

**UNIVERSITY
OF MALTA**

LIBRARY MARKETING SURVEY 2023

REPORT

Presented By
THE OUTREACH TEAM

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The Aims for the Survey

The main aim of this survey was to answer questions related to use of the services, marketing, and outreach. Additionally, the survey had a secondary goal of identifying the best ways to communicate with the patrons. The main questions asked were as follows:

- What services, resources and tools are Library patrons aware of?
- What services, resources and tools do Library patrons use?
- How do patrons learn about Library services?
- How can the Library improve its services?
- What additional services would patrons like to see offered by the Library?
- What additional channels should the Library use to effectively communicate with its patrons?
- Do patrons use the Library spaces and why?

Additional comments and recommendations were also collected.

Methodology

The survey was disseminated in both online and print form. It ran for the full month of March (30 days).

The online version of the survey was disseminated through the usual channels, which included an email sent to all staff and students through the Registrar and the UM Communications Office, the Library's social media (Facebook and Instagram), various University social media pages, and the Library newsletter. A QR Code for the survey was also created, and a number of posters and small flyers were placed around the Campus and the Library study spaces.

Print copies were distributed to different service points and collected daily by librarians. On selected occasions, the Survey team also conducted an in person survey promotion on Campus. Members of staff asked patrons to directly fill in either the online or print versions of the survey. The team was composed of Ryan Scicluna, Stephanie Formosa, Pavol Macejovsky, and the current interns from Switzerland, Julia Staehli and Rahel Weiss.

Data

Table with responses collected.

*Grey fields fall on Saturday and Sunday.

*Yellow fields represent days when the Survey Team spent 30 minutes collecting responses in person.

Table Showing the Progress of Responses					
March	Total No of Responses Online	No of New Responses Print	Total No of Responses Print	Total Responses	Increase in Responses
1	86	0	0	86	0
2	125	0	0	125	39
3	144	16	16	160	35
4	144	0	16	160	0
5	144	0	16	160	0
6	153	19	35	188	28
7	184	22	57	241	53
8	199	33	90	289	48
9	204	13	103	307	18
10	206	7	110	316	9
11	210	0	110	320	4
12	210	0	110	320	0
13	213	9	119	332	12
14	214	5	124	338	6
15	224	14	138	362	24
16	227	4	142	369	7
17	236	23	165	401	32
18	240	0	165	405	4
19	240	0	165	405	0
20	240	8	173	413	8
21	245	11	184	429	16
22	248	0	184	432	3
23	263	21	205	468	36
24	263	0	205	468	0
25	263	0	205	468	0
26	263	0	205	468	0
27	303	0	205	508	40
28	331	6	211	542	34
29	343	5	216	559	17
30	348	3	219	567	8
31	356	2	221	577	10

Chart showing progression of responses for the survey starting on Wednesday, 1st March till Thursday, 31st March

Total Responses vs Day

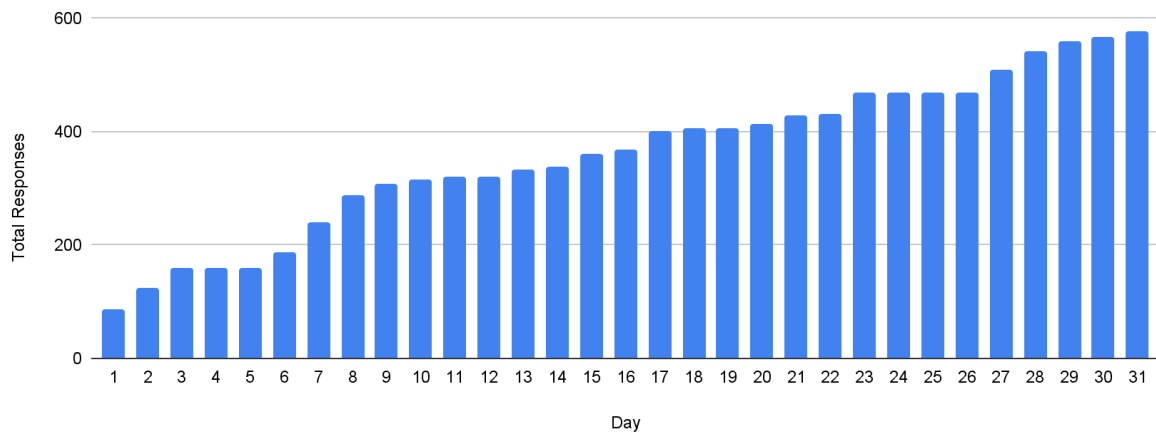
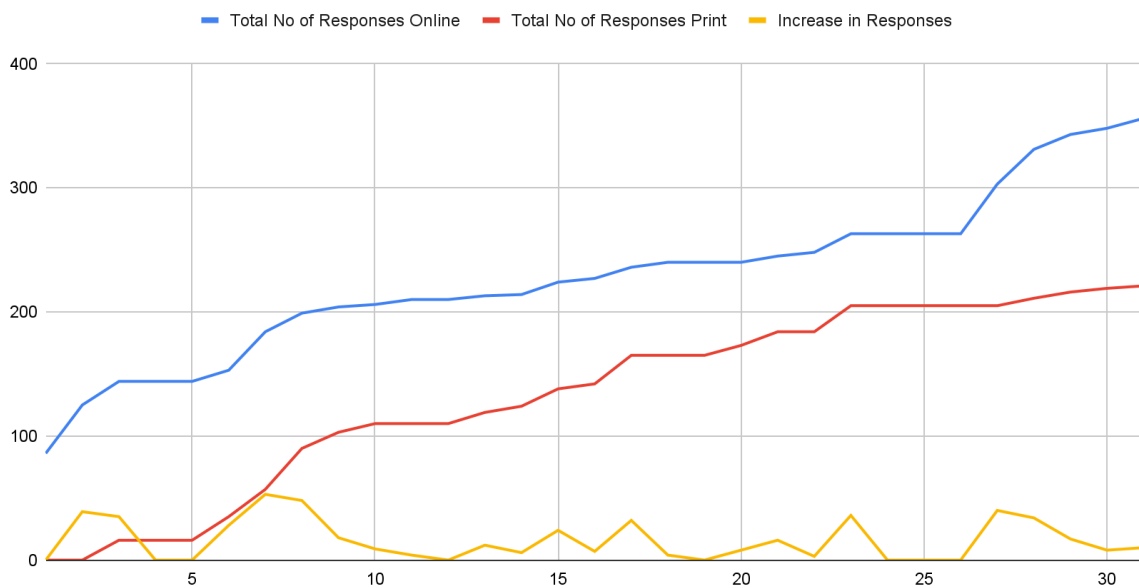


Chart showing the total number of responses online vs the total number of responses in print vs the increase in responses

Total No of Responses Online, Total No of Responses Print and Increase in Responses



Results

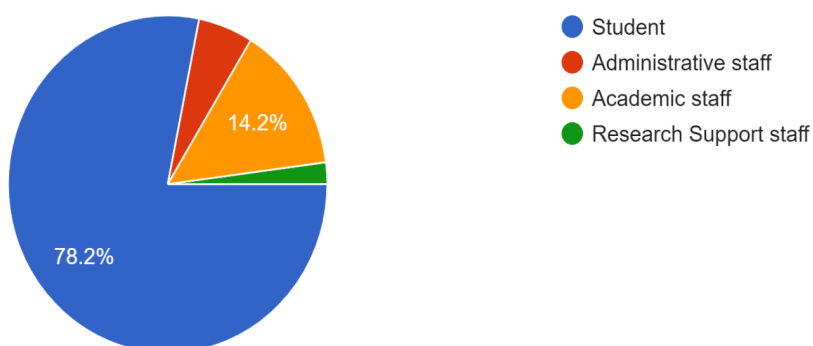
A total of 577 responses were collected in a period of one month (March 2023).

Demographics

Type of User

Current status

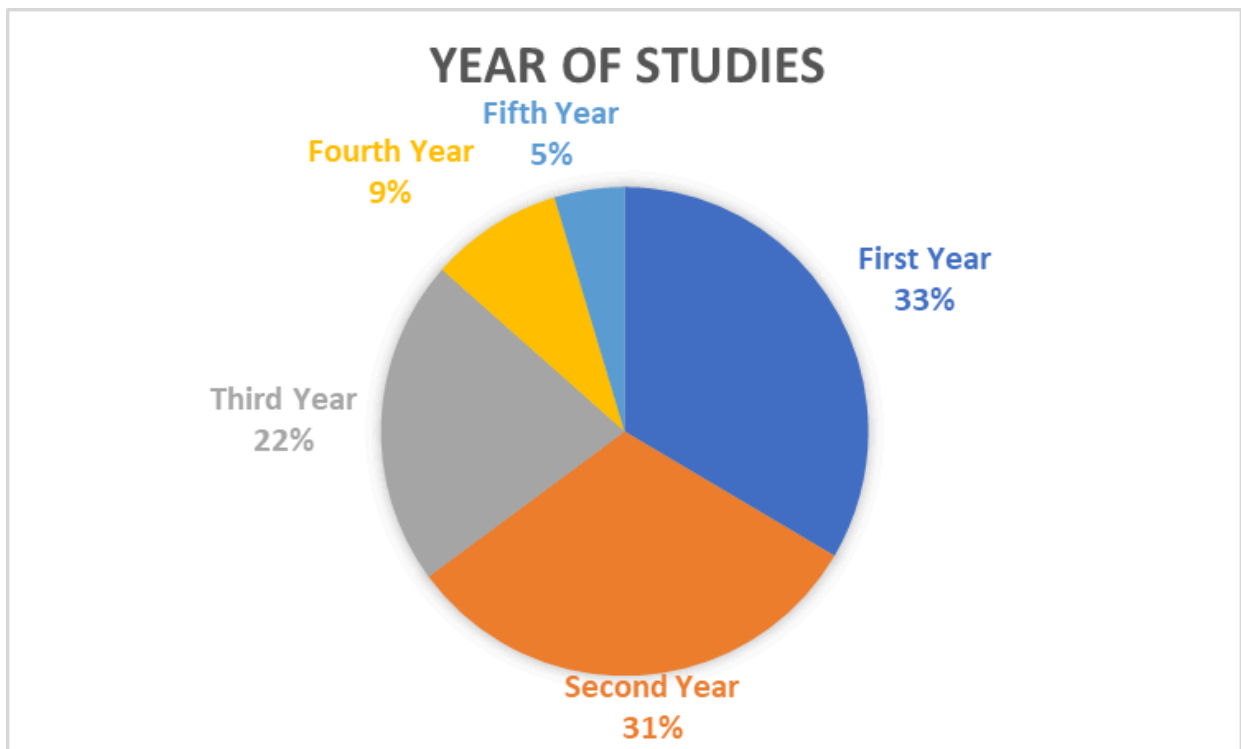
577 responses



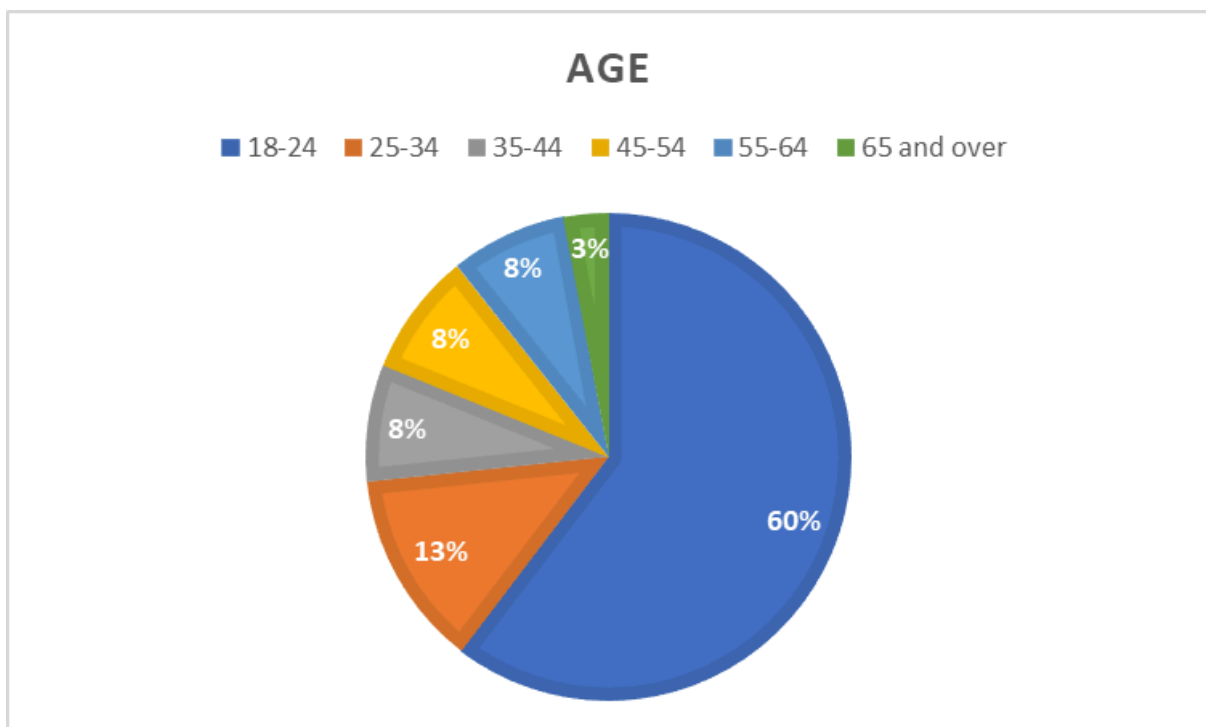
Subject Area

Table of Responses from Faculties		Table of Responses from Centers, Institutes, Schools and other	
Faculty of Arts	101	UM staff	21
Faculty of Medicine & Surgery	61	Junior College	7
Faculty of Economics Management & Accountancy	60	Institute of Earth Systems	6
Faculty of Law	47	Institute of Linguistics and Language Technology	5
Faculty of Engineering	42	Centre for English Language Proficiency	4
Faculty for Social Wellbeing	38	Institute for Tourism, Travel & Culture	4
Faculty of Health Science	38	Institute of European Studies	4
Faculty of Media & Knowledge Sciences	27	The Edward de Bono Institute for Creative Thinking and Innovation	4
Faculty of Science	22	Centre for Labor Studies	3
Faculty of Education	21	Institute of Tourism, Travel and Culture	3
Faculty of ICT	10	School of Performing Arts	3
Faculty of Theology	8	Foundation School for Business Studies	2
Faculty for the Built Environment	6	Mediterranean Institute	2
Faculty of Dental Surgery	5	Centre for Liberal Arts	1
Faculty of Geosciences	1	Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research	1
Faculty of Pharmacy	1	Health And Wellness Centre	1
		Institute for Climate Change and Sustainable Development	1
		Institute for Sustainable Energy	1
		Institute of Baroque Studies	1
		Institute of Digital Games	1
		Institute of Maltese Studies	1
		Traditional Chinese Medicine	1

Year of Studies



Age

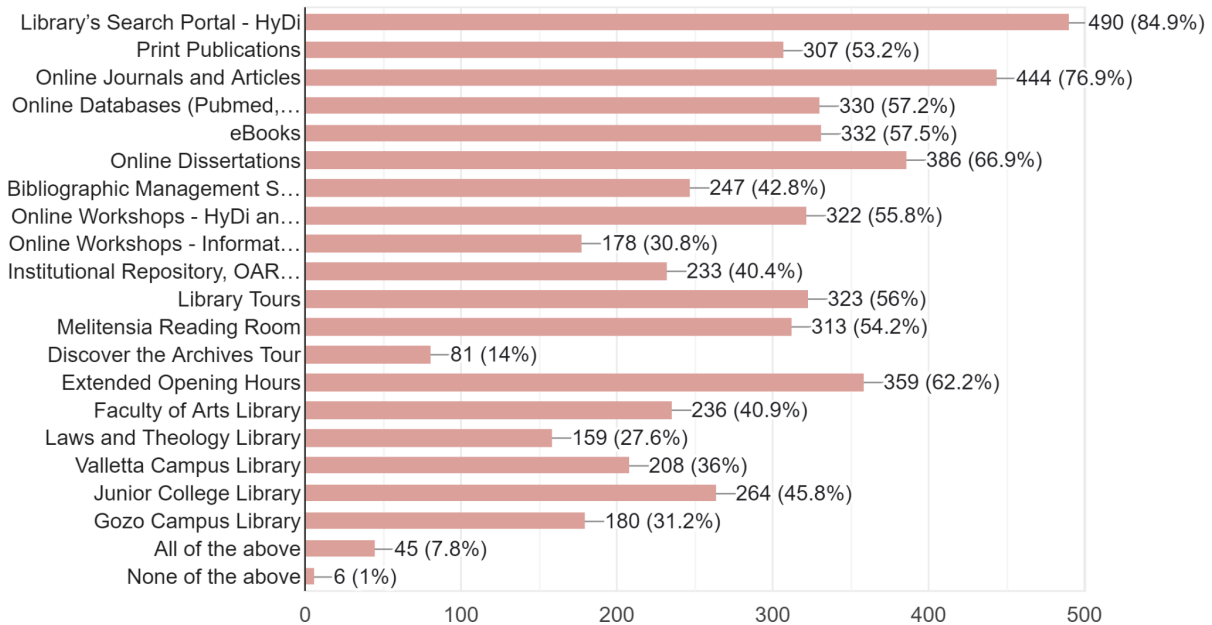


Library Services

Awareness of Services

1A) Which of the following Library services, resources and tools are you aware of?

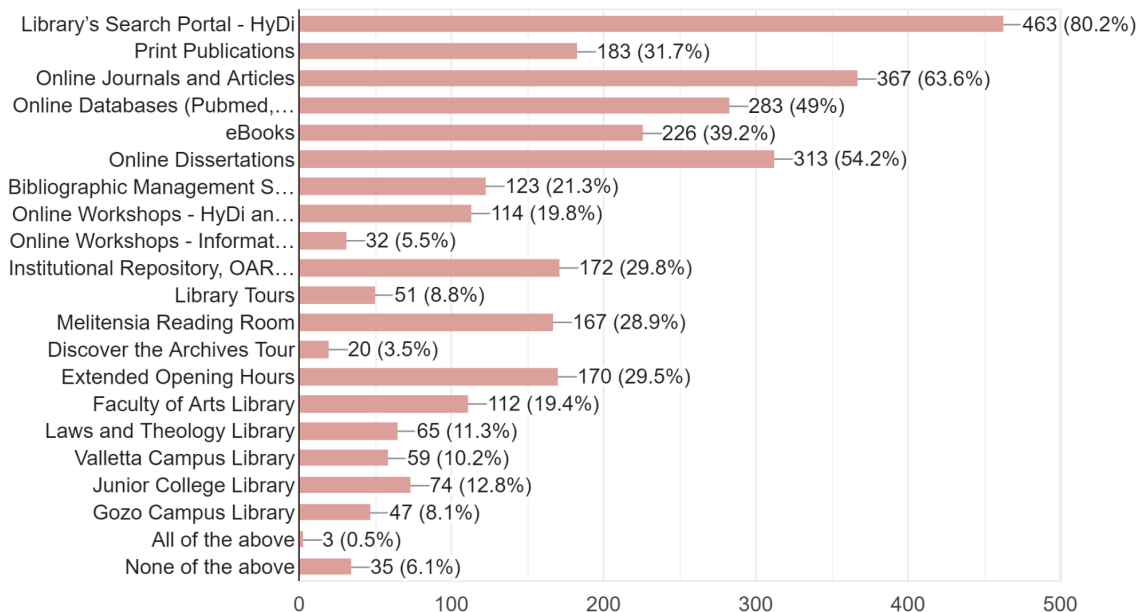
577 responses



Usage of Services

1B) Which of the following Library services do you use?

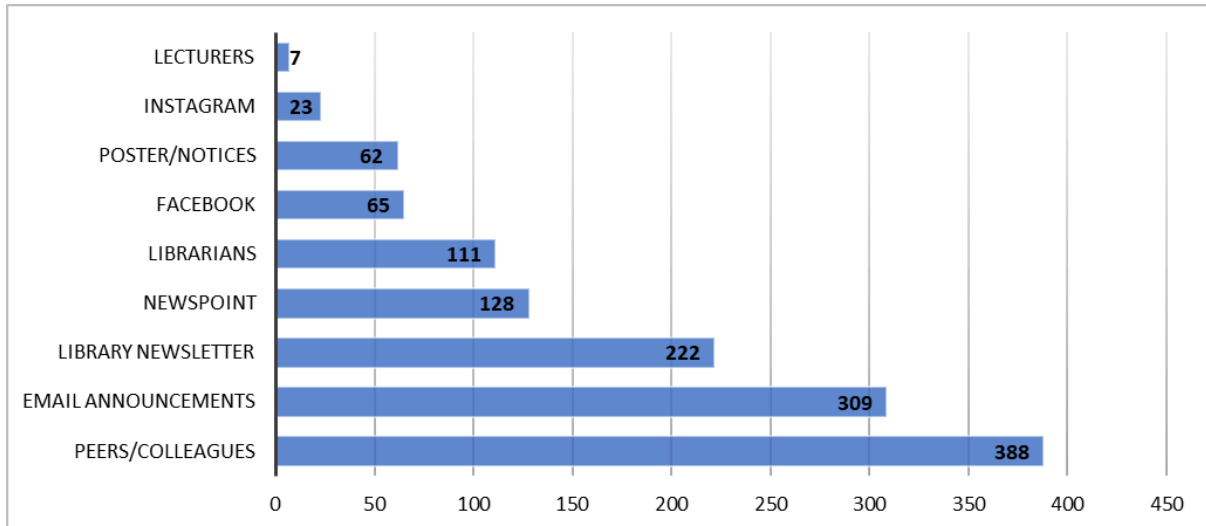
577 responses



Marketing

Most Successful Method of Communication

1C) How did you get to know about these services?



A very small number of respondents (0.02%) pointed out other channels with which they got to know about Library services. These include:

- The Library website (personal searching online)
- Introductory sessions organised by the department/faculty
- Doctoral schools sessions
- Personally exploring the Library building
- Lecture Tutorial

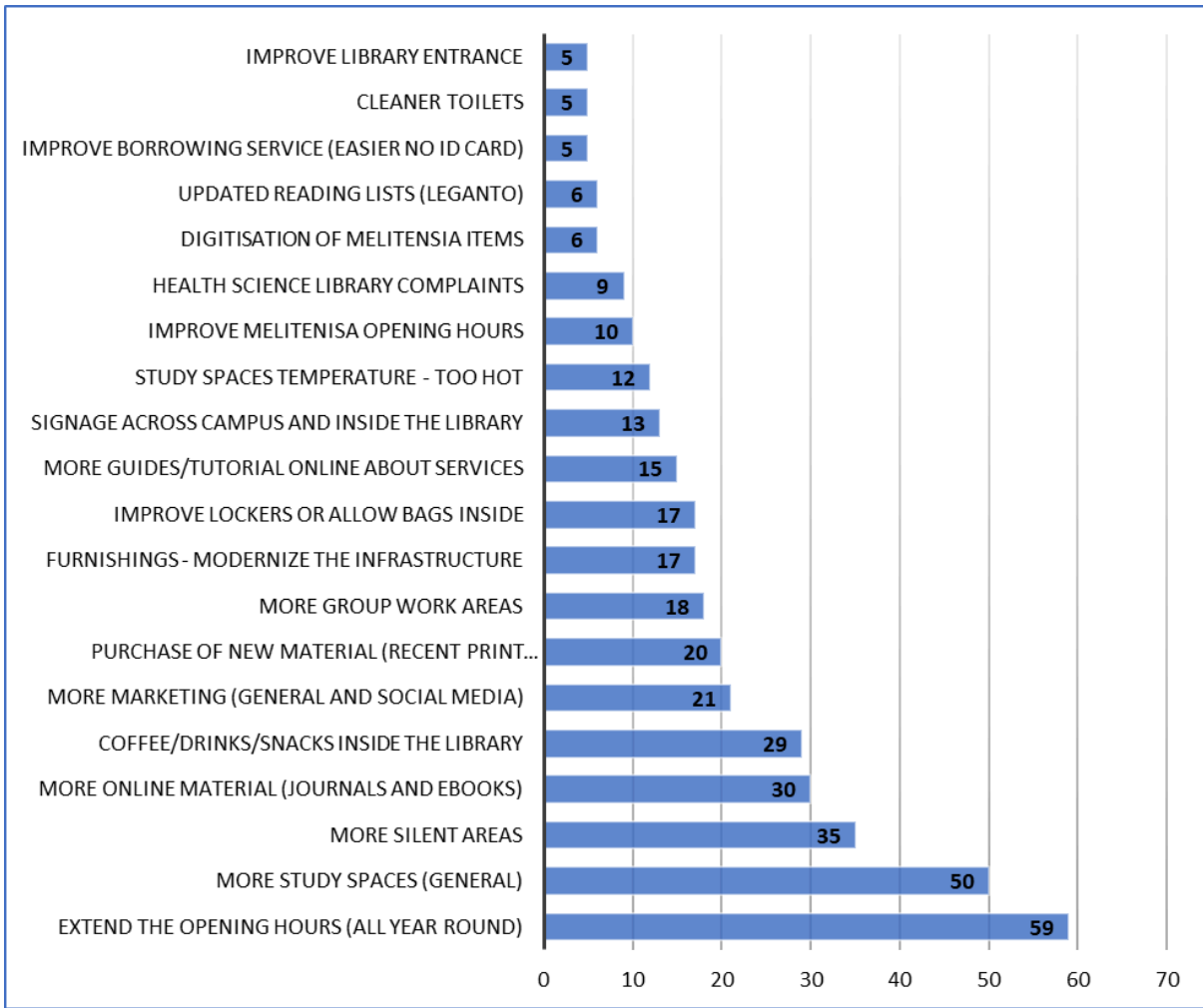
Suggestions from Patrons

Additional Resources

2A) How can the Library improve its services?

A total of 382 responses were analysed in this section.

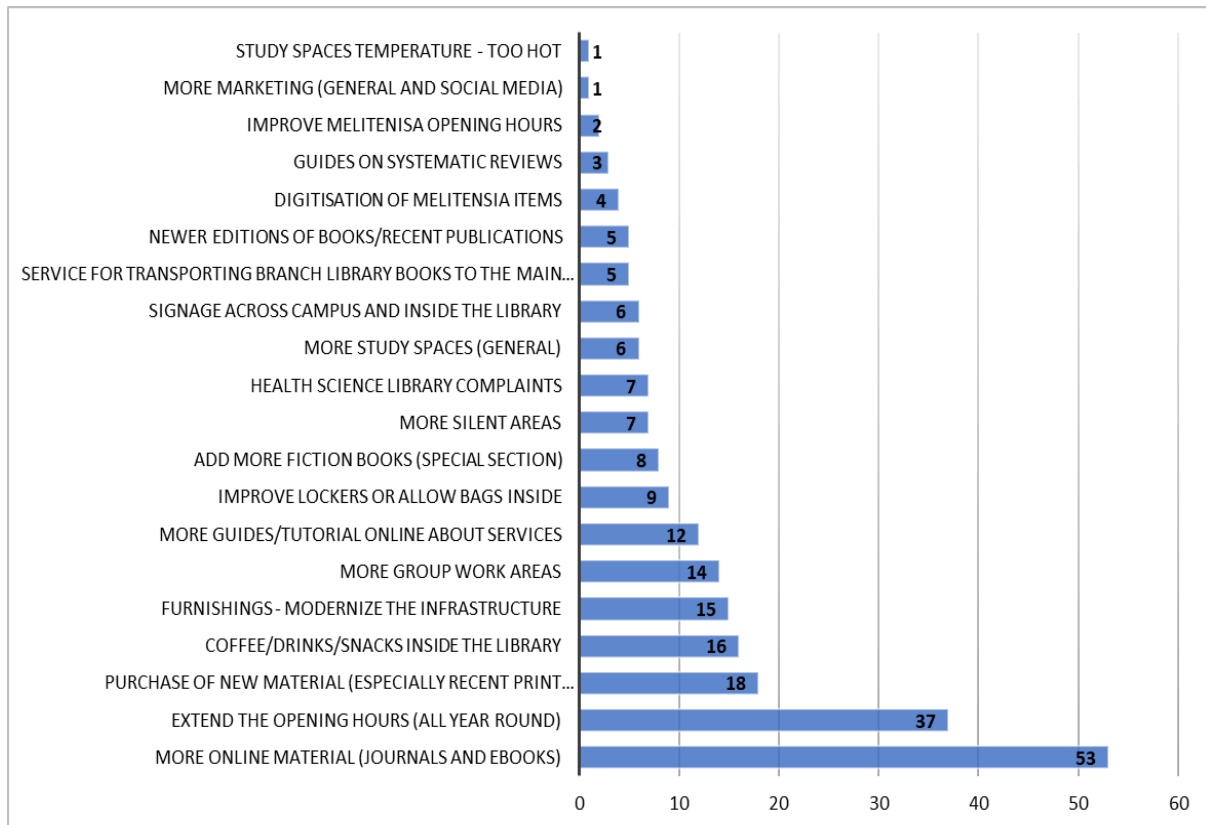
Table of most common replies (Simplified)	
Extend the opening hours (All year round)	59
More study spaces (General)	50
More silent areas	35
More online material (Journals and eBooks)	30
Coffee/drinks/snacks inside the Library	29
More marketing (General and social media)	21
Purchase of new material (Recent print publications)	20
More group work areas	18
Furnishings - Modernise the infrastructure	17
Improve lockers or allow bags inside	17
More online guides/tutorials about the services	15
Signage across campus and inside the Library	13
Study spaces temperature - Too hot	12
Improve Melitensia opening hours	10
Health Science Library complaints	9
Digitisation of Melitensia material	6
Updated reading lists (Leganto)	6
Improve borrowing service (make it easier, no ID card)	5
Cleaner toilets	5
Improve Library entrance	5



2B) What additional resources or services would you like to see at the Library?

A total of 229 responses were analysed in this section.

Table of most common replies (Simplified)	
More online material (Journals and eBooks)	53
Extend the opening hours (All year round)	37
Purchase of new material (Especially recent print publications or newest editions)	18
Coffee/drinks/snacks inside the Library	16
Furnishings - Modernise the infrastructure	15
More group work areas	14
More online guides/tutorials about the services	12
Improve lockers or allow bags inside	9
Add more fiction books (Special section)	8
More silent areas	7
Health Science Library complaints	7
More study spaces (General)	6
Signage across campus and inside the Library	6
Service for transporting branch libraries books to the Main Library	5
Newer editions of books/recent publications	5
Digitisation of Melitensia material	4
Guides on Systematic Reviews	3
Improve Melitensia opening hours	2
More marketing (General and social media)	1
Study spaces temperature - Too hot	1

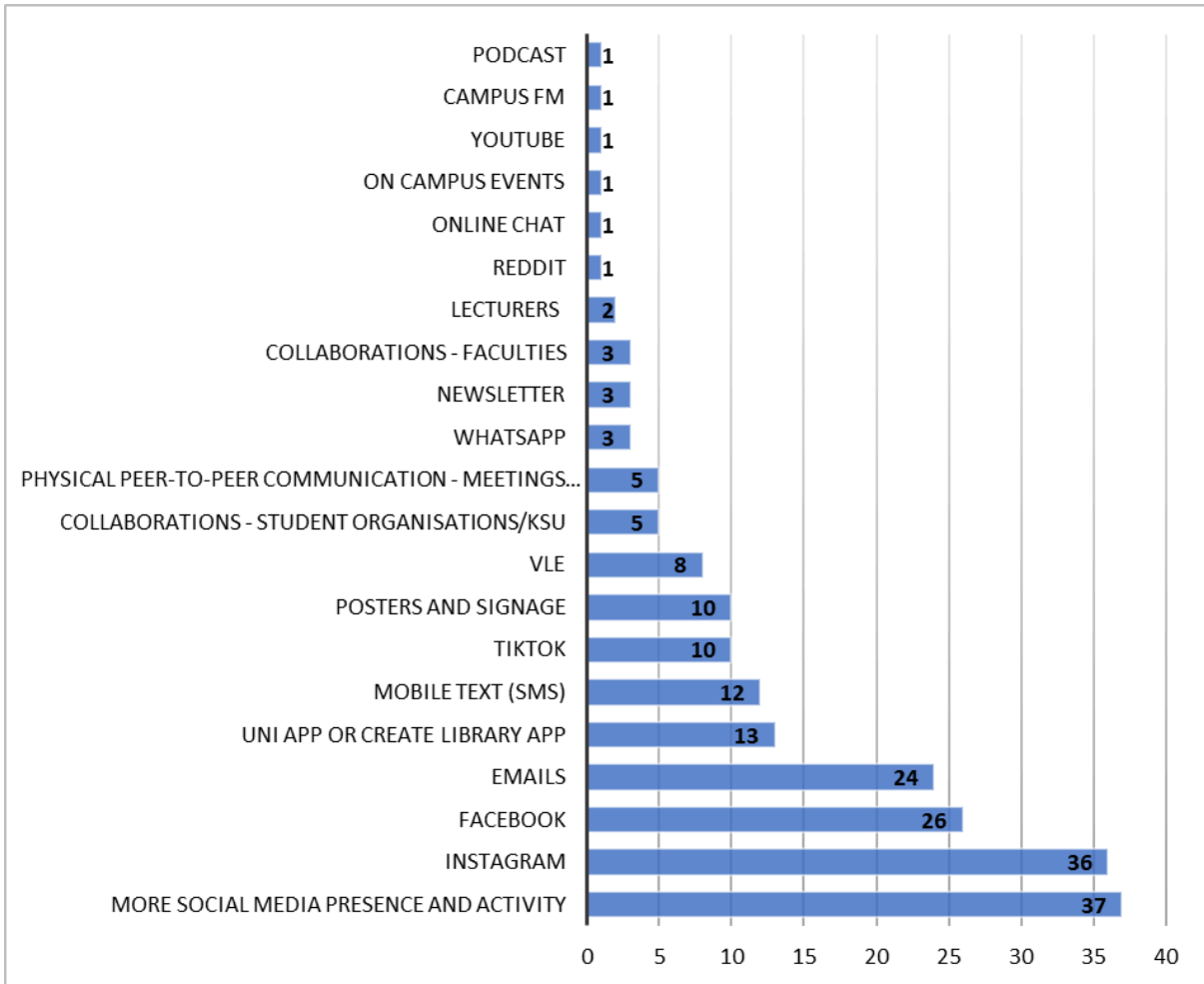


Additional Channels for Promotion

2C) What additional channels should the Library use to communicate with patrons?

A total of 203 responses were analysed in this section.

Table of most common replies (Simplified)	
More social media presence and activity	37
Instagram	36
Facebook	26
Emails	24
UM App or Create Library App	13
Mobile text (SMS)	12
TikTok	10
Posters and Signage	10
VLE	8
Collaborations - Student organisations/KSU	5
Physical Peer-to-Peer communication - Meetings with students and staff	5
WhatsApp	3
Newsletter	3
Collaborations - Faculties	3
Lecturers	2
Reddit	1
Online chat	1
Campus events	1
YouTube	1
Campus FM	1
Podcast	1

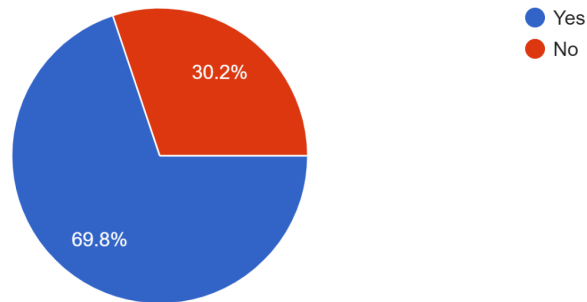


Study Spaces

Usage

3A) Do you use the Library's study spaces?

577 responses



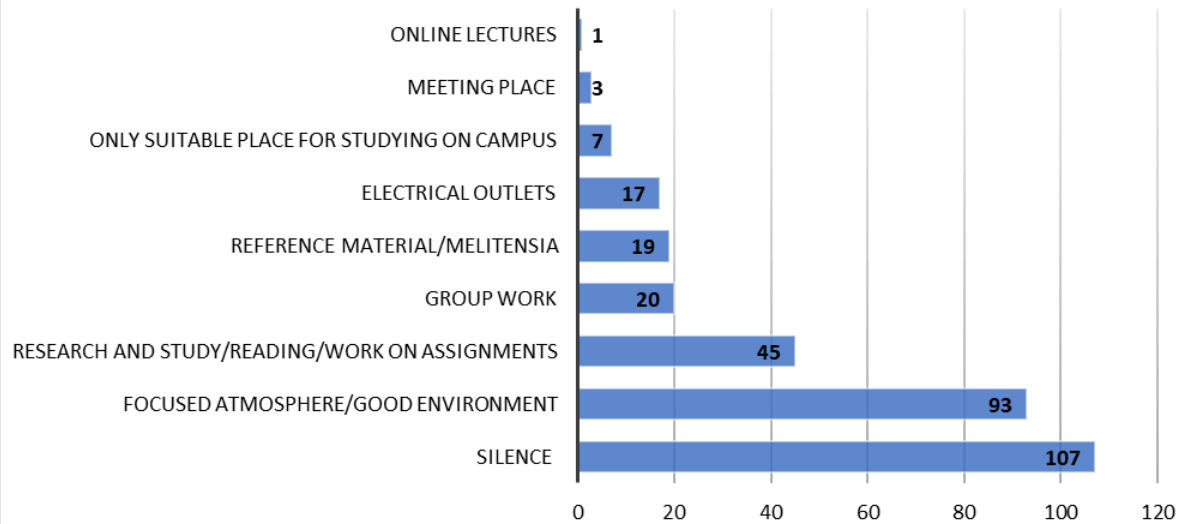
Comments

3B) Why?

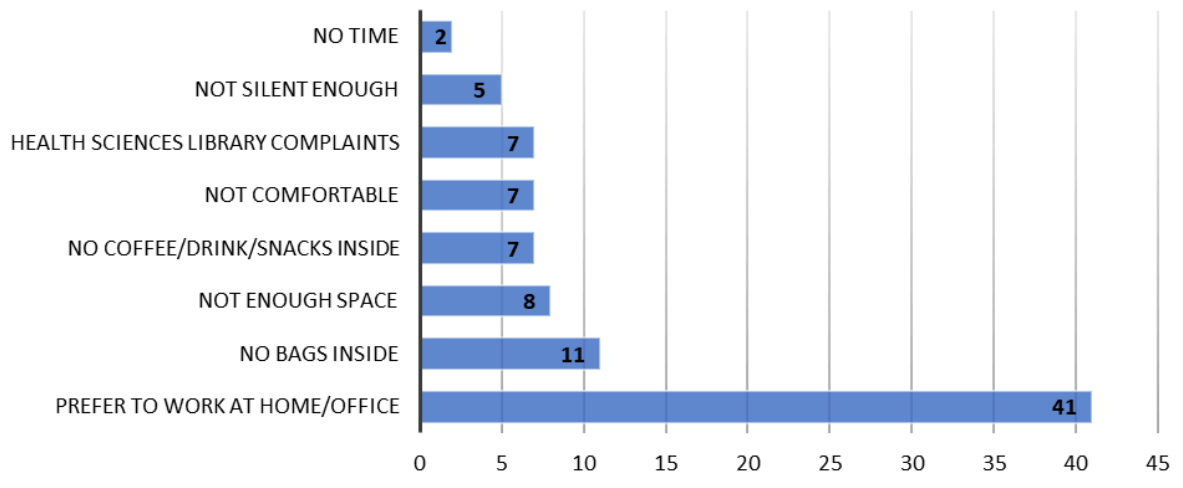
A total of 400 responses were analysed in this section.

Yes		No	
Silence	107	Prefer to work at home/office	41
Focused atmosphere/good environment	93	No bags inside	11
Research and study/reading/work on assignments	45	Not enough space	8
Group work	20	No coffee/drink/snacks inside	7
Reference material/Melitensia	19	Not comfortable	7
Electrical outlets	17	Health Sciences Library complaints	7
Only suitable place for studying on Campus	7	Not silent enough	5
Meeting place	3	No time	2
Online lectures	1		

Do you use the Library's study spaces? Yes responses



Do you use the Library's study spaces? No responses



Discussion

Awareness of Library Services

The results indicate that a significant majority of respondents know about different Library services. The only outliers are the new services that were introduced for the first time during the current academic year 2022-2023. These are the Information Literacy Workshop Series and the Discover the Archives Tours. In their responses, the patrons also emphasised that the branch libraries were not as well known as the other Library services. This can be attributed to the branch libraries servicing smaller cohorts of students. Given the data collected, more outreach and marketing is needed to ensure that current students are fully aware of all Library services, and that proper tutorials/guides and instructional videos are available.

Academics

A number of requests were made to acquire specific databases and resources, which highlights the fact that academics are unaware that they can recommend these through proper Library channels or ask the Library to purchase material for their courses/study units. The respondents also stated that material needed to be updated to include the latest publications, especially in the fields of science, technology, medicine, and rapidly changing subjects.

Library Website

Comments regarding the interface of HyDi and the Library website were also made. Most of them referred to how the interfaces could be made more user friendly and more visually appealing. In the case of HyDi, another issue that was brought up pertains to how searches are carried out and how these cannot be saved in a permanent state, as they update each time the search is accessed.

Library Furniture

With reference to furnishings and the modernisation of the infrastructure, most of the comments referred to modern desks, USB charging ports, increasing/fixing the number of computers available, fixing of electrical outlets, and improving the overall aesthetic of the Library, especially the ground floor and the Circulation Desk area. Remarks were also made about the fact that two-pin plugs (EU standards) are useless for the majority of the patrons since locally, the three-pin plugs are used. These take up space of the most commonly used electrical sockets and thus limit use for most patrons.

Library Collections

Respondents expressed the need to incorporate online audiovisual material in the Library collections. Other responses included increasing the availability of frequently used items, especially textbooks for large cohorts, and updating publications to the latest editions. Many survey participants also suggested that the Library should start buying fiction books to form a separate collection for students wishing to take a break from intense research without having to go to the public library.

Study Spaces

When it comes to study spaces, a lot of comments were about increasing space, either for group work or silent study spaces. A number of suggestions were also made about better policing around silent study spaces and better upkeep of these spaces (mentioning broken electrical outlets, leaking ceiling when raining, broken chairs/desks, etc...).

Conversely, many positive remarks about the focused and clean atmosphere provided by both the group work and silent study spaces were collected. Patrons use study spaces as a means to concentrate on their work, get rid of distractions, and destress from a hectic schedule and lectures.

Opening Hours

One of the most commonly occurring requests is to extend the Library's opening hours all year around. Since the Library, in some cases, is the only clean and quiet place which patrons can use to stay focused and study, the Library is expected to remain open longer throughout the entire year, including weekends, public holidays and recess periods.

Peer-to-Peer Communication

The most common way the patrons learn about the Library services is through in person peer-to-peer communication, either between friends and colleagues or by talking to librarians and other researchers. This is a big indicator that the Library can use "Brand Ambassadors" - academics/researchers/students as a means to promote the usage of services/resources.

The Library Newsletter

A surprising outcome from the survey is the high popularity of the Library Newsletter. This can be a result of the brief format and straight-to-the point tone of the newsletter, which is disseminated monthly via email to all UM staff and students. Since the newsletter is so renowned, additional options can be considered to disseminate it further, such as uploading a digital version online or using temporary QR Codes to spread it on Campus.

QR Codes Vs Print

As seen by the total number of collected responses, the digital responses outnumber the ones collected in print. Although most of the digital responses increased after mass online dissemination by emails, a huge number of participants opted to fill in the survey through the QR Code when collecting survey responses in person.

This requires further testing with other activities in order to determine the true efficacy of QR Codes for instructional guides and/or incorporation within the physical spaces at the Library. As a future project, the Outreach team will use QR Codes for Library guides in specific areas of the Library by linking QR Codes to the respective information on the Library Website. Furthermore, QR Code activities will be brainstormed for Freshers' Week in the form of virtual library tours for students who wish to explore the Library at their own pace.

Student Concerns

While collecting face-to-face responses, some participants inferred that such surveys are pointless because they do not believe that the Library (and in general the University) will listen to the feedback, or it will take a long time to respond. This might be something to consider going forward when it comes to gathering feedback from patrons. If the Library intends to maximise the participation of patrons in future activities, it would be advisable to create a system where feedback is incorporated in the daily operations of the Library. This can also include being more transparent with communication, such as publishing results of surveys and similar activities.

Health Sciences Library

Restoring the Health Sciences Library was a common suggestion, with most times blaming the Library as the entity responsible for the decision to close it. In fact, medical and health sciences students still expect the Library to reopen the Health Sciences Library in Mater Dei. Since the Health Sciences collection is currently being incorporated into the Main Library catalogue, transparent communication with patrons, highlighting the availability of the collection, would prevent unnecessary negative publicity.

Recommendations

Listed below are a number of recommendations by the Outreach Department to address shortcomings identified by the survey.

Marketing Plan

The implementation of a marketing plan to help promote services and improve communication would greatly improve the ability of the Outreach Department to operate more effectively. This plan could be concluded in 3 year intervals with different marketing strategies outlined for specific Library services. This would also help with assessing what works and what needs improving. Additionally, it is recommended for a member of the Outreach team to always be included in any new initiatives or new service implementation as a way to incorporate such projects within the overall marketing strategies of the Library. This would assist with better communication throughout the University platforms and offer a different perspective, which is sometimes needed when implementing a new service aimed at specific Library patrons.

Specific strategies would be outlined targeting different market segments. These would need to be further incorporated in a calendar of events to facilitate a holistic approach to the overall Library marketing goals. Priority would be given to increasing communication between the Library, patrons and UM staff and students.

Different marketing strategies targeting different market segments with goals:

- Faculty/Department/Center/Institute/School level meetings (targeting academics)
- Brand Ambassadors (Peer-to-Peer)
- Library Newsletter (general outline of services, new workshops and events, ect...)
- One-time events (increase awareness and encourage collaborations with other entities)
- Social media campaigns (using both the UM and the Library social media pages)

Direct meetings with academics in the form of departmental or faculty/centre/institutie/school meetings could be used to outline specific services for academics such as ordering of resources and promoting the use of academic centric services such as Leganto, OAR@UM, and drUM. Academics might be more inclined to ask questions or clarify certain misconceptions about how the Library works in person.

Making sure that academics know what services are offered would make it easier for them to communicate this to their students and thus improve overall communication with the Library. These meetings could be repeated for new academics within the faculty/centre/institutie/school. This could be also used to identify “Brand Ambassadors” and enlist their support in promoting certain services with their colleagues. As seen from the survey, peer-to-peer marketing is amongst the most popular options patrons utilised to learn of services offered by the Library. Using patrons who already use or are extremely satisfied with the services would effectively increase the Library's reach and marketing power amongst academics.

Even though the Library is constantly purchasing new print and electronic resources, students find that the new acquisitions either do not match resources suggested for their research, or they are unable to find material from their reading lists at the Library. This problem presumably stems from the academics not ordering new material or not checking whether the material placed on the reading lists is available at the Library. The issue can be easily mitigated by strongly encouraging the academics to use Leganto. This means that more effective marketing and promotion of this service is needed so that the Library's holdings reflect new publications and current publications used for research. Another way this could be tackled would be by accepting book recommendations by students, especially if academics in the field seem disinterested to curate their subject area or refuse to use Leganto.

The Library currently uses its own social media channels for most of its promotion and marketing. However, the results of the survey indicate that only a small portion of the respondents actually got to know about Library services through these channels. The Library should therefore use the official University of Malta social media channels to promote important notices, new services, and events open to the general public. At the same time, the Library should still operate their own Facebook and Instagram accounts as a way to promote new subscriptions and resources, webinars, and training workshops and keep an informal way for patrons to get in touch.

In order to effectively gauge the impact of the marketing plan, a similar marketing survey should be repeated after 3 years. This will make it easier to compare results with this survey (2023) and comment on any improvements or shortcomings observed.

Study Spaces

Many respondents indicated that the Library is also used as a space to relax and destress from university life. The study spaces are used to increase focus and get away from the noise on Campus. A significant number of comments called for allowing coffee and other snacks at the Library, which suggests that changing the Library regulations to accommodate these requests would encourage students to use the spaces more and create a new welcoming image for the Library. Some consideration should be taken into account when refurbishing the Library to accommodate students' needs from their perspectives, for example, adding USB charging sockets, increasing the soundproofing of spaces, better upkeep of the study spaces, more visible and easy to understand signage, more 3-pin plug sockets instead of having 2-pin plug sockets, etc...

Similarly, students repeatedly brought up the fact that the top floor silent study area is constantly bombarded with noise. This either comes from the outside (tent right in front of the Library, the Library foyer, or the Library terrace), or the patrons making phone calls and having conversations at the main staircase, entering and leaving the Melitensia department, and loudly talking in the entrance area.

The second floor could be isolated further either by installing a door or by switching the group work area on level 2 with the silent area on level 3, since this area already has a way to be closed off with a door making it more silent.

Updated Melitensia Opening Hours

Some users remarked that the Melitensia section closes for lunch, which they consider frustrating since they might need to use resources that cannot be borrowed. As the Melitensia department is a heavily used section in the Library, a staff rotation system for break time similar to how the Circulation, reading halls and Reference operate, could be adopted.

Simpler and More Effective Library Signage

Some respondents find navigating the Library confusing and overwhelming. This is an issue especially for new students who are unfamiliar with the Library premises. The current signage might not necessarily answer all questions patrons could have while visiting the Library. In order to make things clearer and easier for patrons to navigate, new signage could be introduced. These could be done using visual cues and, similarly to floor maps, clearly indicating what's on each floor and where it is located.

This could also include creating signage outside pointing to the Library. Some patrons commented that they do not know where the Library is located and thus never had an interest in visiting. Clear and visible signage around the entire Campus could help students find their way to the Library, while also serving as a reminder that the Library is available to anyone who needs a place to study.

Simplifying the Library Website Experience

A number of patrons commented that the Library website does not offer a user-friendly interface experience. Users either can't find information or the information is not easily explained. A redesign of the website could be considered, emphasising the user's point of view. Priority should be given to ensuring the users can easily find and access information on every facet of the Library.

Example: A student/researcher/academic looking for information about dissertations might not think to look at the ETD section on the Library website. The language used by professionals and librarians might not be understood by students/researchers/academics who are not familiar with the day-to-day vocabulary librarians use. A clear place to upload instructional videos also needs to be identified since there is a tendency for this type of online material to increase.

Ending on a Positive Note

Here are some positive comments collected from the survey outlining the remarkable staff working at the UM Library.

<p>The Library has made tremendous strides in meeting contemporary challenges and making available a host of digital resources. It is also proactive in providing training and in its outreach, and staff have been helpful.</p>
<p>The library does a great job as it is, and I am always impressed by the professionalism and willingness to help of its staff.</p>
<p>The Library's services are admirable.</p>
<p>Hooray for the friendly helpful librarians.</p>
<p>I would like to underline the incredible work being done by the library. Everyone is very helpful and the resources available are top notch</p>
<p>I thank the library staff for the sterling work they do. I sincerely think the library is one of the greatest assets UM has.</p>
<p>Just that library staff have always been very helpful and efficient, perhaps more consistently so than in any other area of UM.</p>
<p>It's always a pleasure to work with library staff</p>
<p>Thank you for your prompt services and replies whenever I needed assistance.</p>
<p>Staff are very sweet and I recommend the library to my friends. thanks for the opportunity.</p>
<p>Thank you for providing access to so many databases which are extremely useful for writing assignments / studying.</p>
<p>Keep it up! I am grateful for the services given by the Melitensia that supported my research.</p>
<p>Overall I'd say the library is performing very well. The digitisation programme it's undertaking is probably the biggest of its type in Malta, plus it's the only local library of any size with a decent opac.</p>
<p>I appreciate the level of outreach and feel that Library staff do a good job of keeping users informed.</p>
<p>Keep up your excellent work! I'm truly impressed by the so many changes that have taken place in the UM Library since I was an 18-year old student at my same Faculty in 1978!</p>
<p>I enjoy going to the Melitensia because it's very quiet and helps me to be productive. I enjoy sitting by the windows for natural light.</p>