

OCLC SHARES Sharing Special Collections Through Interlibrary Loan Survey Results

OCLC SHARES Sharing Special Collections Working Group

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- Lynn Wexler, Reference Librarian at the Hirsch Library, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, who as a member of our working group helped to develop the survey and to analyze the responses upon which this interim report is based, right up until her retirement in March 2019.
- Chela Scott Weber, Senior Program Officer for OCLC Membership and Research, who continues to sit in on many working group calls and has advised us from the perspective of a special collections curator and archivist.

Executive Summary

Report on sharing special collections survey

The SHARES Sharing Special Collections Working Group was formed in September 2018 to explore the interlending of materials from special collections among members of the SHARES resource sharing consortium. The group's first step was to conduct a survey to gather information on the current state of sharing special collections through interlibrary loan across the SHARES partnership.

The survey, which was posted to the SHARES-L discussion list on December 21, 2018 and closed on January 31, 2019, attracted 55 responses from 75 different SHARES institutions -- a 73% response rate. The proportions of the various library types represented among the responses, and the proportion of US-based libraries versus non-US libraries responding, matched closely with the overall SHARES membership profile.

The survey responses capture the current state of sharing special collections at the various types of SHARES institutions and point to specific actions that could be taken by SHARES as a group to promote and improve the practice, not just within our consortium but across the library community. **Lending copies from special collections is done by most respondents, while digitizing whole works and lending physical items is much less mainstream.** Analysis of the survey results leads the working group to make several recommendations:

- There needs to be a community workspace whereby SHARES partners are able to share standards-driven procedures. This will enable institutions to determine their comfort level in lending special collection material.
- Any workflows or procedures that are developed need to be flexible in order to account for the different types of libraries and special collections within the SHARES consortium.
- Interdepartmental cooperation is key to sharing special collections.

These recommendations are based on the following points that emerged from the survey responses:

- Cooperation between ILL and special collections staff already appears to be robust across the SHARES community.
- Most libraries will share what they share from special collections "with any library."
- There is no one right way to divide responsibilities between ILL and special collections staff.
- Some respondents noted a willingness to lend and even have protocols in mind but hadn't yet been asked to lend anything.
- Some respondents posited that protocols developed by this working group and adopted by SHARES, perhaps in tandem with a best practices document, would empower them to approach their special collections colleagues with the idea of lending.
- Interlibrary loan and special collections staff need to engage in regular, sustained, detailed communication about the value of sharing special collections and the best way to go about it at their institution.

The SHARES Sharing Special Collections Working Group will now take up the next piece of our assignment, developing a framework of protocols and practices for sharing special collections materials via interlibrary loan among the members of the SHARES consortium.

Context

In September 2018, as an outcome of the SHARES Policy Rethink's third theme, Enhancing Access, the SHARES Executive Group put out a call to the SHARES membership looking for volunteers to join a new Special Collections Working Group. Five volunteers and the OCLC SHARES program officer convened as a group for a kickoff meeting in November 2018.

By membership agreement, SHARES libraries have liberal lending policies with one another and generously agree to fill requests for normally non-circulating material. But the working group didn't know how much SHARES members currently extend that generosity to their special collections materials. In order to promote sharing special collections, working group members decided they needed to understand the extent to which special collections are already being shared within the consortium.

With that in mind, the working group developed a survey to measure the current state of sharing special collections through interlibrary loan within SHARES. This sharing might include scanning of articles or chapters within works, digitizing entire items that are out-of-copyright, or lending a physical item. It is important to note that sharing is not just about physical items; there are multiple ways to share from special collections.

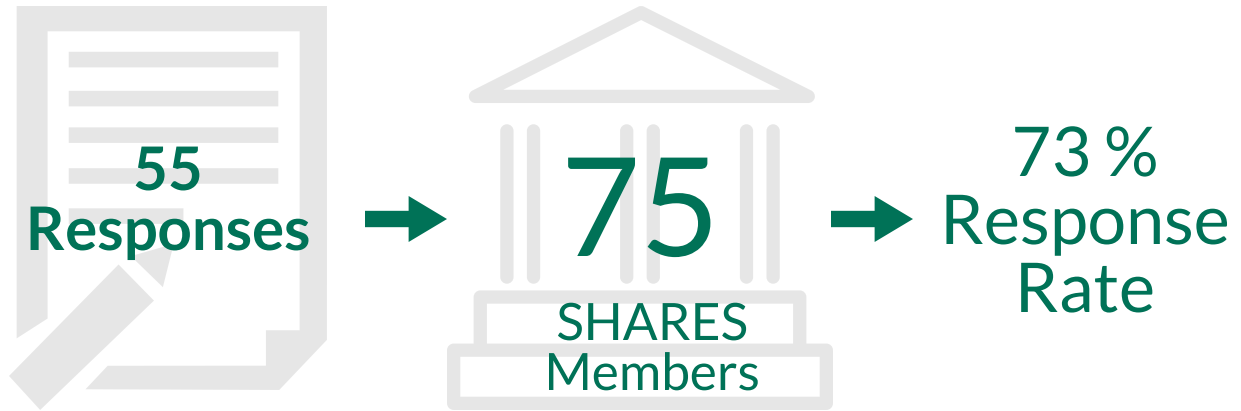
The survey consisted of 16 questions -- mostly multiple choice, but with some open-ended questions where respondents were encouraged to convey anything they felt was important for the working group members to know about sharing special collections. The survey was designed so that responses would remain anonymous, but respondents could volunteer their OCLC symbol if they liked.

The survey opened on December 21, 2018, with an announcement on the SHARES-L email listserv, and remained open for about 6 weeks. The working group asked that one interlibrary loan head from each institution respond to the survey by Thursday, January 31, 2019, and sent email reminders to the listserv throughout January. The SHARES program officer also promoted it at an in-person SHARES meeting at the 2019 American Library Association Midwinter conference.

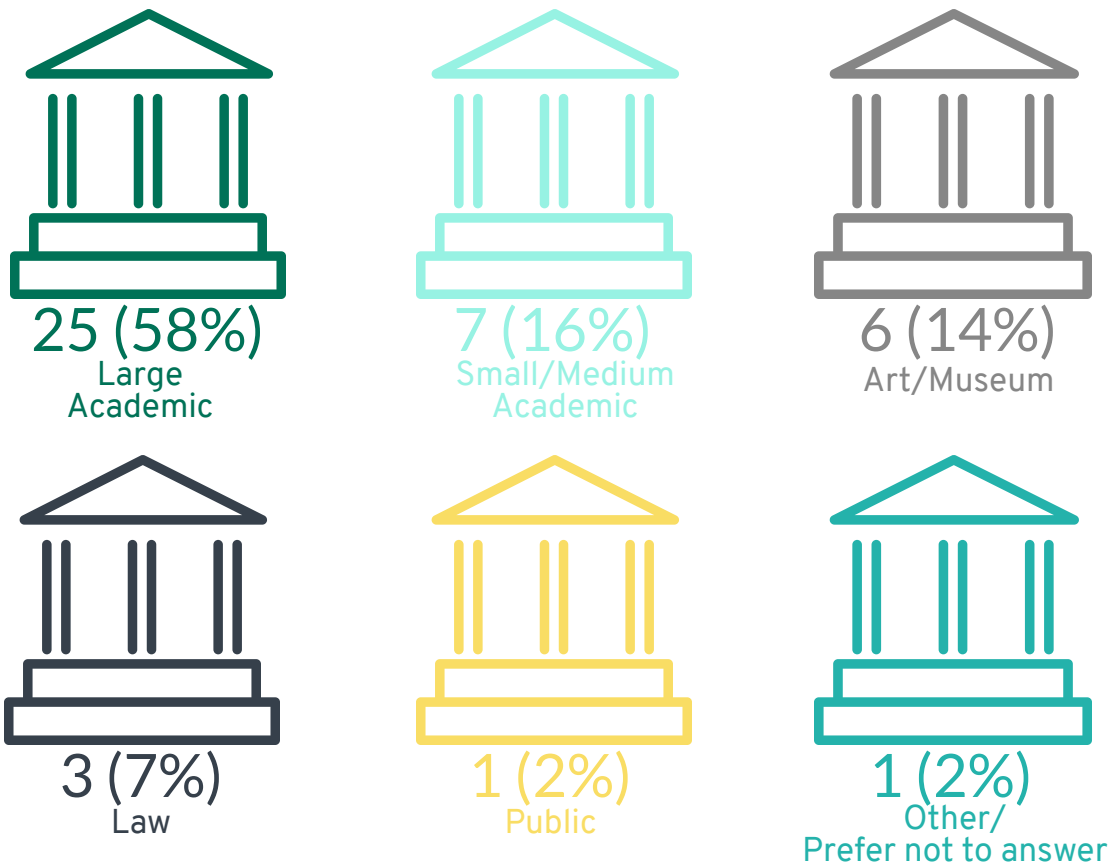
Demographics

Although not all respondents answered every question, the Working Group received 55 responses from approximately 75 SHARES member institutions: a 73% response rate.

Number of Respondents



Respondents by Library Type



Demographics (Cont'd)

Respondents by Location

44 Responses

Within
US

38

86%

Outside
US

6

14%

■ US ■ Outside US

Section 4

Responses on Current Practices/Workflows

The survey questions were grouped thematically. The first set of questions focused on respondents' institutions and facilities with subsequent questions asking about specific workflows and policies.

Question 1:

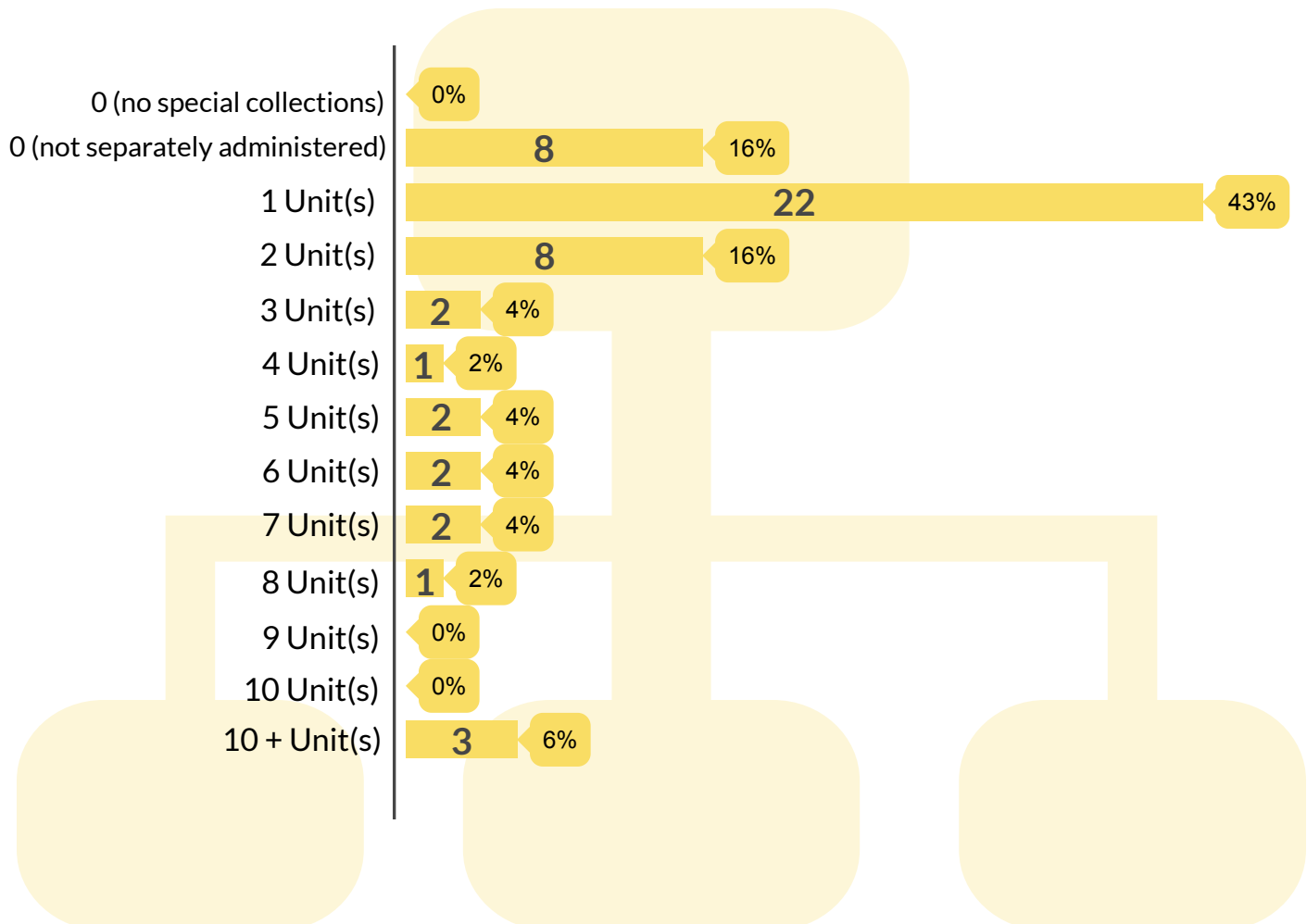
Asked, "How many distinct special collections administrative units are there in your symbol's library system?"

A higher number of separately administered units would mean ILL staff need to interact with greater numbers of special collections staff, with each location potentially having different policies and/or levels of willingness to lend or copy items from their collections.

The majority of respondents had between 0 to 2 units. But 14 respondents did note that they had 3 or more separately administered special collections units, with 3 having more than 10.

Distinct Special Collections Units

51 Responses



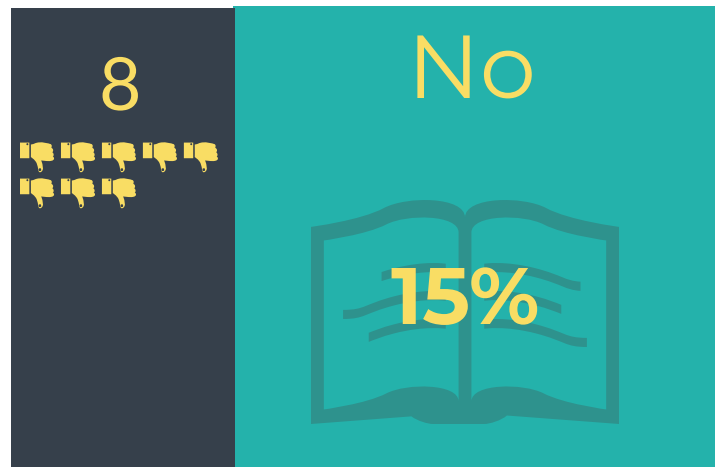
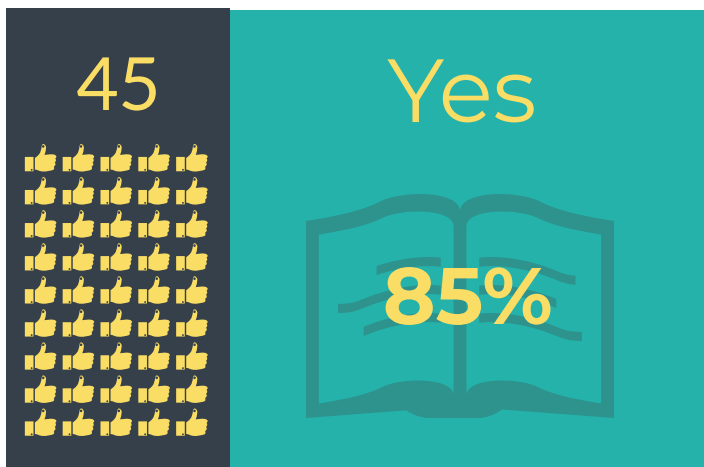
Question 2:

Asked, "Does your library have a supervised and secure special collections reading room?"

Forty-five, or 85% of respondents, noted that they do, with only 8 saying that they do not have a supervised and secure special collections reading room.

Secured Reading Room

53 Responses



Question 3:

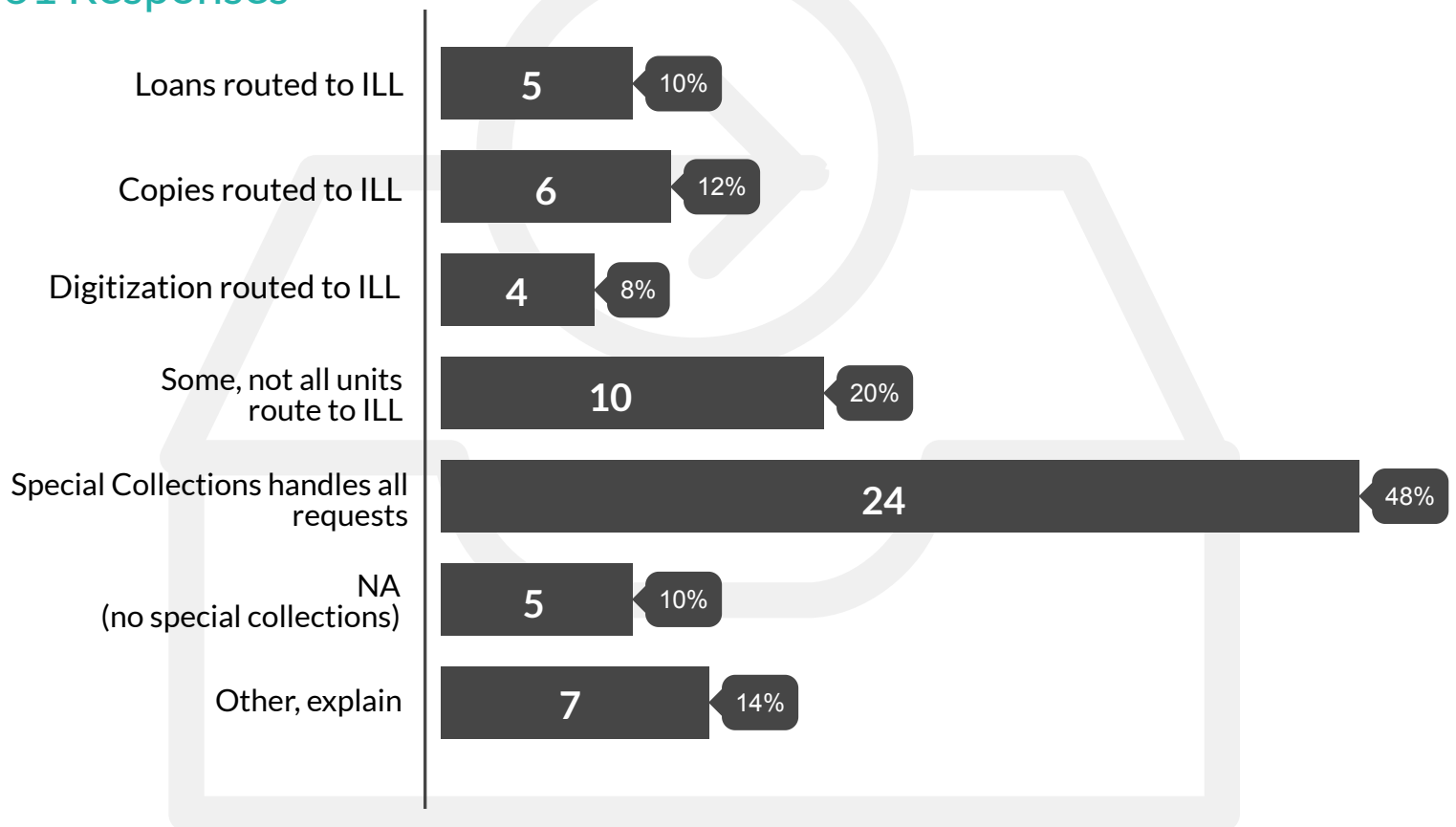
Asked, "When your special collections units receive requests directly, do they route them to your ILL department for processing?"

This question was really looking at internal stakeholders and how they collaborate across departments -- a theme that also arose in other questions asked.

The majority of respondents noted that the special collections units manage all ILL requests that they receive. Very few actually route requests for copies, loans and digitizations to ILL staff. But some respondents marked that some but not all units route requests to ILL. This could potentially lead to confusion at borrowing institutions when some requests for special collections are filled through ILL while others are not, and borrowers are not sure why. For those that marked "other" as a response, many stated that requests made by individuals contacting that special collections unit were handled by the unit itself, while those made by academic or research institutions were routed to the ILL department. Those who marked "not applicable" indicated that they do not loan from special collections units; that reply was also mirrored in other questions in the survey.

Routing to ILL

61 Responses



Other, explain

- Depends on the request. Some are routed to our unit, while others are routed to Preservation, Conservation, and Digitization unit.
- Some requests but not sure about why some go to central ILL and some don't.
- No [special collections] material is available for ILL, so any requests received at [special collections] would be passed to us for refusal.
- Loan, copy, and digitization requests for any library material are routed to the interlibrary loan department.
- Our special collections unit handles all requests made by individuals. Requests made by an institution or a librarian on behalf of a researcher are routed to ILL.
- While there is no unit, per se, there is a [special collections] librarian. She will generally handle any requests she gets directly. While ILL will handle any it receives directly.
- If an individual, [special collections] handles. If a library, they refer to our ILL unit.

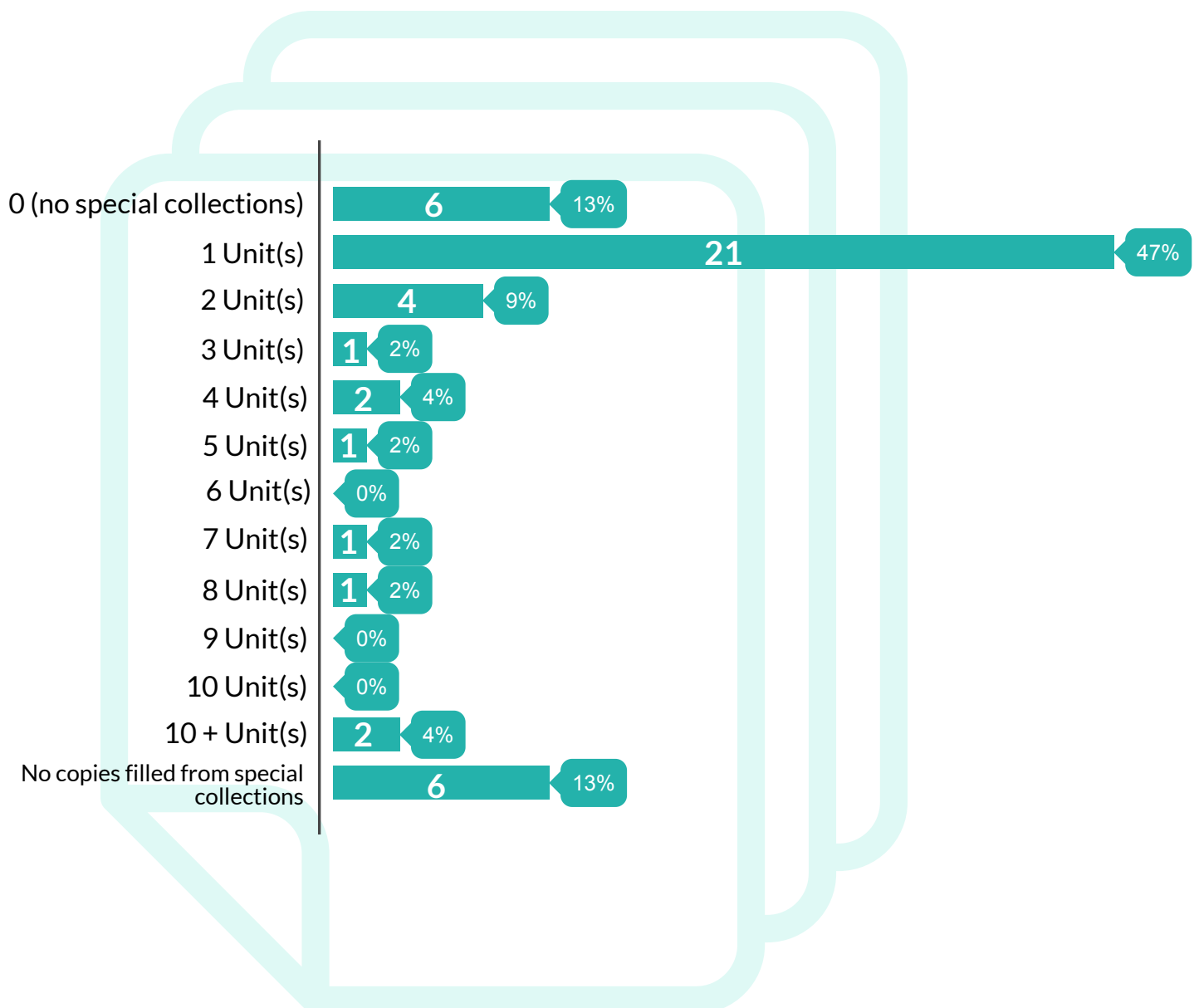
The next set of questions focused on copy requests, also known as non-returnables.

Question 4:

Asked, "How many of your distinct special collections units selectively fill ILL lending copy requests for chapters/articles (non-returnables)?"

The majority of respondents indicated that their special collections units fill at least some copy requests, with only 6 saying their special collections units do not fill ILL requests for non-returnables. The overall responses were encouraging, providing an indication that overall there is some type of lending going on with special collections.

Copy Requests 45 Responses



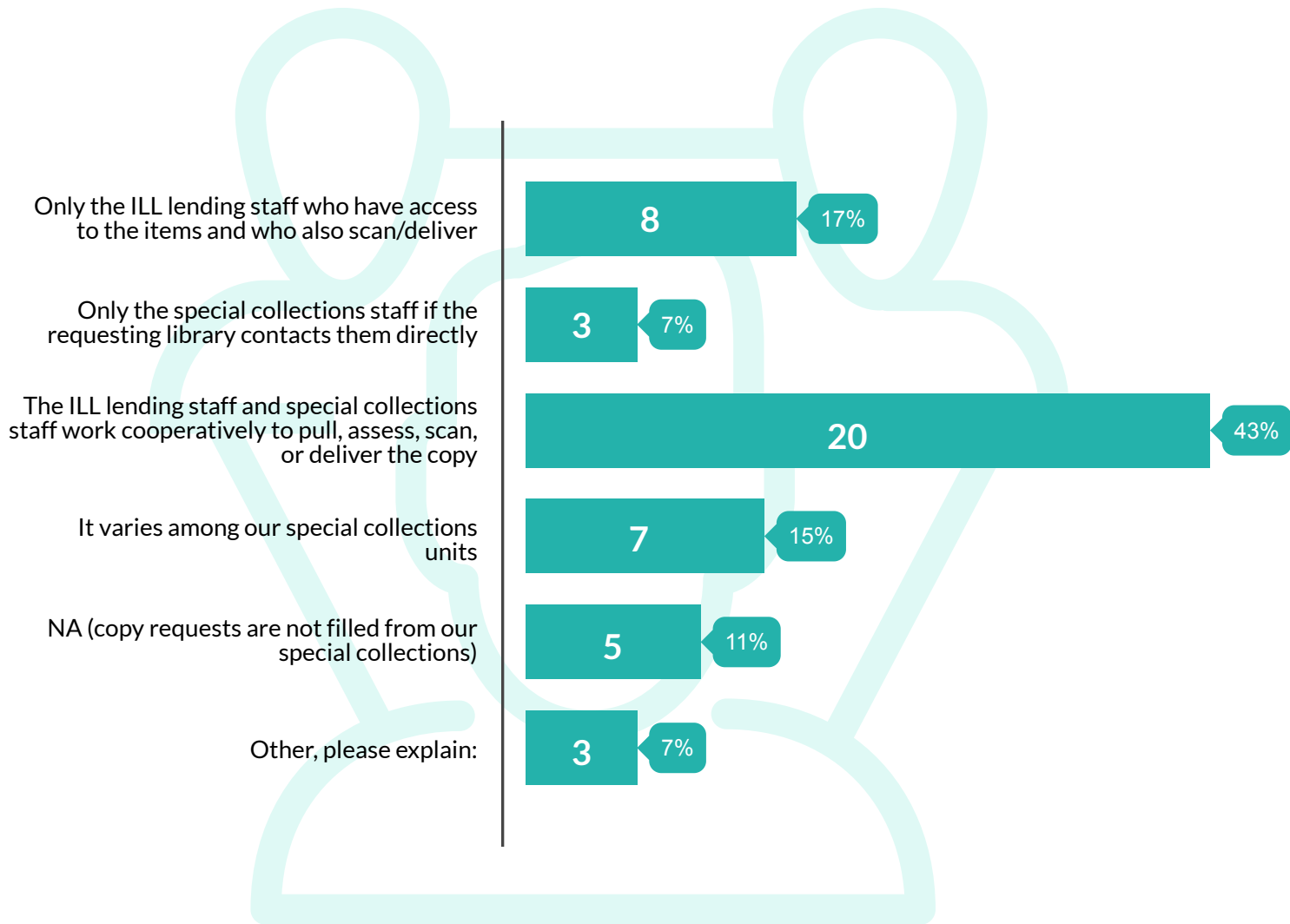
Question 5:

Asked, "Who receives, scans, and delivers the ILL copy requests (non-returnables) for special collections chapters/articles at your institution?"

The vast majority -- 20 -- indicated that ILL lending and special collections staff work cooperatively to pull, assess, scan and deliver the copy. This shows that there is already a strong sense of collaboration between ILL and special collections units at those institutions that offer non-returnables.

Request Handling

46 Responses



Other, explain

- Our [special collections] staff pull and scan items, and those scans are sent on to the ILL staff for delivery through ILLiad. For physical items, it's the same procedure. [special collections] staff pull them and ILL staff get them processed with details for special insurance. Items are then given to our Receiving Room staff, who process outgoing shipments.
- If we receive a request for something considered part of a special collections, ILL will make copies after speaking to appropriate specialist colleagues.
- ILL staff send the request to the Special Collections staff who pull and scan the material. They email the file to ILS who sends the file to the borrowing library.

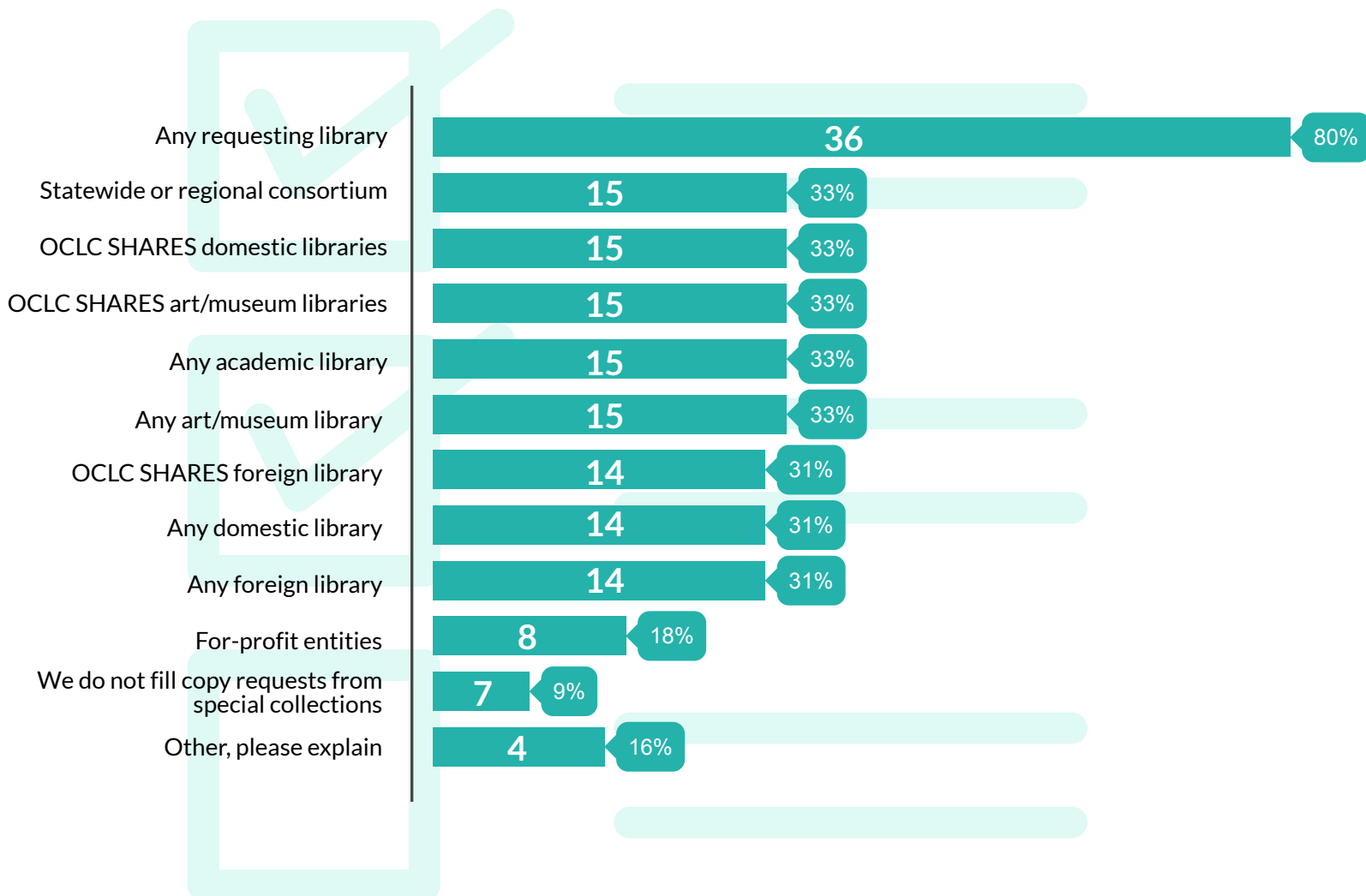
Question 6

Asked, "In general, for which groups of requesting libraries do you selectively fill **copy requests** for articles/chapters from special collections through ILL?"

This question addressed external stakeholders, versus the aforementioned internal stakeholder type question. Here we found that most respondents will fill selective copy requests for most libraries. However, under the "other" category, respondents noted that their ILL departments route requests to special collections units and do not actually know what happens to them afterwards, while others noted that their special collections units need more time to process copies than the usual turnaround for ILL requests. This is often communicated through conditional responses to the borrowing library and/or asking to be put in the OCLC lending string multiple times.

Groups

172 Responses



Other, explain

- Because Special Collections prefers requests are routed through them, ILL is not aware of what happens once an institution reaches out.
- We will review all special collections article requests regardless of location/type. We do ask that the library list us 5x on the lending string and note that we are the last resort, as processing does take some additional time for our [special collections] folks.
- It also depends on if we can scan the special collection materials and send via PDF.
- Varies by the location of the special collections item.

The next question specifically addressed digitization of whole works.

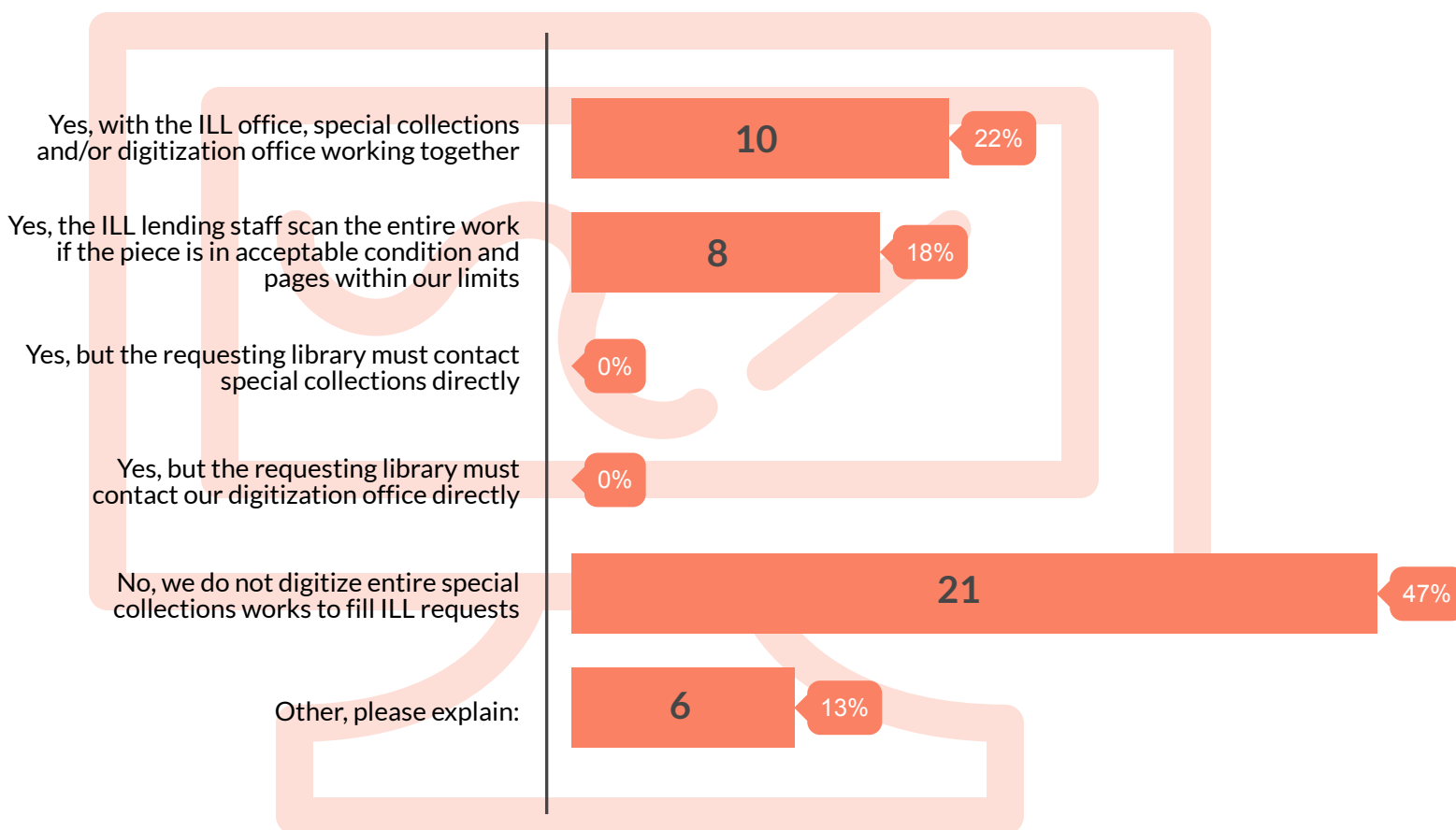
Question 7

Asked, "Do you **digitize entire special collections works** on-demand from selective ILL requests you receive for out-of-copyright works?"

Eighteen respondents do provide digitizations of whole works, with 10 of those noting that they work together with other internal stakeholders to digitize the item, while 8 are able within their own ILL departments to scan the works when it fits their policies for non-returnables. Note that half of the respondents indicated that they do not digitize entire works for special collections ILL requests, representing an area where the working group might be able to advocate for change. Most respondents who chose the "other" category noted that such requests are routed to their special collections units for a response and they don't know how they were handled afterwards.

Digitizing Works

45 Responses



Other, explain

- This would be on a case by case basis. I'm sure we've digitized full items in the past for patrons, but it would really depend on the item and the condition, as well as available staffing for [special collections] as they would be completing the digitization process.
- We have done it on very few occasions and only if the material isn't too delicate.
- We have never had to consider this but if we had the only out of copyright work we would.
- Yes, Spec Coll staff scan the entire work if the piece is in acceptable condition, and they feel it is okay to do (e.g. donor conditions, copyright).
- It's a mixed bag that is subjective to our special collections staff approval.
- Requests must be sent directly to our special collections location not handled via ILL. It is unclear if entire work will be digitized. Depends on the item.

We followed up the question about digitization with several focusing on returnables, or loans.

Question 8

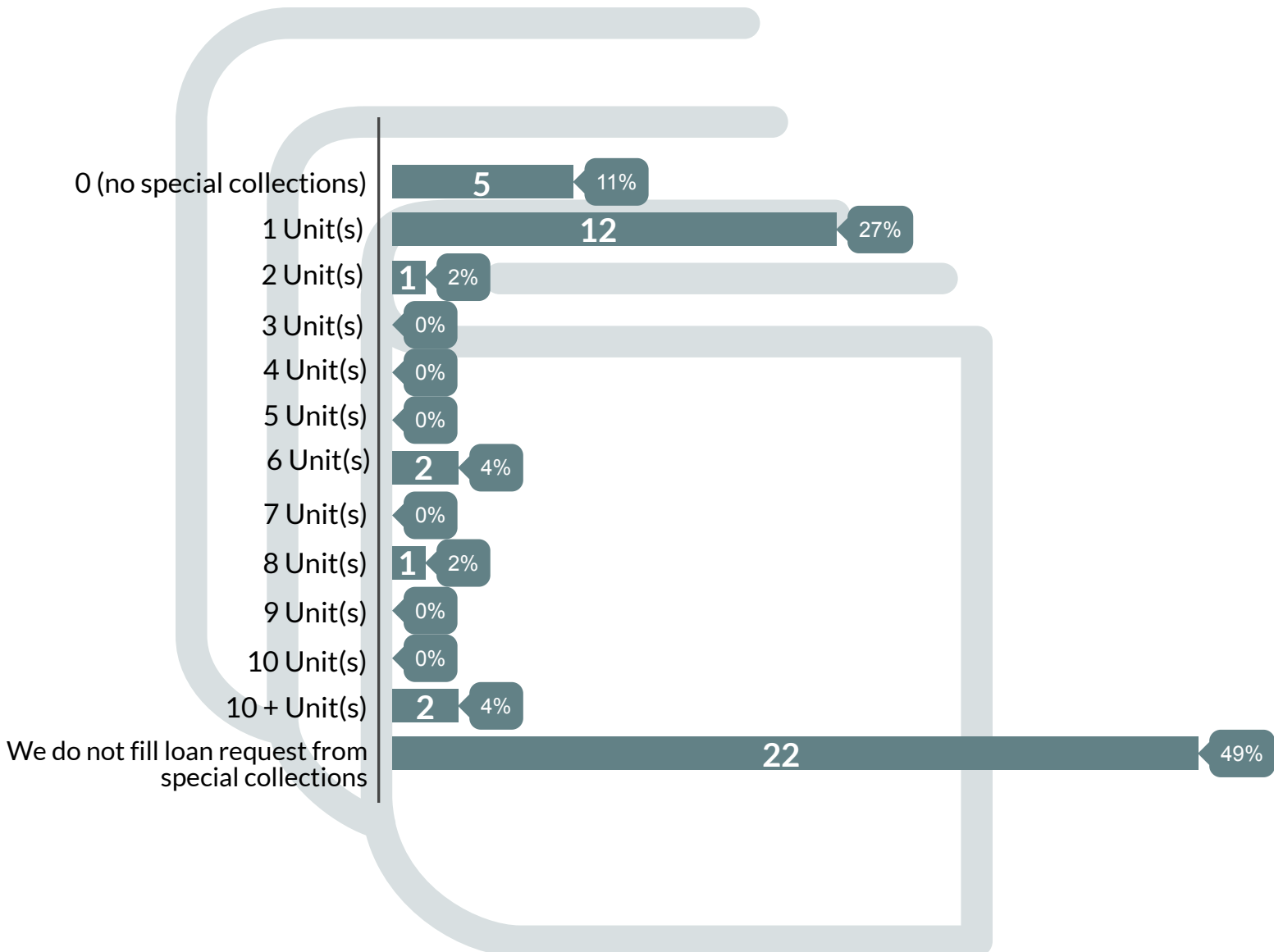
Asked, "With how many of your distinct special collections units does your ILL office work to fill selective lending loan requests (returnables)?"

Almost half of the respondents stated that they do not fill requests for loans of returnables from their special collections. In comparison, Question 4 asked the same information about copy requests, and only 6 respondents noted that they do not fill requests for copies from their special collections.

Going forward through the next few questions, we found that the majority -- 21 to 23 respondents -- report that they do not fill requests to borrow returnables from their special collections. What is perhaps more interesting about the responses to the next few questions is what those who do lend returnables from their special collections have to say.

Loan Requests

45 Responses



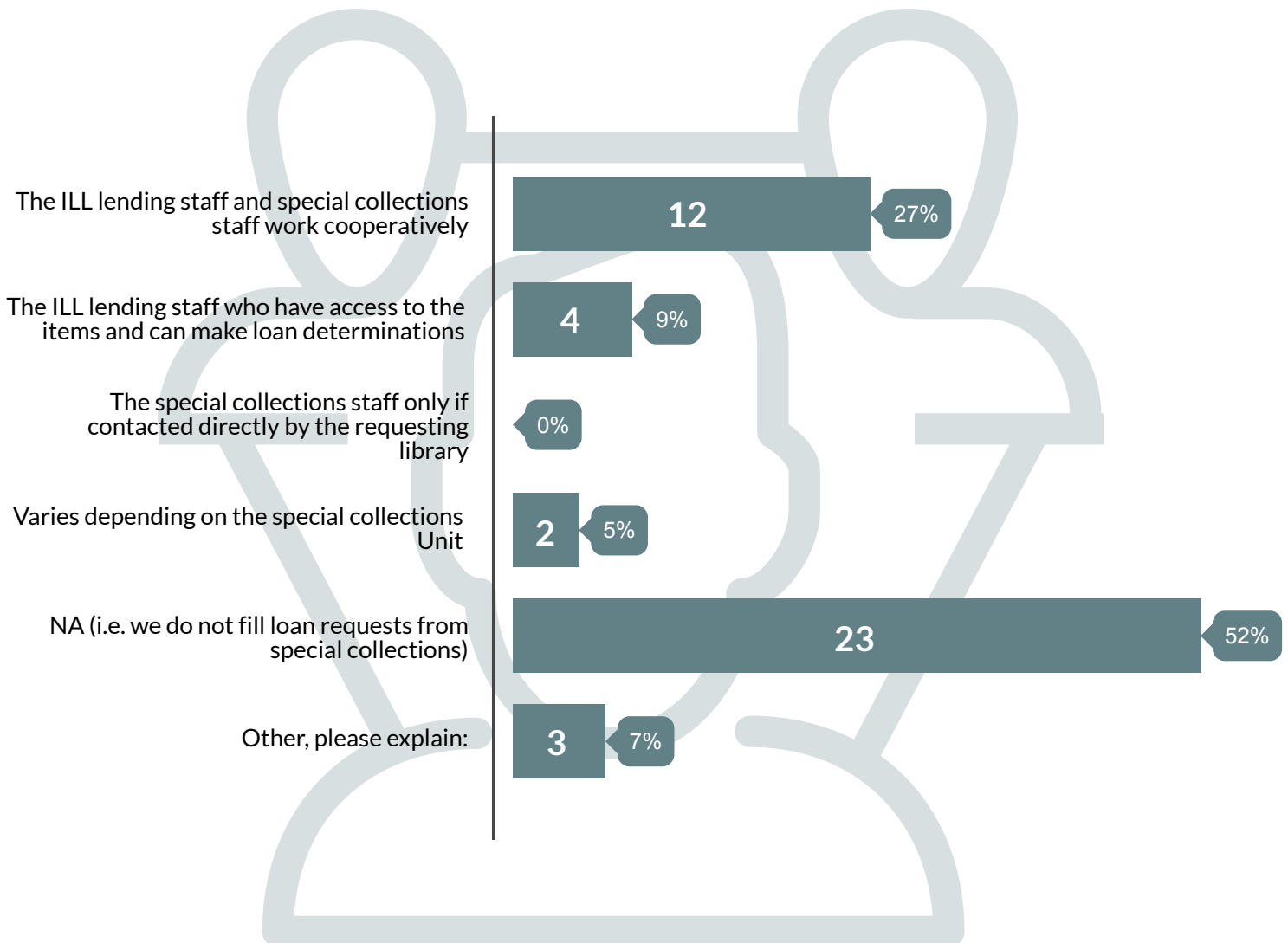
Question 9

Asked, “Who pulls, assesses, processes, and ships the ILL loan requests (returnables) for special collections at your institution?”

Again, 23 don't fill physical loan requests from their special collections, but, for those institutions that do, 12 of them indicated that the ILL lending staff and special collections staff work cooperatively. One institution explained that they will offer scans when a loan is requested from a special collections unit, fulfilling the SHARES principle of “getting to yes” for an ILL request among member libraries.

Request Handling

44 Responses



Other, explain

- [Special collections] handle pulling/assessing material, and ILL then prepares the items to go out and makes sure items are insured properly. Receiving room staff then pack the items for outgoing shipment.
- ILL supervisor would consult and then supervise students physical handling.
- We will offer to scan materials that have been requested as loans. If accepted, the special collections unit and ILL staff will work cooperatively to fill request.

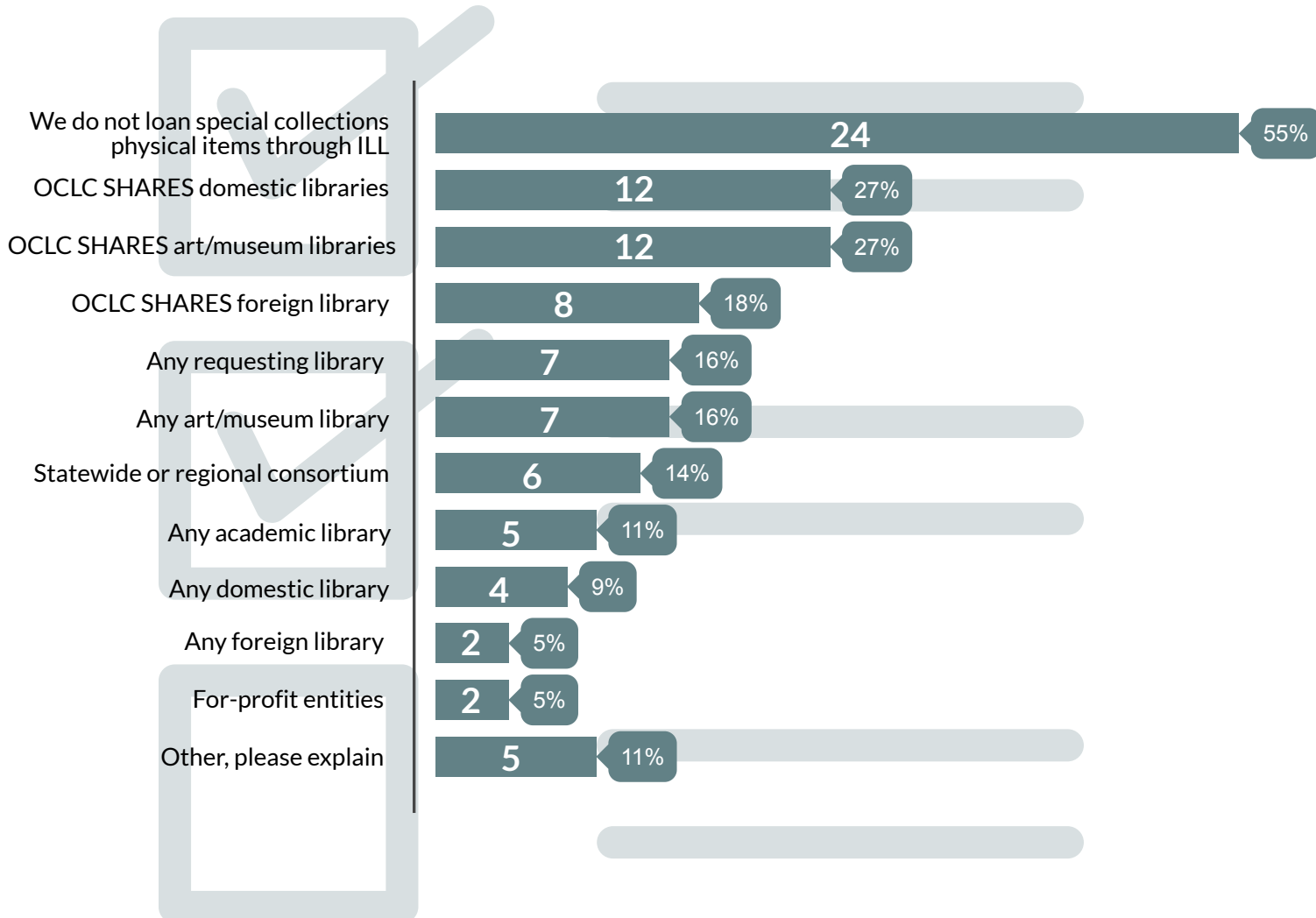
Question 10

Asked, "In general, for which groups of libraries do you fill selective loan requests for physical special collections items through ILL?"

For those that actually do fill those requests, we see that they will loan primarily to their SHARES partners, which is really a special benefit of being a SHARES member.

Groups

94 Responses



Other, explain

- We will consider loan requests for [my consortia], and prior contact requests (if they've already confirmed availability with [special collections]).
- Any library with a secure reading room.
- Loans of physical non-circulating materials for exhibition purposes. These are not handled by ILL staff.
- We are participating in pilots with [two consortia partners] but prefer to copy when possible.
- [consortia]

We asked two questions that dealt with shipping procedures, in order to gauge any trends from libraries that do lend physical special collections items, and with the hope that this information may assist us in making future recommendations about the sharing of special collections.

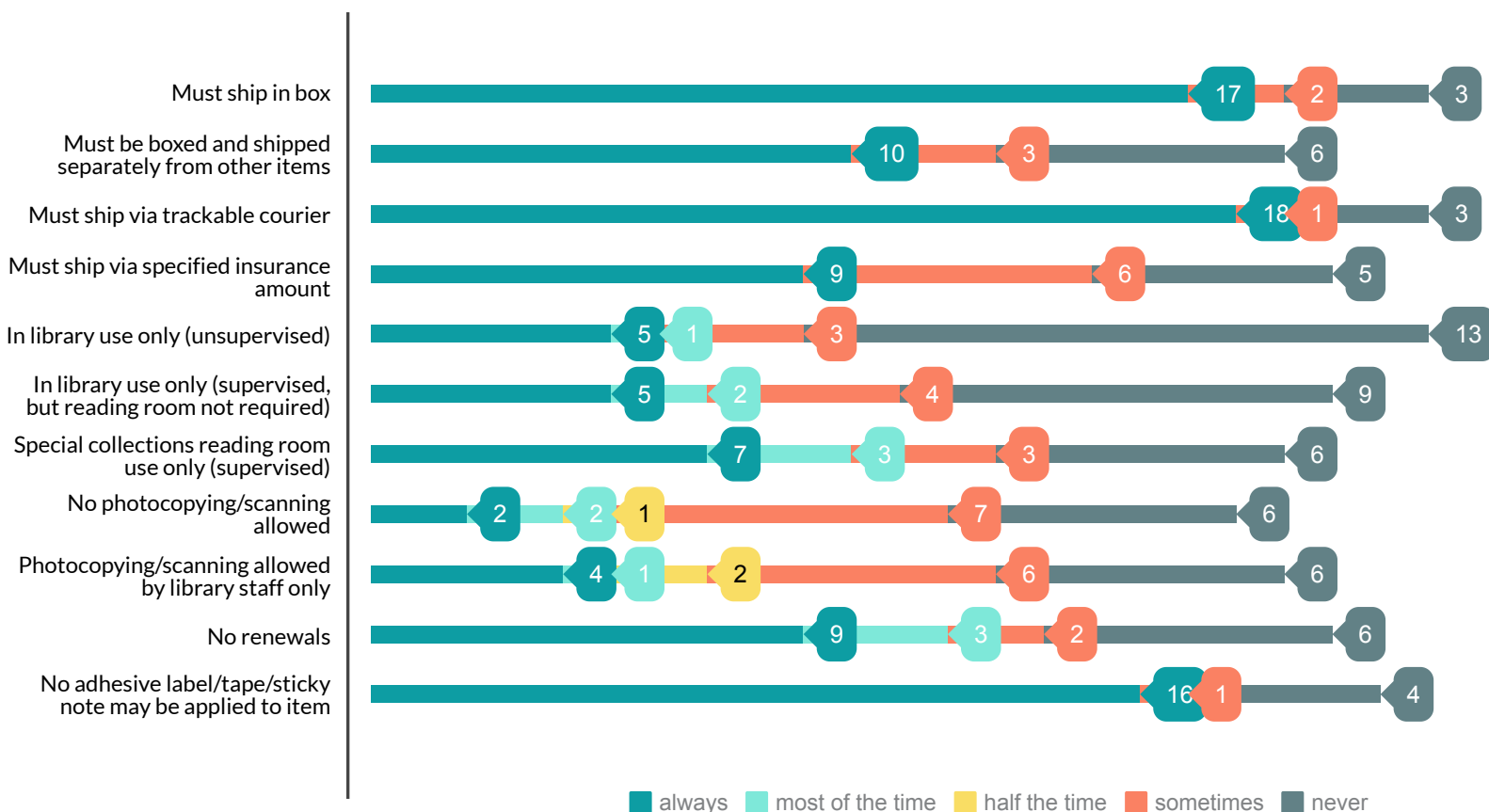
Question 11

Asked, "If you lend **physical special collections items** (returnables), how often do you set the following usage or shipping restrictions as a condition of the loan?"

Colors in our chart indicate the various choices: always, most of the time, about half the time, sometimes, and never. Responses to this question showed which shipping restrictions are most important to libraries that do lend physical special collections items.

We can see that most libraries expect the items to be used in a controlled environment, but not necessarily under supervision. There did not appear to be many issues with creating reproductions of these items once they are in the hands of the borrowing institution. Of course, applying adhesive materials to special collections items is forbidden. (This is actually a good rule to follow whether you are borrowing from a special collection or a regular circulating collection, as per the Interlibrary Loan Code of the United States.) What is particularly reaffirming from the survey responses is that institutions do expect physical loans to be shipped in a box via a trackable courier.

Shipping Restrictions 222 Responses



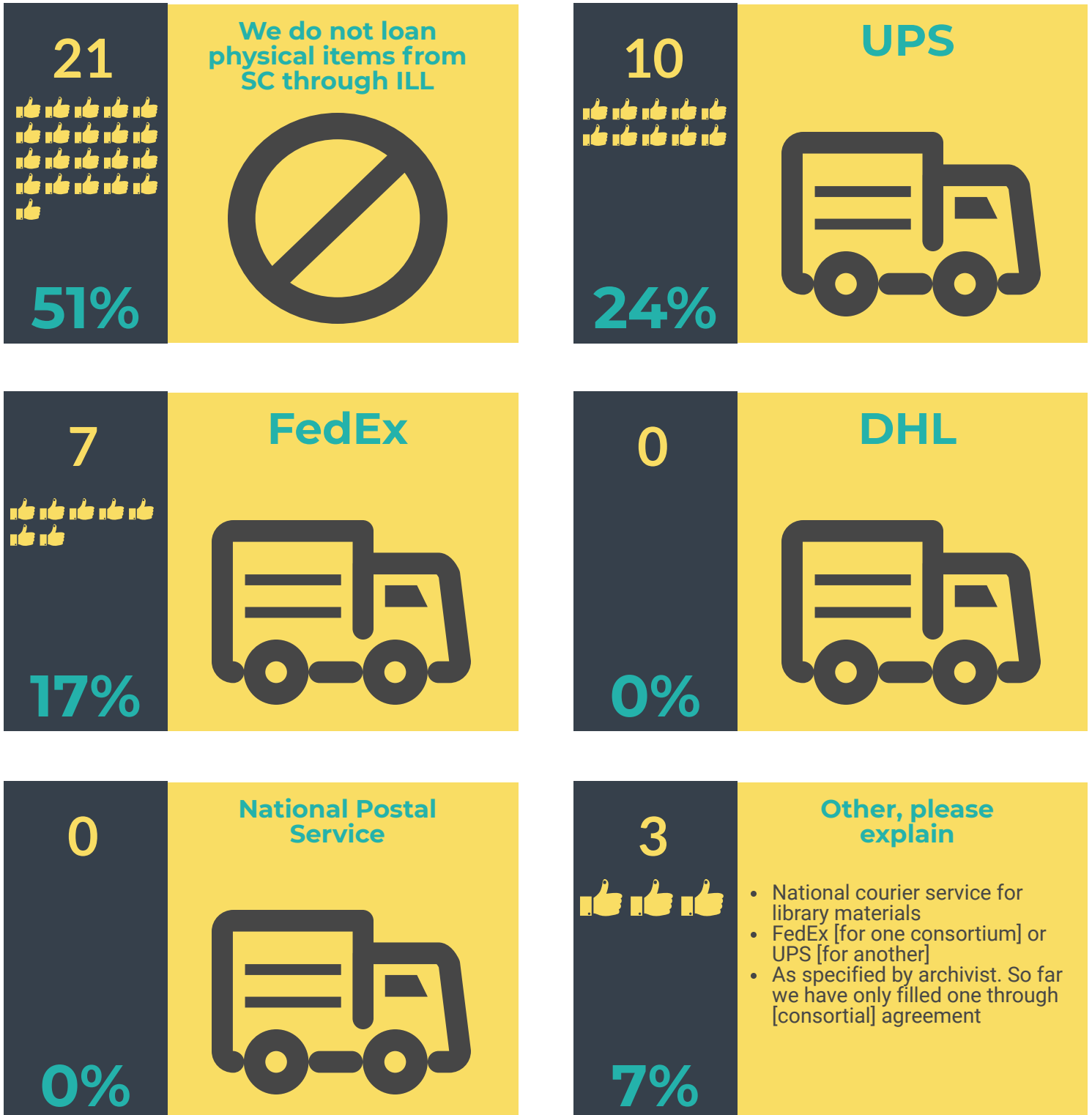
Question 12

Asked, "What shipping method do you usually use for sending **physical special collections items** (returnables)?"

Those that do fill such loan requests are split more or less evenly between UPS and FedEx, while those in the "other" category indicated that they also use a local courier service for their special collections items.

Shipping Methods

41 Responses



Open-Ended Responses

Question 13 of the SHARES Sharing Special Collections survey solicited open-ended feedback asking respondents to share any comments or suggestions with the working group. The question prompted 17 responses which are summarized in the following paragraphs.

All general feedback about the survey and working group was positive. Several respondents stated that they were eager to hear the results of the survey. Others are hoping that the working group will create some type of documentation for them to take back to their special collections staff to facilitate discussion about sharing special collections.

Four respondents noted that policies or procedures are in place at their institutions for lending special collections material, but they have not had many requests to loan out these materials. One respondent stated that though lending workflows for special collections material are established, every request to borrow an item has thus far been denied by their special collections unit. In short, for several institutions theoretical procedures are in place, but these have not been tested or revised through an established habit of lending special collections material. Creating a workspace for SHARES partners for sharing successful standards-driven procedures could assist with getting more institutions comfortable with lending.

Others chose to highlight how special collections material requests are different from typical ILL transaction processes. Special collections requests take extra time for ILL lenders with one respondent noting that conditions for loaning special collections material are handled on a case-by-case basis. Another respondent stated that ILL works with faster turnaround times than their special collections unit, typically resulting in frustration from all stakeholders in a hypothetical ILL transaction. The time and extra work involved with lending from special collections has resulted in a sense of wariness about doing so. These responses indicate a need for managing expectations with borrowers and lenders when processing loans from special collections units. This could be done through conditionals, via email, or by telephone, but all constituents should be aware that these loans are atypical and have to be handled as such. Sharing documents detailing how to manage these expectations is something the working group may consider tackling.

Though physically lending materials from special collection units is not always feasible, many institutions responded that they can fill these requests as non-returnables (i.e. scans). Several respondents wrote that lending is not viable, but they are digitizing materials from their archival or special collections holdings. Again, because ILL and Special Collections staff may operate with different timelines, it is important that borrowing institutions are looped into a conversation so expectations can be managed.

Finally, a few respondents noted that their special collections units have non-traditional holdings which could potentially complicate ILL transactions. Some SHARES partners stated that their entire holdings are considered special collections. Others stated that rarity or value are not the primary characteristic when considering if an item is classified as a part of a special collection. These responses indicate that, when considering a set of best practices for lending special collections within SHARES, a flexible framework is required that accommodates different ways of classifying special collections, but also respects the collaborative work done by staff between ILL and special collections units.

A review and analysis of the survey results leads the working group to make several recommendations. There needs to be a community workspace whereby SHARES partners are able to share standards-driven procedures. This will enable institutions to determine their comfort level in lending special collection material. Any workflows or procedures that are developed need to be flexible in order to account for the different types of libraries and special collections within the SHARES consortium. Finally, the working group also recognizes that interdepartmental cooperation within and across libraries is key to sharing special collections. Effective communication between lenders and borrowers will ensure that materials are handled properly when meeting the research needs of users.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The Working Group's next step is to use what we learned from the survey to develop a framework for sharing special collections through interlibrary loan between SHARES members.

What are the expectations we share that can become our protocols? These expectations would not just be for SHARES members acting as suppliers of loans or copies; they would also apply to members as borrowers of physical items, too, so that lenders will be assured that their materials are handled in an appropriate way by both the requesting library and its user.

The protocols the working group develops also need to allow for workflow flexibility at each institution where decision-making, scanning, and even packaging authority may reside with different departments needing to work together. Any proposed protocols cannot be imposed upon our libraries' special collections colleagues, so we must find ways to involve them in the conversation with interlibrary loan practitioners and incorporate both groups' feedback in a mutually acceptable and feasible framework.

Then, after the framework is completed by our working group, the separate SHARES Best Practices Working Group will seek to develop specific steps libraries can take to implement the proposed framework, allowing for local customization. These options could be anything from who approves the loan/scan to who does the scanning, digitizing, or packaging, to what item-specific loan restrictions there might be, to what templates or paperwork should be used.

Finally, the SHARES Executive Group as a leadership body will amplify and publicize this ILL-Special Collections collaborative work. They will develop any needed training, such as on digitizing standards or regarding proper packaging techniques. The Executive Group will also guide any process related to updating the official SHARES policies.

This undertaking is both ambitious and daunting, but the SHARES membership is comprised of knowledgeable and devoted practitioners who see value in this endeavor to meet the continuing research needs of our communities.