 11: Respondents tend to have minimal experience with descriptive information about their digital materials and would welcome some support in creating it.

12. How much consideration do you give to copyright and intellectual property rights when digitizing material?



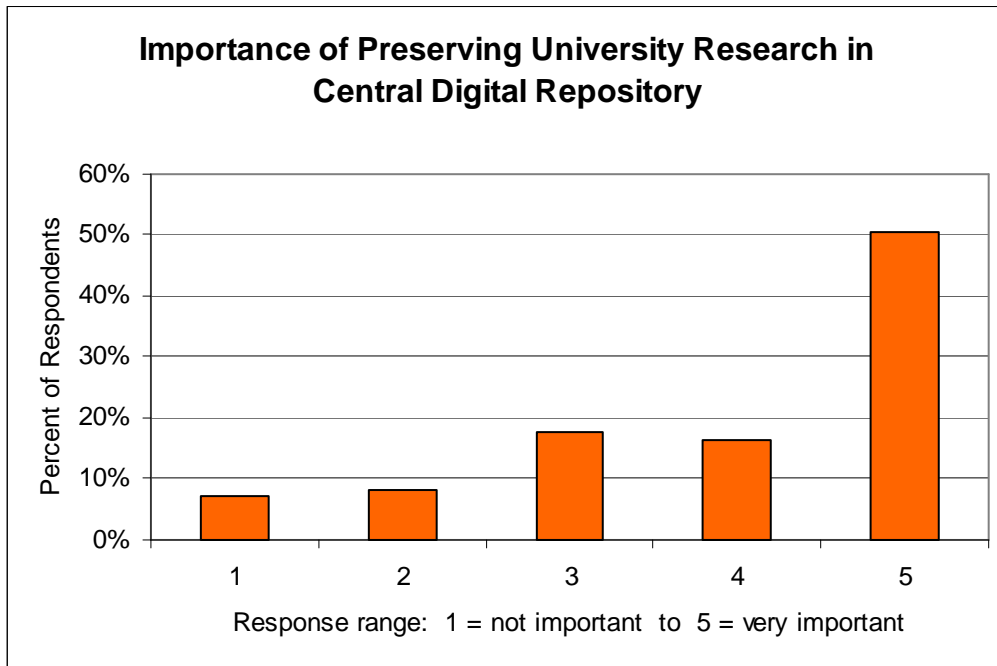
13. How much do copyright concerns keep you from acquiring or creating digital materials?



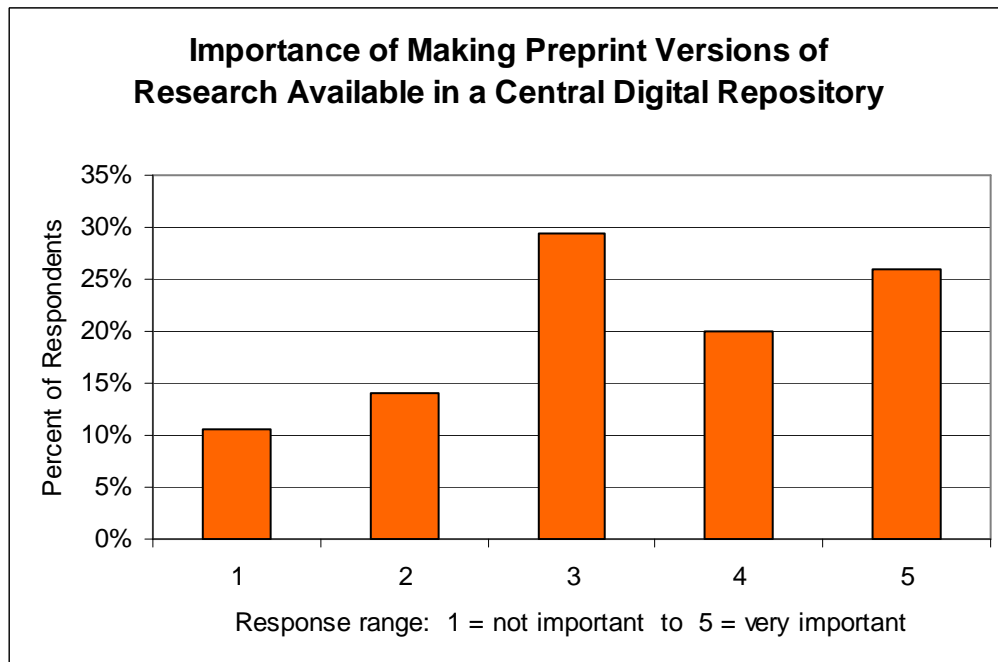
Interpretation of items 12 and 13: Concerns with copyright and intellectual property issues have some impact on respondents work with digital materials, although it is diffuse and varied.

The following questions ask how important particular benefits of a digital repository at URI would be to you.

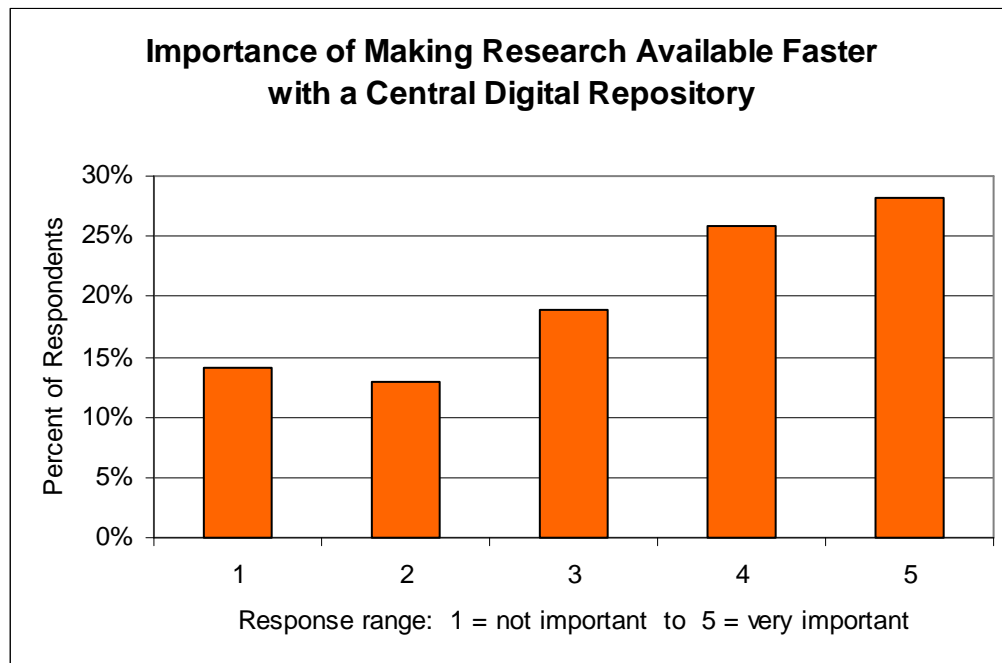
14. Preserving the research of the University in a central place.



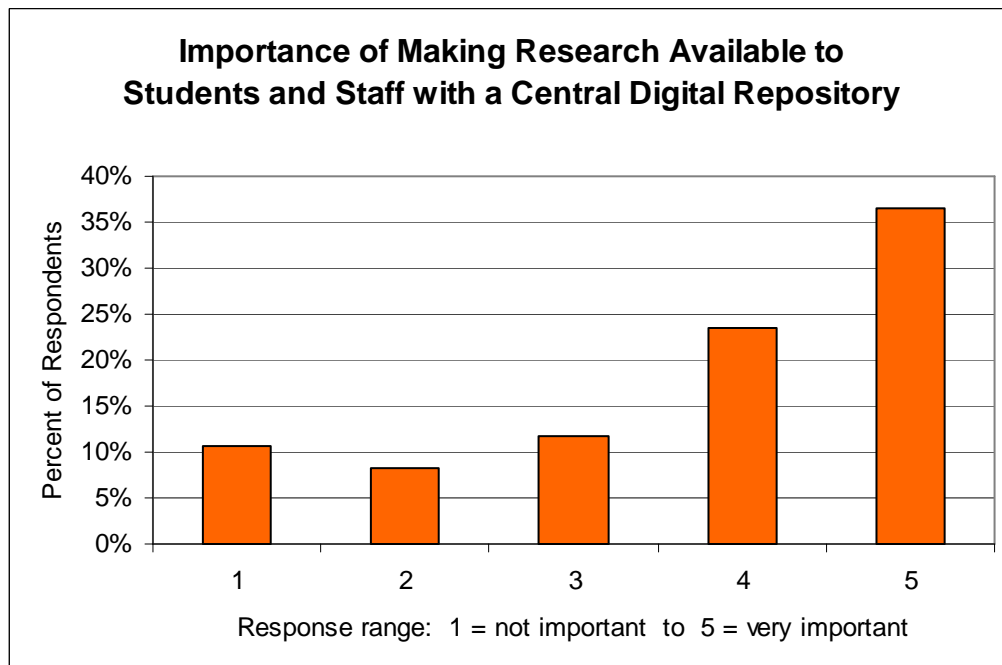
15. Making preprint versions of my research available to a worldwide.



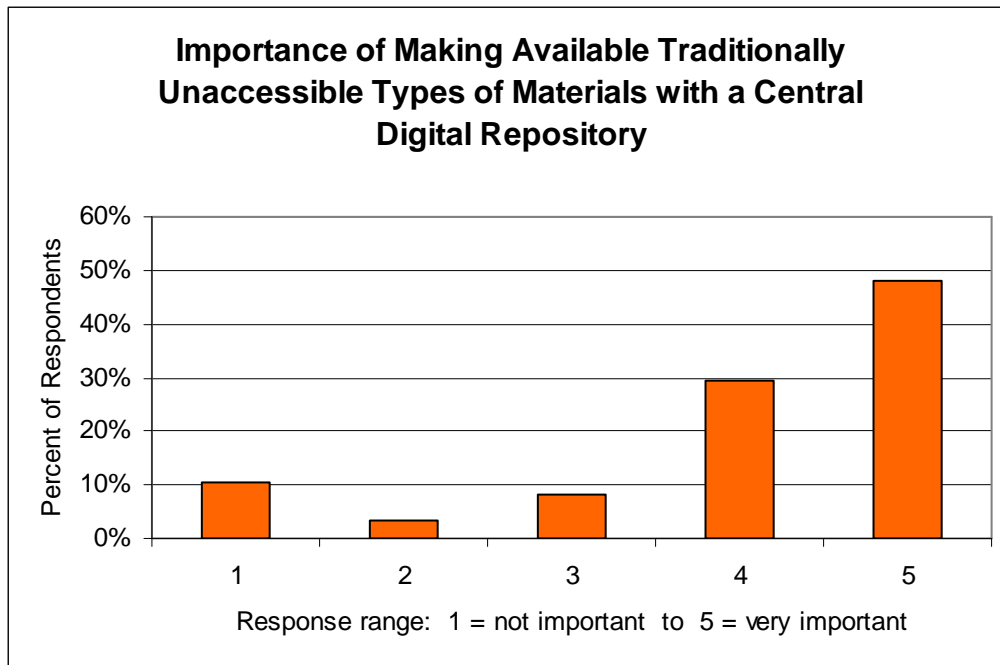
16. Making my research available faster than the traditional publishing process.



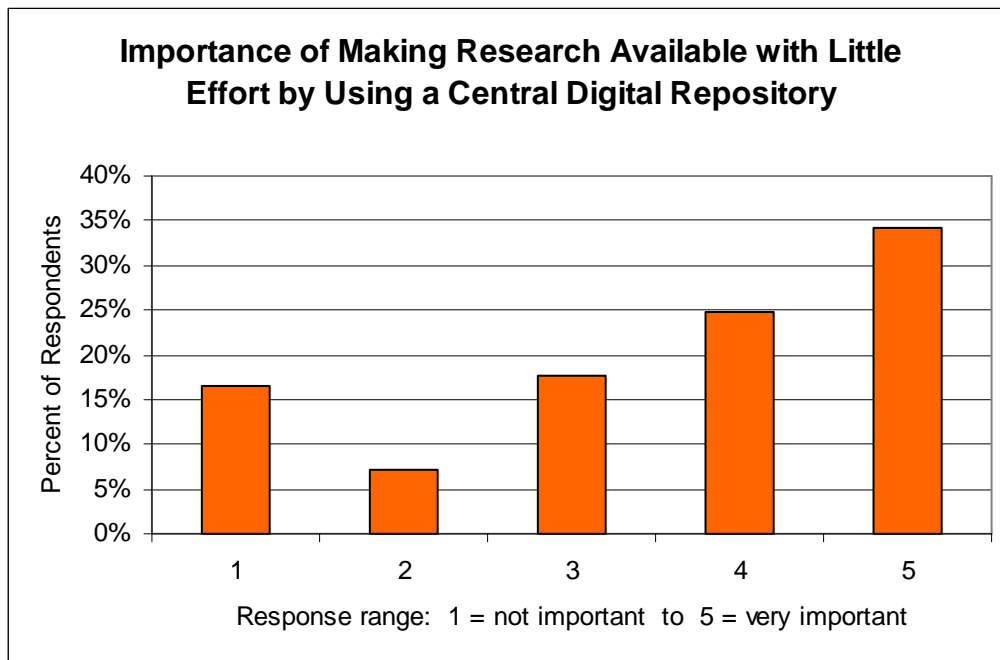
17. Making my research available to students and staff.



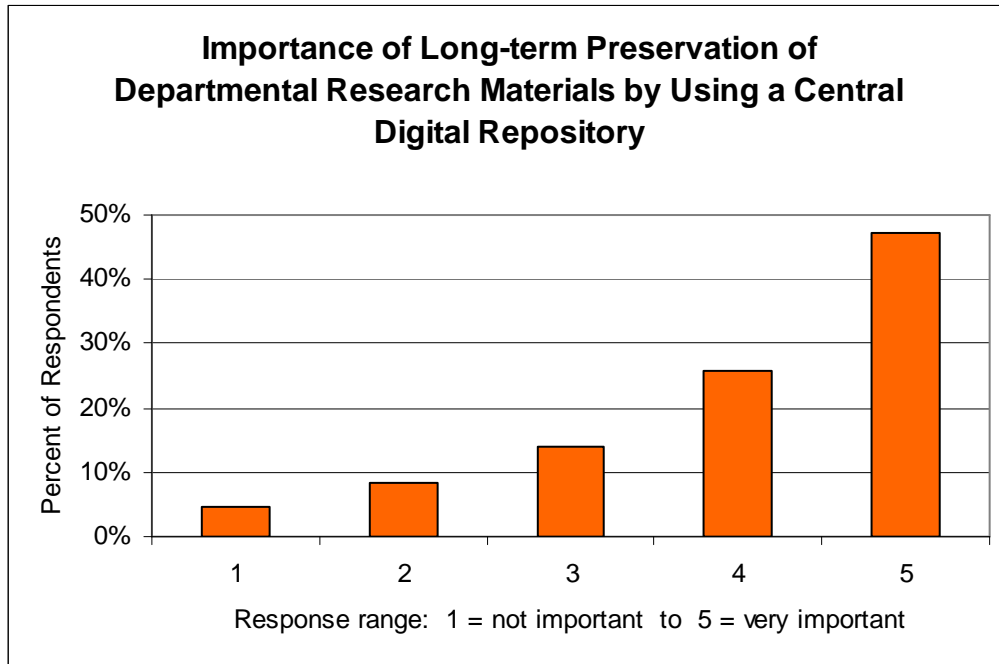
18. Making available types of materials not accessible through the traditional publishing process such as large datasets, audio, video, and graphic images.



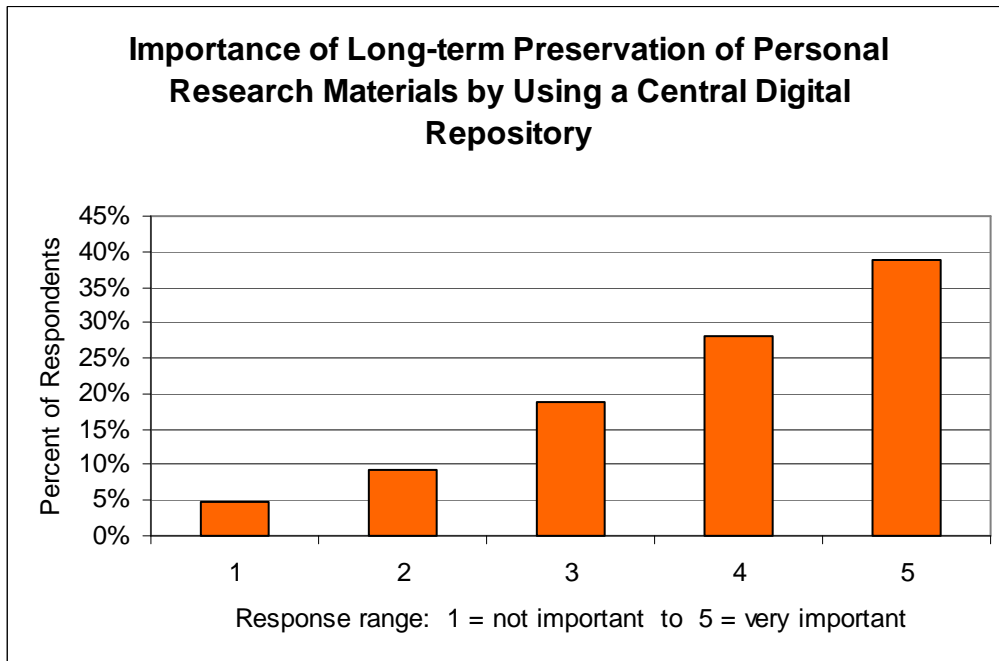
19. Making my research available with very little effort on my part.



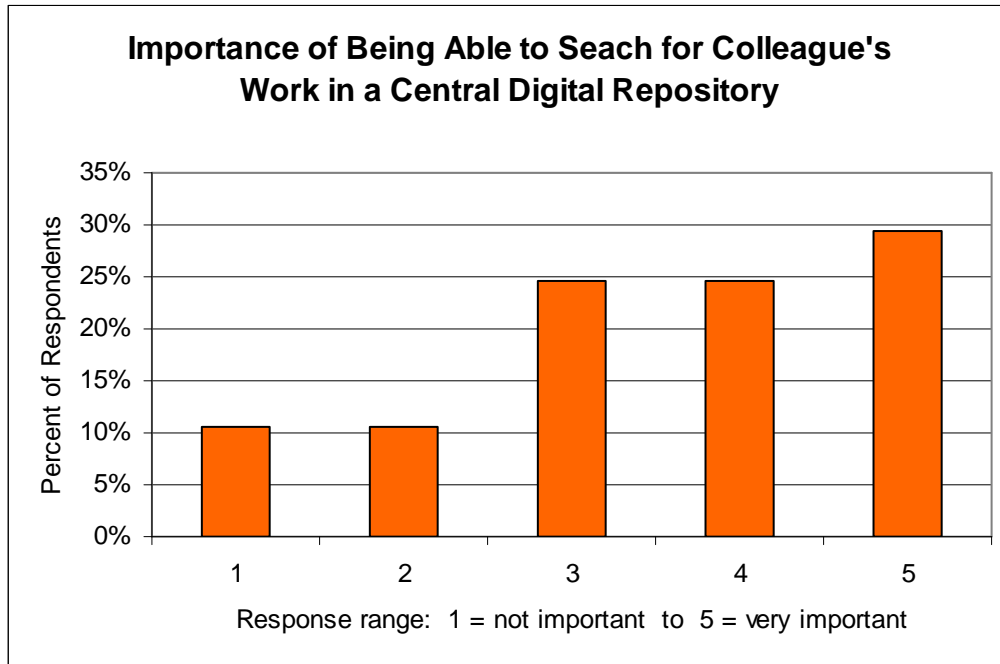
20. Providing long-term preservation of departmental digital research materials.



21. Providing long-term preservation of my personal digital research materials.

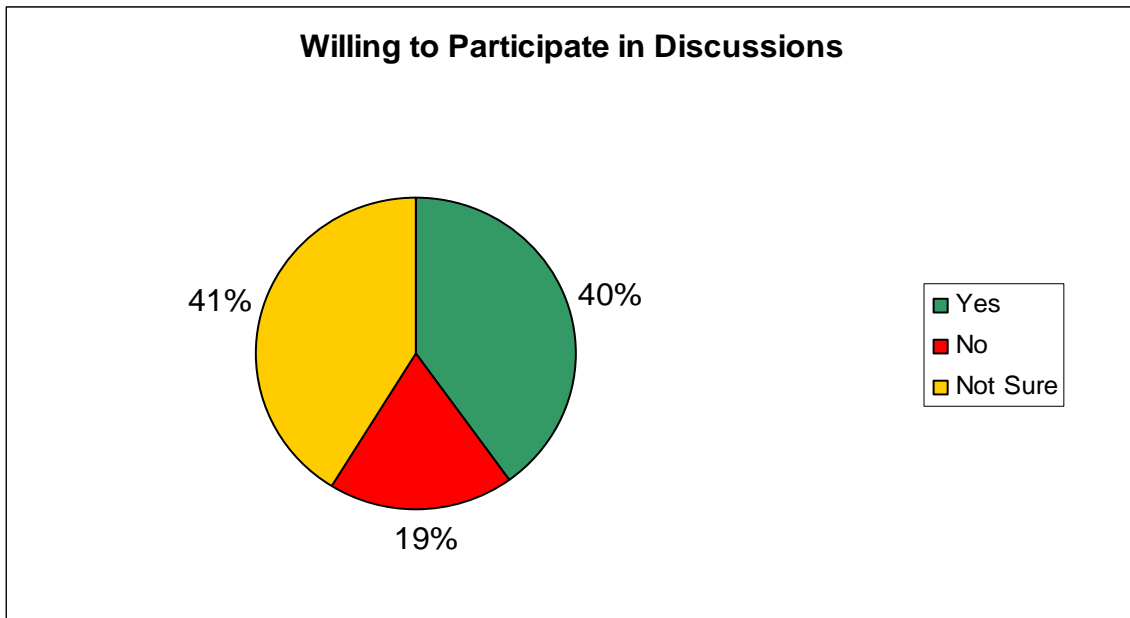


22. Allowing me to search for the work of my colleagues throughout the University.

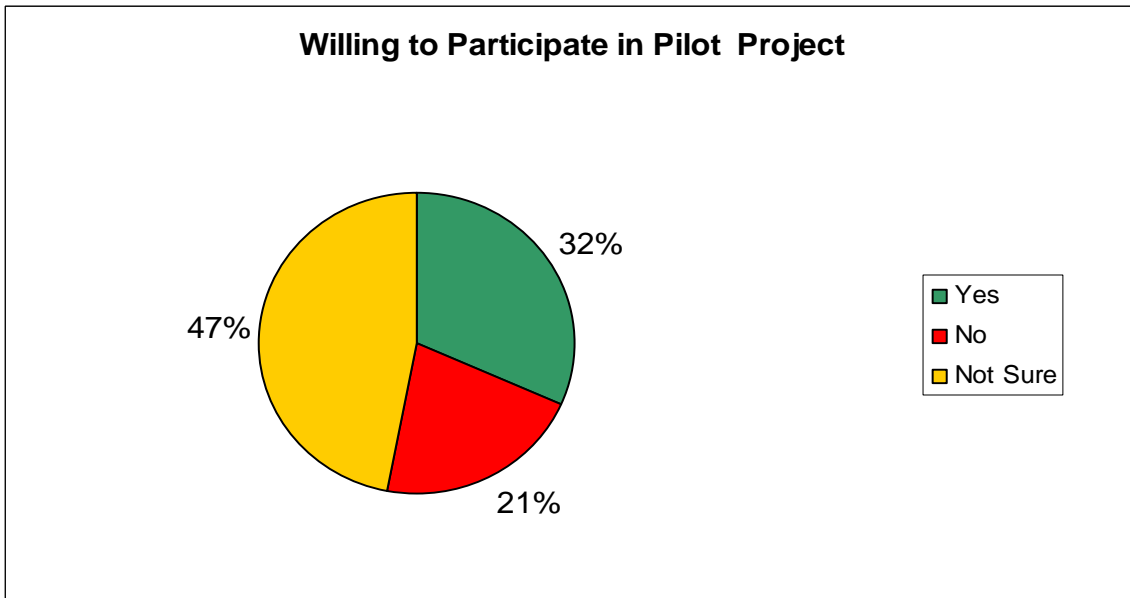


Interpretation of items 14 through 22: Respondents strongly support the idea that a central digital repository is important, that it can make their work more easily available to staff and students, that it can make available the types of materials not easily accessible through traditional publishing channels, and that it will provide long-term preservation for their personal and departmental materials. With a bit less enthusiastic but still positive opinions, they consider it important that a central repository make their preprint materials available faster and to a worldwide audience in a way that is easy for them, and that it provide access to the work of University colleagues. In none of the questions did the answers tend toward the “not important” side of the scale and this choice never exceeded 16%.

23. Would you be willing to participate in discussion on the development of a centrally managed digital repository?

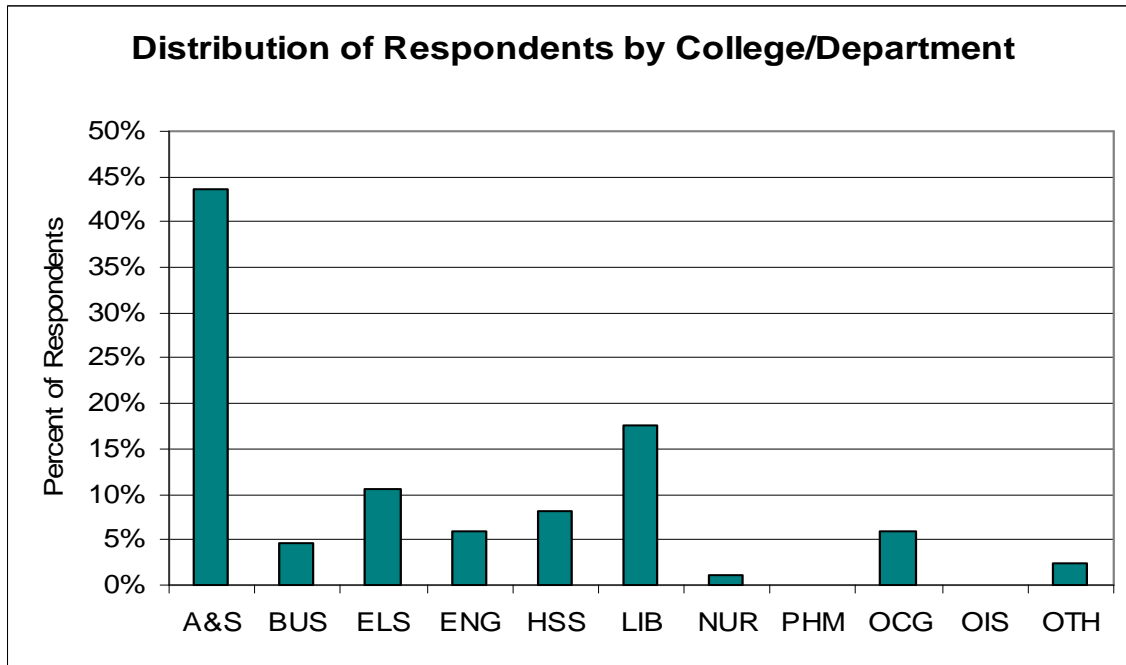
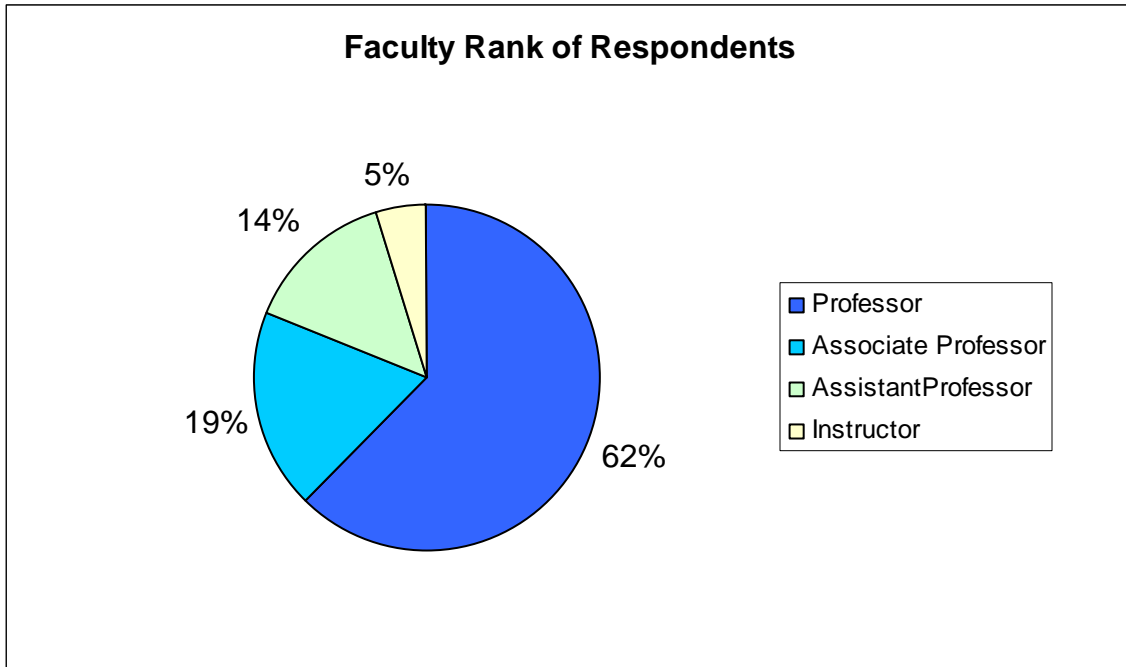


24. Would you participate in developing a digital repository pilot at the University of Rhode Island?



Interpretation of items 23 and 24: Significant fractions of the survey respondents are willing to participate in continued development of a digital repository. Twenty-seven individuals would help with a pilot project.

25. What is your faculty rank (Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, Instructor) ?



Interpretation of item 25: The distribution of respondents by faculty rank closely mirrors the actual proportions of tenured/tenure-track faculty. Distribution by college/area is similar to the University population with the exception of an over-sampling of Library faculty. In general the survey sample could be considered reasonably representative of the University population while acknowledging that respondents are more likely to have a greater interest in digital repositories.

26. Please enter your comments and suggestions:

Answer to #9 varies with the nature of the material. I don't understand the question in #10.

Can you give me a copy of the results of this survey? I am interested in estimating storage requirements for an organization like URI but from the technical point of view. Thanks

Central digital repository can make sense only if it is designed well and is very convenient for end users and reliable. Otherwise, people will prefer to maintain their individual and/or departmental repositories. People with their own/departmental servers need a valid reason for migrating to URI servers.

Digital images accessible to students, recorded student projects and presentations are what I currently store.

Good idea! Good luck & keep us informed of your progress.

Great survey!

I had a conference paper (which had a copyright notice on it) nearly published before my own, revised version was published. This experience has greatly clouded my desire to make my scholarly research available before it has been "officially" published.

I need a stable storage site for my web-accessible database of digital video clips and still images, and other data about cilioprotists of Rhode Island. This data is being generated by my on-going project, the Rhode Island Cilioprotist Micrograzer Survey (RICMS)(c). I would be willing to meet to discuss my needs and to help in planning a centralized Digital repository for URI.

I need to preserve digitally one of the largest repositories of historic political presidential ads { 1952-2004 } that exists in the Us.

I think it is a good idea, but I may be getting too old to keep learning new tricks of the trade. You may need to consider extra training for older faculty, who learn new things more slowly. Important would be ease of use, support, and assurance of backup (archival).

It would be particularly valuable to make our Master's theses publicly available by this means. Let us move fast on this one!

Like many faculty I would like to learn and use digital tech and materials in my classes. The copyright issues are daunting, and finding the time to learn is tough. Sometimes I don't know where to begin.

More than an internal digital repository for university authored work, the library needs more electronic journal access through existing systems and these systems should be easier. Although attractive as a service, internal systems like this usually see little use (a group at PSU created one and it is essentially dormant a year later).

My department would be more likely to save digital materials if we had more server space.

Peer reviewed journal publications are most important for careers. There must be no interference with that by prepublishing to get results out quickly. The same problem exists for patentable concepts. The University does a poor job with computer integrity and support now. I wouldn't trust anything set up on campus.

questions 9 and 10 didn't seem important as to the digital library. also if i was not sure of what digital materials were being created in my dept. how can i answer the questions that follow. should i just skip questions ** to ** and then proceed to questions **

Since many materials on digital media from 10-20 years ago are not accessible now, how can we be sure that current materials will be accessible 100 years from now? Also, how secure are the servers?

This is a very important project please don't let it get caught up in beaucracy - very encouraging to see this survey and to know there is an action plan.