College students continue to adopt new online services

Use of online information sources increased for college students since 2005. Use of most sources continues to be higher among college students compared to U.S. total respondents. College students have quickly adopted new resources, such as Skype and Twitter.

E-mail use has hit saturation—99% of college students use e-mail and most e-mail daily. E-mail has its rivals. Fast adoption of social networking and media has placed sites such as Facebook and YouTube at the top of most-used online sources—going from almost nonexistent to ubiquitous in less than four years. Most (92%) college students use social networking sites; 81% use social media sites. Two-thirds of students who use social networking log on daily.

Search engines continue to dominate, topping the list of electronic sources most used to find online content (93%), followed closely by Wikipedia (88%). The key difference in usage between search engines and Wikipedia is the frequency—75% of students who use search engines do so daily, compared to 20% of those who use Wikipedia.

Results show a decline in use of library Web sites, electronic journals and online databases since 2005. This drop is driven by a decrease in use among college students ages 25–64. Use rates among 18–24-year-old students show a modest increase for library Web sites (53% to 58%), while e-journal use declined slightly (41% vs. 39%) and online database use did not change (30%). While the number of college students using the library Web site declined (61% to 57%), those who do so are using it more frequently—22% use it at least weekly, up from 15% in 2005.

E-mail has its rivals. 92% of college students use social networking sites.

18–24-year-old college students

Use of these resources increased or remained flat.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library Web site</th>
<th>Online databases</th>
<th>Electronic magazines/journals</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Social communication

- E-mail
- Instant messaging
- Blogs
- Social networking sites
- Social media sites
- Skype
- Twitter

Finding content

- Search engines
- Wikipedia
- Online bookstores
- Online news
- Library Web site*
- Electronic magazines/journals*
- Online databases*

Getting answers

- Ask-an-expert sites
- Online librarian question service
Libraries: more trustworthy

Libraries (online or physical) are considered:

- More trustworthy
  - 2010: 76%, 2005: 69%
  - Difference: 7%
- More accurate
  - 2010: 76%, 2005: 69%
  - Difference: 7%

Search engines: faster

Search engines are considered:

- Faster
  - 2010: 92%, 2005: 84%
  - Difference: 8%
- More convenient
  - 2010: 87%, 2005: 84%
  - Difference: 3%
- Easier to use
  - 2010: 84%, 2005: 84%
  - Difference: 0%
- More reliable
  - 2010: 64%, 2005: 64%
  - Difference: 0%

We asked students about the trustworthiness of Wikipedia for the first time. The majority (65%) believe that Wikipedia is less trustworthy than libraries, while 30% believe both are equally trustworthy.

Students determine which sources to use based on credibility and trustworthiness of information, if it is free and if it provides what they need. Fewer, about half, say they rely on ease of use and speed. Most students continue to rely on personal knowledge and common sense (78%) to determine the trustworthiness; this was among the top determinants in 2005. If college students question sources, they cross-reference with other Web sites or sources.

Trustworthiness and accuracy are cited as the most critical criteria for determining which information sources to use. However, behavior indicates that speed and convenience, and a strong belief that personal knowledge and common sense can determine credibility, continue to drive most search activity through nonlibrary resources. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of students use Wikipedia and 93% use search engines for finding online information. Just over half use the library Web site (57%).
Finding success at the library

While it may not be the first source college students turn to for information searching, the library is cited as an important information source by the majority. When cross-referencing information sources, more than half (56%) use library materials and 24% use a librarian. These rates are similar to 2005 results (57% and 29%).

Among college students who use a recommendation from a trusted source to determine the trustworthiness of information, 11% use library materials and 5% consult librarians. These rates are higher than in 2005 (5% and 2%).

College students recognize the value-add librarians provide to the search process. Three-quarters (78%) who use librarians agree librarians add value to the process and that librarian assistance is available when needed (71%). More college students are very satisfied with information, service and overall experience with librarians than they are with search engines, at rates roughly the same as in 2005.

Why don’t college students use the library Web site?

- 23% Other sites have better information.
- 21% Prefer to use the library.
- 17% Web site does not have what I need.
- 12% Fines are too much.
- 11% Can’t find what I need.
- 10% Did not know it existed.

How has the library’s value increased for you?

- More valuable to use the libraries ‘free’ resources as way to cut back on my discretionary spending.” 27-YEAR-OLD GRADUATE STUDENT
- It’s a hotspot for information and we live in an age of information so its the place to be.” 18-YEAR-OLD UNDERGRADUATE
- Since checking out books from the library is free it is a great value when money is tight. Free entertainment can’t be beat.” 25-YEAR-OLD ECONOMICALLY IMPACTED GRADUATE STUDENT

Library Web site fulfills need—when discovered

Most students begin their information search using a search engine, and 27% indicated they have started with a search engine and ended up at a library Web site. Of those who connect to the library Web site, most use the site (80%) and almost all who do so get to success (99%). About a third of students (34%) say that the library Web site was the only site used; two-thirds also used other sources (65%). Most who started at a search engine and ended up at a library Web site say they have returned to the site (69%), and 50% have increased their use of the library and/or library Web site.

Students who use the library Web site find success. However, over 40% of students indicate they have not used their library Web site, a rate similar to 2005. The top reason for not using the library Web site is the perception that other sites have better information (23%). This perception remains consistent with 2005 findings.
The value of the library has increased to college students

College students value the library. Appreciation for the library came through in both the data and open-ended statements. The value of the library was more apparent to many during the down economy. A third (32%) of students indicated that the library’s value has increased for them personally during the recession, higher than for total U.S. respondents. College students also recognize the value for their community. A third (31%) believe that the library’s value has increased for their community during the recession, a rate equal to the total U.S. respondents.

When students identified the most important library role, the top response was “to provide books, videos and music”; “a place to study” ranked second. These values mirror the top student library activities. The top 2010 annual library activities were homework/study (66%) and borrow print books (60%). While library use trended down from 2005 across all resources, borrowing print books and leisure reading stayed relatively stable.

Students are less impressed with all online resources

Mirroring attitudes of nonstudents, college students had lower overall impressions of information resources than in 2005. Search engines had an 88% favorability rating in 2005, dropping to 70% in 2010. Likewise, favorability ratings dropped for libraries and bookstores, including online libraries and bookstores. Bookstores, online bookstores and online libraries have dropped to more neutral ratings. The physical library, like search engines, saw an 18-point slide from 2005.
College students use and value libraries

Nearly three-fourths of college students have a library card. College students who have been assisted by a librarian are overwhelmingly (90%) satisfied with their experiences with librarians, and eight out of ten agree that librarians add value to their search process.

Demographics

College students made up 19% of our U.S. survey respondents. Nearly a third of them consider a public library as their primary library.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY LIBRARY</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>TYPE OF STUDENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College/university</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT 85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>GRADUATE STUDENT 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community college</td>
<td>8%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

College Students

- Feel information from library sources is more trustworthy than search engines (43%)—more so than U.S. respondents (26%)
- Are most likely to use the library Web site (57%), and more use it weekly than in 2005 (22% up from 15%)
- Are most likely to use social networking sites (92%)
- Begin their online information search using search engines (83%)
- Use Wikipedia (88%)
College students advise libraries

College students want libraries to enhance their collections and to be open more hours.

29% Add or update services.
- 17% Add/update collection
- 9% Add/update computers
- 2% Add programs/classes
- 1% Make services available online

21% Increase customer service.
- 10% Extend hours
- 6% Re-examine rules
- 3% Add staff/more knowledgeable helpful staff
- 2% Promote the library/advertise more

21% Improve the facility and environment.
- 10% Renovate/expand facility
- 7% Make finding books easier
- 4% Study areas/meeting rooms/seating/café

21% Improve the facility and environment.
- 10% Renovate/expand facility
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- 4% Study areas/meeting rooms/seating/café

4% I'm satisfied with my library.
- ...excellent job."
- "it is great!"

"More books available on a wider variety of topics."
23-YEAR-OLD ECONOMICALLY IMPACTED UNDERGRADUATE

"More computers"
19-YEAR-OLD UNDERGRADUATE

"To provide resources for people to easily access. This also includes the librarians who share their knowledge as well."
21-YEAR-OLD UNDERGRADUATE

"Increase hours and days of operation"
56-YEAR-OLD GRADUATE STUDENT

"Ease up on the fees"
20-YEAR-OLD UNDERGRADUATE

"It needs to better organize it's books and keep computers updated"
20-YEAR-OLD UNDERGRADUATE

"Become cooler"
18-YEAR-OLD UNDERGRADUATE

"more study rooms"
23-YEAR-OLD GRADUATE STUDENT