

Partnership

Canadian journal of library and information practice and research

Revue canadienne de la pratique et de la recherche en bibliothéconomie et sciences de l'information

PARTNERSHIP

The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research
Revue canadienne de la pratique et de la recherche en bibliothéconomie et sciences de l'information

Walk-In Users and Their Access to Online Resources in Canadian Academic Libraries

Les membres du grand public et leur accès aux ressources en ligne dans les bibliothèques universitaires canadiennes

Pamela Carson and Krista Louise Alexander

Volume 15, Number 2, 2020

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1074627ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v15i2.5793>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

The Partnership: The Provincial and Territorial Library Associations of Canada

ISSN

1911-9593 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Carson, P. & Alexander, K. (2020). Walk-In Users and Their Access to Online Resources in Canadian Academic Libraries. *Partnership*, 15(2), 1–25.
<https://doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v15i2.5793>

Article abstract

In the past, a member of the public could access an academic library's collection simply by visiting the library in person and browsing the shelves. However, now that online resources are prevalent and represent the majority of collections budgets and current collections, public access has become more complicated. In Canadian academic libraries, licences negotiated for online resources generally allow on-site access for walk-in users; however access is not granted uniformly across libraries. The goal of this study was to understand whether members of the public are indeed able to access online resources in major Canadian university libraries, whether access to supporting tools was offered, how access is provided, and whether access is monitored or promoted. The study used an online survey that targeted librarians responsible for user services at Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) member libraries. The survey results indicated that some level of free access to digital resources was provided to walk-in users at 90% of libraries for which a survey response was received. However, limitations in methods and modes of access and availability of supporting resources, such as software and printing, varied between the institutions. The study also found that most libraries did not actively promote or monitor non-affiliated user access.

Tous droits réservés © Pamela Carson, Krista Louise Alexander, 2020



This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

Érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

PARTNERSHIP

The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research
Revue canadienne de la pratique et de la recherche en bibliothéconomie et sciences de l'information

vol. 15, no. 2 (2020)
Theory and Research (peer-reviewed)
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v15i2.579>
CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

Walk-In Users and Their Access to Online Resources in Canadian Academic Libraries

Pamela Carson
Web Services Librarian
Concordia University
pamela.carson@concordia.ca

Krista Louise Alexander
Reference & Subject Librarian
Concordia University
krista.alexander@concordia.ca

Abstract

In the past, a member of the public could access an academic library's collection simply by visiting the library in person and browsing the shelves. However, now that online resources are prevalent and represent the majority of collections budgets and current collections, public access has become more complicated. In Canadian academic libraries, licences negotiated for online resources generally allow on-site access for walk-in users; however, access is not granted uniformly across libraries. The goal of this study was to understand whether members of the public are indeed able to access online resources in major Canadian university libraries, whether access to supporting tools is offered, how access is provided, and whether access is monitored or promoted. The study used an online survey that targeted librarians responsible for user services at Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) member libraries. The survey results indicated that some level of free access to digital resources was provided to walk-in users at 90% of libraries for which a survey response was received. However, limitations in methods and modes of access and availability of supporting resources, such as software and printing, varied between the institutions. The study also found that most libraries did not actively promote or monitor non-affiliated user access.

Keywords

Walk-in users, authentication, academic library, digital resources, Canada

Introduction

Canadian university libraries hold and grant access to a vast amount of information in support of scholarship. As of 2017, Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) member libraries together held more than 100 million items in all formats (CARL, 2019). In the past two decades, the amount of electronic content available through academic libraries has increased enormously, as has the portion of collections budgets used to pay for this content. For example, in 2017-2018, Concordia University Library (2019) spent 87% of its collections budget on digital resources. For every journal the library held in print, there were six available digitally (Concordia University Library, 2018a). Concordia Library users downloaded almost 1.5 million full-text articles in 2016-2017, but there were only 88,580 initial loans of physical items from the library collection (CARL, 2018). These numbers represent a 17:1 ratio, which is similar at other Canadian university libraries (CARL, 2018, p. 24; see Table 1 for detailed statistics). Digital content is important and highly used in Canadian academic libraries, and libraries can no longer be defined solely by their physical collections.

While the vast majority of academic library users are students enrolled at the library's institution, a significant number of members of the public visit the library as well. In a one-day survey of visitors to Concordia University Library, 47 members of the public came to the library (0.88% of total visits that day). Another 302 visitors (5.63%) were either alumni, students, or employees from other schools or universities (Concordia University Library, 2018b).

The shift to digital content has complicated walk-in user access, and librarians have been aware of this issue for many years. Courtney (2001) concluded that "the shift from printed to electronic formats [...] combined with the integration of library resources with campus computer networks and the Internet poses a distinct threat to the public's access to information even onsite" (p. 478). Courtney encouraged librarians to make "conscious choices" (p. 478) about whether they offered access to unaffiliated users and warned that "others" (p. 478) may be making these choices for them.

Do Canadian Academic Libraries Have a Duty to Serve the Public?

Although the main duty of academic libraries is to serve their institutionally-affiliated users, the extent to which academic libraries serve their non-affiliated users is unclear. Lenker and Kocevar-Weidinger (2010) explained the issues around balancing the needs of the numerous parties (non-affiliated users, primary users, frontline staff, the university, local public libraries, and the profession) when providing services to unaffiliated users, and they suggested ethical pluralism, where there may be competing obligations, as a framework to use when assigning resources to meet the needs of non-affiliated users.

Although Canadian universities operate autonomously from the government, they are publicly funded (Jones, 2014). Of all university revenues in 2015-2016, 49.1% was from federal and provincial governments (Statistics Canada, 2017). Because of the nature of university funding, these non-profit organizations “are regarded as having a broader public purpose” (Jones, 2014, p. 21).

Similarities can be drawn between Canadian universities and publicly funded universities in the United States. In fact, eight CARL-member universities are also members of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU, n.d.), a number of which “use official statements to detail their commitment to serving the citizens of their particular state” (Doney, 2019, p. 1). The Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities (1999) called for more engagement between state and land-grant universities and the public in order to have a positive impact on society. The Commission recommended that “teaching, research, and extension and service functions [...] become even more sympathetically and productively involved with their communities” (p. 9) and stated that “community has many different definitions extending from the neighborhood in which the campus is located to the world” (p. 11). It also acknowledged that “engagement is not free” (p. 12).

Kaufman (2011) considered whether public universities that participate in government depository programs and receive public funding are obligated to provide access to the public by reviewing relevant North American jurisprudence. Kaufman concluded that the general public does not appear to have a right to access university library collections. Kaufman indicated that there are multiple factors and competing needs to be weighed and that, ultimately, it is up to the libraries to decide how they will serve the public.

Hang Tat Leong (2013) checked the university mission statements of 18 prestigious universities, including CARL members University of Toronto, University of British Columbia and McGill University, and found that every one had a “commitment to benefit society and the world” (p. 221), but only six of the 18 university libraries echoed this commitment in library mission statements.

Indeed, there is a strong movement in academic libraries to benefit society by changing scholarly communication to open access models and making research more available, especially given that much university research is publicly funded. The Open Education and Open Educational Resources movements are also gaining foothold. However, Shuler (2007) asked whether academic libraries are “follow[ing] their logic to its natural conclusion, the evolution towards an ‘open source university’” (p. 301) because “active debate of civic issues requires comparable public access to the digital network” (p. 301).

Most academic libraries in Canada are open to the public, and visitors can physically access collections. One notable exception is the University of Toronto’s Robarts Library, which only provides access to its primary community and, for a fee, “faculty members, staff, or graduate students from other universities” (University of Toronto Libraries, n.d.) or “community users who can demonstrate a legitimate research purpose” (Hang Tat Leong, 2013, p. 224). This policy is not without controversy, Kaufman (2011) outlined. Before the Internet Age, an on-site user generally had access to university library print

collections. However, an increasing proportion of academic libraries' collections is digital, and walk-in user access is mediated by Courtney's (2001) "others" (p. 478): institutional information technology policies and capabilities, parameters of licence agreements with content providers, and, ultimately, the choices of individual library administrations.

In Canadian academic libraries, licences negotiated for online resources generally allow on-site access for walk-in users. Licenses negotiated at the national or provincial consortia level normally contain a clause that guarantees access for walk-in users. Model licences or requirements for negotiating licence agreements from Consortia Canada (2017), Canadian Research Knowledge Network (2014), Council of Atlantic University Libraries (2015), Ontario Council of University Libraries (2016), Bureau de coopération interuniversitaire (formerly Conférence des recteurs et des principaux des universités du Québec, 2006), and the Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries (2013) all have clauses that include walk-in users with the list of authorized users. Standard licence agreements from major content providers Elsevier (n.d.), EBSCO (n.d.), ProQuest (n.d.), and JSTOR (n.d.) also list walk-in users as authorized users.

The goal of this study was to understand whether members of the public are indeed able to access online resources in major Canadian university libraries and how this access is provided.

Why CARL Libraries?

CARL libraries represent 29 out of 95, or approximately one third, of all Canadian university libraries (CARL, n.d.-a; Universities Canada, n.d.). This homogenous set of libraries is comparable in several ways. CARL policies indicate that CARL member libraries have strong collections and institutional support, their institutions undertake graduate level scholarship, and they have "sponsored research" (CARL, n.d.-b) that makes up at least 15% of the institution's operating budget (CARL, n.d.-b). The libraries are all part of universities that receive funding from the Canadian government (Canadian Association of University Business Officers, 2019). CARL libraries include all Canadian universities that ranked on the Times Higher Education (2019) list, with the exception of University of Northern British Columbia, and they represent the 25 largest Canadian universities in terms of 2018 full time undergraduate enrolment, with the exception of Wilfrid Laurier University (#22) and MacEwan University (#25) (Universities Canada, n.d.).

Literature Review

Investigations of whether the public has access to academic libraries have been completed in both the United States and England. Although only a few have been specific to electronic resources, many have touched upon this aspect of library service as a part of their exploration of academic library walk-in user service offerings. This previous research served as guidance in the creation and dissemination of the survey the authors used to assess walk-in user services at CARL libraries.

Online Information-Based Research

Barsun (2003) reviewed the provision of an extensive list of library offerings to unaffiliated users, including access to physical library space, borrowing privileges, and interlibrary loans, by using information provided on library websites and in the mission statements of 100 American Association of Research Libraries (ARL) member libraries. Additionally, Barsun looked at the level of access to databases afforded to unaffiliated users and found a significant lack of clarity. Indeed, the authors' Canadian investigation was initially meant to echo Barsun's non-survey approach; however, a preliminary scan of CARL library websites mirrored Barsun's experience and left the authors with the same lack of clarity. Barsun was able to glean that only 15 of the 100 libraries' websites indicated unaffiliated user access to proprietary databases on campus.

Weare and Stevenson (2012) completed an examination of library websites and held telephone interviews for Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis and 12 comparator American public university libraries. All 13 of the libraries examined gave external users computer access, but as in the investigations that came before, there were often restrictions on which computers could be used and time limits on access. One library charged a \$1 fee for access to library computers for a day. Despite these restrictions, external users in all 13 libraries had access to the institution's databases.

Fernandez (2013) analyzed institutional library policy documents related to “unaffiliated patrons and electronic access to library resources” (p. 5) for 61 ARL libraries. He found that 97% of the libraries provided these patrons with access to the library's electronic resources, but that 29% required authentication. Fernandez also found that 20% of the policies imposed constraints on public access through time limits and 25% of the policies imposed limits on the nature of the content these users were allowed to access.

Delving a bit deeper into the subject, Wilson et al. (2019) used information available on library websites to look at the level of public access at 12 academic libraries around the world and how that access correlated with “institutional commitments to openness” (p. 15), such as open access policies and institutional repositories. No Canadian institutions were included in the study. The study determined that there was often an incongruity between the institutional open access features (policies, repositories, publications) and their openness to the general public in terms of library access.

Doney (2019) also used library websites in her research, but she focused on unaffiliated user access at APLU libraries. Doney's main goal was to determine the level of access to physical space and borrowing opportunities for unaffiliated users at each library and to use that information to compare land-grant and non-land-grant APLU library access and privileges. Doney found that a larger proportion of non-land-grant library websites “provided some indication that unaffiliated patrons could access the library building” (p. 5). The results were similar for information about borrowing privileges: non-land-grant library websites tended to be more forthcoming with that information when compared to land-grant library websites.

Survey-Based Research

Members of the public generally have walk-in access to academic libraries in North America. Russell et al. (1992) found that out of 18 publicly funded urban American universities, only one did not grant stack access to unaffiliated users. In a 2001 survey of 814 American academic libraries investigating service to unaffiliated users, Courtney (2003) found that 96.3% of responding public institutions permitted unrestricted physical access to library collections. Courtney (2003) also found that in-library computer access to library resources was provided to unaffiliated users in 95.4% of the academic libraries that responded, with 13.6% of responding institutions requiring user authentication for computer access to library resources. Courtney (2004) had identified 128 libraries in her original survey that were using or planned to use authentication. She followed up with 97 of the 128 via survey for additional details (Courtney, 2004). Of the 38 libraries that responded to this new survey, 27 indicated that they provided unaffiliated users with access to authenticated computers. In 11 cases, the unaffiliated user was logged on by a staff member; in eight cases, unaffiliated users could use guest or generic login credentials; in nine cases, unaffiliated users were given temporary login credentials; and in one case, there was “a single password for consortium users” (Courtney, 2004, p. 270).

Weber and Lawrence (2010) completed another cross-country survey in order to determine the state of authentication and guest access at ARL libraries. It should be noted that only five of the 61 responding institutions were Canadian: University of Alberta, University of British Columbia, University of Guelph, McGill University, and the University of Toronto (all CARL libraries). This contrasts with the 21 Canadian academic library respondents to the study described in this article. Weber and Lawrence’s survey was fourteen questions long and was administered online. Results showed that in 87% of responding libraries, guest users had access to licensed electronic resources post-authentication. Licensed electronic resource access dropped to 67% for users on library computers that did not require authentication.

Shires (2006) completed an online survey limited to academic libraries in Florida. Shires’s results showed that 91.7% of the 36 responding libraries gave in-library database access to their public users, with one library reportedly providing the public with off-campus access to their subscription databases. Shires’s survey also included a question about the frequency with which these libraries promoted their offerings to the public. Only 13.9% of the 36 responding institutions indicated that they “routinely” (p. 320) engaged in such promotion, compared with 86.1% of institutions that used this kind of promotion “sometimes,” “rarely” or “never” (p. 320).

Other surveys limited to specific states within the U.S.A. followed in both North Carolina and Tennessee. Busbee et al. (2014) surveyed the libraries of the nine publicly funded academic institutions in Tennessee using a nine-question online survey instrument. Their most pertinent finding was that one of the nine responding libraries “allowed open access to their electronic resources” (p. 5), but the other eight required authentication. Ellern et al. (2015) focused on authentication methods on public computers in 113 North Carolina academic libraries. Using a 36-question online survey,

they determined that 66% of the responding libraries required computer authentication, with the majority of those (59%) using “centralized or networked authentication” (p. 116) over “paper sign-in” (p. 116), guest accounts, or other authentication methods.

A comparable British study was completed in the South West region of England. Holmes et al. (2012) used a survey to assess electronic resource access by walk-in users at 34 participating Higher Education and Further Education institutions in the geographic area. Interestingly, over 80% of the 34 responding institutions did “not provide walk-in access to electronic resources” (p. 9). The two obstacles to providing access identified by the largest percentage of responding institutions were “IT restrictions” (p. 11) and licensing issues. Of the six institutions that did provide access, five had some form of limitation placed on this access, such as limitations on content or time of day that access was provided. With respect to the method through which walk-in users gained access to the library’s electronic resources, three main types of access emerged. Libraries provided either specific computers open to anyone or specific computers that required authentication, or walk-in users were able to use any computer in the library but needed temporary login credentials. None of the libraries surveyed did much to promote their walk-in user services.

Although this topic has been researched extensively in the United States, the published literature does not show any investigations of this type specifically in Canada. The authors saw such a study as a valuable undertaking because it would provide Canadian institutions with the opportunity to see how the services they offer their walk-in users compare to what is offered at other institutions across the country.

Methodology

In summer 2017, The researchers created an 18-question survey using LimeSurvey software. The survey included an English version and a French version (see Appendix 2 for the English version). Although the authors did not view the survey as potentially harmful to participants and the relevant information was often available freely on library websites, the researchers sought ethics approval to ensure compliance with university research policy. After receiving ethics approval, the researchers created a list of potential contacts at the 29 CARL university libraries by scanning each library’s website and determining which librarian’s job title appeared to be most closely related to user access. The researchers sent this targeted sample an email that included the purpose of the research, a note about anonymity, information about informed consent and withdrawing from the study, a URL to the survey, a deadline (late summer 2017), and contact information for the two researchers. The welcome page for the survey defined a walk-in user as a member of the general public, not associated or affiliated with the respondent’s institution or any other academic institution (i.e., not an alumnus/alumna, “Friend of the Library,” visiting scholar, or student from another institution with special borrowing privileges). Once the deadline had passed, the researchers followed up via phone or email with the nonresponding institutions (17 of 29) in an attempt to elicit a higher response rate. In cases where the original contact was found to be on leave or was not the right person to respond to a survey on this subject, the researchers contacted a different individual at the institution. This follow up resulted in an additional

nine responses and a final response rate of 72% (21 out of 29 possible respondents). Survey results were kept anonymous. The results were downloaded from LimeSurvey and are discussed in detail below. After survey distribution, the authors realized that the content of question 10 could be sensitive in nature and therefore decided to exclude it from analysis and discussion in this article.

The researchers had scanned library websites before sending the survey and therefore assumed that the libraries *would* offer walk-in users access to electronic resources but that the method of implementation would vary among the institutions. For the most part, the researchers' assumptions proved correct after analysis of the survey data.

Results

Only those survey respondents who clicked the submit button on the final page of the survey were included in the results discussed below; surveys that were only partially filled out were not included in the analysis. 21 surveys were completed in full, out of a potential 29 CARL university libraries, for a response rate of 72%. Of the 21 respondents, 19 indicated that their libraries granted walk-in users some level of access to their digital resources.

Policy Documents

Figure 1 shows that a large proportion (15 of 21) of respondents indicated that their libraries had a policy document that contained information about access to computers and online resources for walk-in users. Six respondents reported that they did not have a policy document of this type. Of the 15 respondents that indicated their libraries had policies, 11 indicated that their policy document did not place restrictions on the type of content walk-in users were able to access online. The remaining four indicated that their policy document did place restrictions on the type of content walk-in users were able to access online. Restrictions at those four institutions varied.

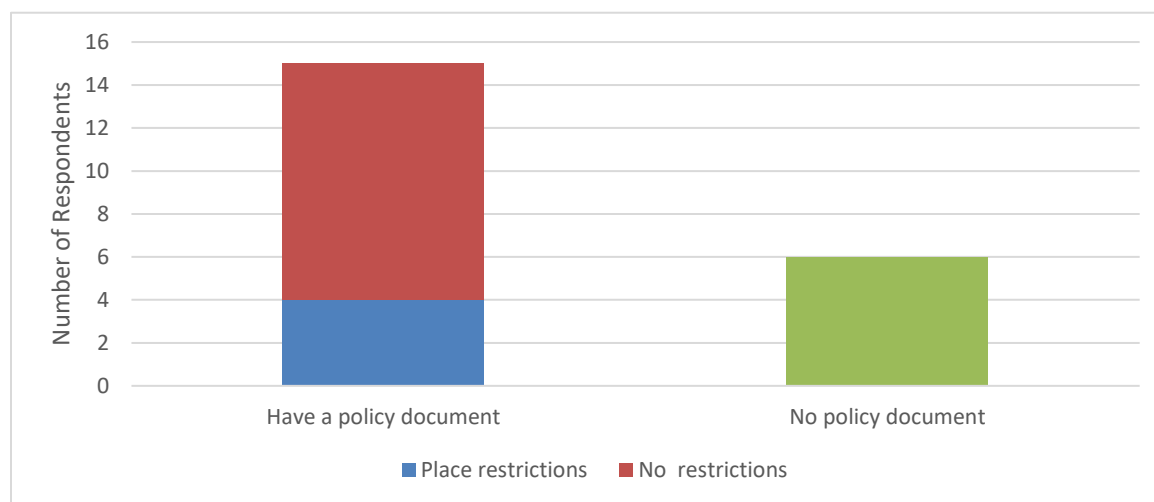


Figure 1. Number of libraries with and without a policy document for walk-in users.

Gaining Access

The CARL libraries that participated in the survey had varying requirements for gaining access to library computers (see Table 1). For the question that addressed access requirements, survey respondents were allowed to select more than one response, if applicable, and many did. More than half (11) required walk-in users to provide a piece of identification, one third (seven) required walk-in users to fill out a form, one respondent indicated that staff filled out a form on the patron's behalf, and four required walk-in users to sign a user agreement or agree to one electronically. None of the respondents indicated that their library required walk-in users to pay a fee. Nine of the respondents indicated that their library did not ask for any of the access requirements that were provided as options in the survey.

Table 1

Walk-in User Access Requirements at Respondent Libraries

<u>Access requirement</u>	<u>Number of respondents</u>
Provide piece of identification	11
Fill out a form	7
Staff fill out form on patron's behalf	1
Sign or agree electronically to a user agreement	4
Pay a fee	0
None of the above	9

Note: responses to this question were not mutually exclusive: survey respondents could select more than one access requirement if applicable.

The methods libraries used to give computer access to walk-in users also varied (see Figure 2). Three libraries used guest accounts offered by central university IT, eight used guest accounts offered by the library, one used a common walk-in user login credential, and three offered specific workstations with no login required. One respondent indicated that their library provided login information on computer monitors. Another library offered both central university IT guest accounts and specific workstations with no logins required. Another library offered both library guest accounts and specific workstations with no logins required. Two libraries provided walk-in user access to any library computer with no login required. In one case, the access method was unclear.

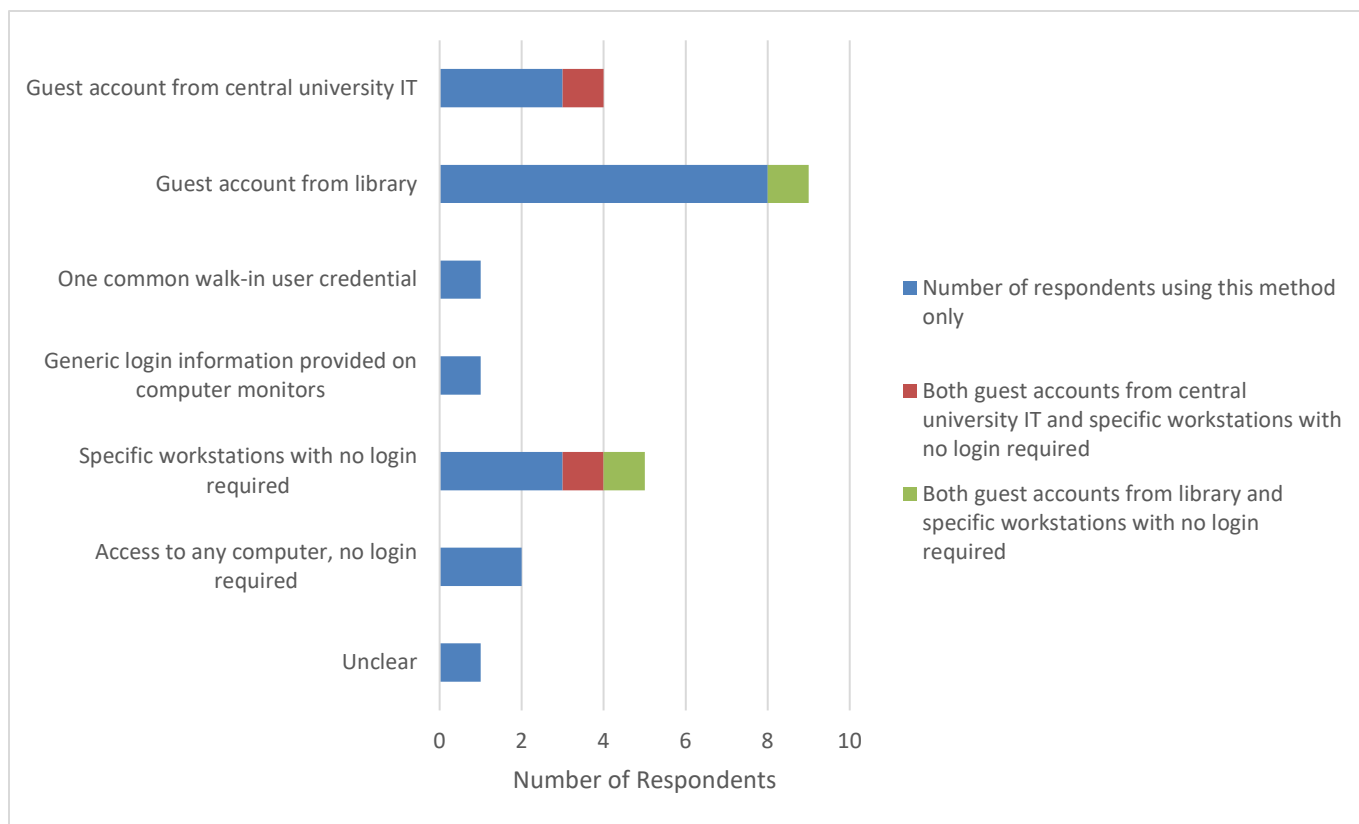


Figure 2. Methods of walk-in user access at responding institutions.

Of the nine respondents who chose “None of the above” for the access requirements that were provided as options in the survey (see Table 1), five indicated that their library provided access via either any computer with no login required or specific workstations with no login required, one provided access via one common walk-in user credential, one provided access via generic login information provided on computer monitors, one provided access via both guest accounts from central university IT and through specific workstations with no login required, and in one case the method was unclear.

Available Resources

An overwhelming majority of respondents (17 of 21) indicated that their library subscribed to online resources with licences that allowed for access to walk-in users. The remaining four respondents indicated that they were “not sure.” The authors believe that 17 is an underestimate, given that academic libraries generally subscribe to Elsevier, EBSCO, ProQuest, and JSTOR products, which allow for walk-in users in their standard license agreements (EBSCO, n.d.; Elsevier, n.d.; JSTOR, n.d.; ProQuest, n.d.). Access to electronic resources (beyond the library’s catalogue), internet, software, and printing/photocopying facilities varied by institution and showed greater restrictions for computers that did not require a login (see Figure 3). Seven respondents indicated that walk-in users could gain access to their library’s subscription resources through institutional Wi-Fi.

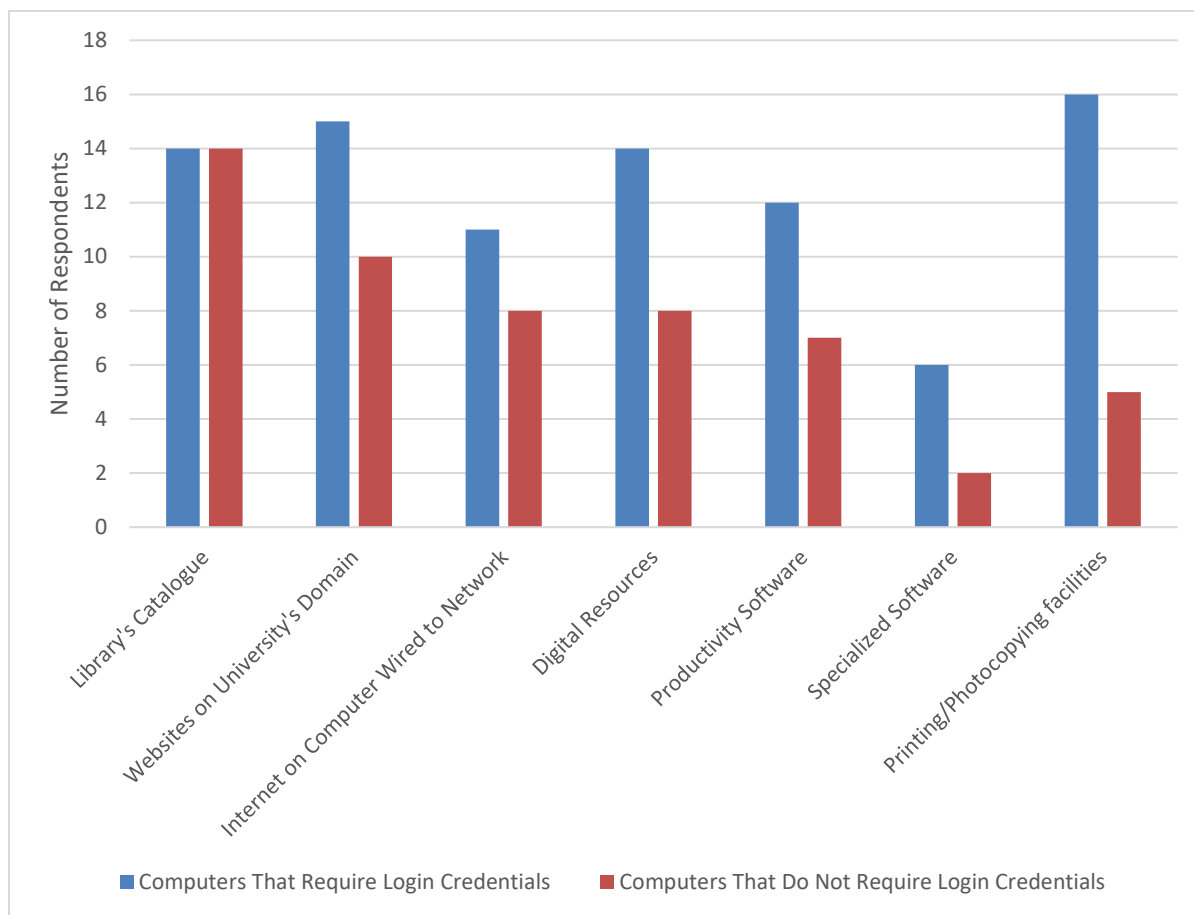


Figure 3. Resource access for walk-in users at responding institutions.

Restrictions

Nine respondents indicated that walk-in users were restricted to using specific computers in the library, while three indicated that walk-in users were restricted to accessing library resources during a specific time of day (during opening/business hours or service hours). Most of the libraries did not place restrictions on the amount of time walk-in users had to use a computer at one time: 16 provided unlimited access or access that was only limited by library opening/closing hours. Two libraries indicated that although there were time restrictions or access was meant to be short term, time restrictions were not enforced. Time restrictions varied for the other two respondents. One library had both a one-hour and a one-day time limit, depending on the user type. The other reported a four-hours-per-day time limit. One respondent did not answer this question.

When asked how long walk-in user guest accounts were valid, half of the respondents (10 of 21) stated a restriction of either 24 hours, one day, or until the end of the day/midnight. In one case, it depended on whether the walk-in user was provided with a community (one hour) or researcher (one day) account. Two libraries had no limits on how long guest accounts were valid. Of the remaining respondents, six indicated that

their library either did not have guest accounts or that this question was not applicable, one respondent was not sure, and one provided no response.

Monitoring

Four respondents indicated that their library monitored the number of walk-in users. Although respondents were asked to elaborate on how this monitoring was done, they did not provide much information. A single respondent indicated that the library kept forms. In two cases, the libraries merely kept track of the number of logins or walk-in user forms provided. In one case, the respondent indicated that they kept track of users that required a guest pass but did not elaborate on how this was done.

Promotion

One third of respondents (seven of 21) indicated that their library made efforts to promote walk-in user access either to online subscribed resources or computing facilities (see Table 2). Of those seven institutions, six used website promotion. However, one of these six respondents indicated that “only access to computers is detailed on website, not access to the online resources,” and another clarified that the library merely provided information and that they did not consider this promotion. Other promotional methods included outreach (two respondents) and a print brochure/pamphlet (one respondent).

Table 2

Promotional Methods Used by Responding Institutions

<u>Promotional Methods Used</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
Website	6
Outreach	2
Print brochure/pamphlet	1

Discussion

Although the majority of survey respondents (15 of 21) indicated that their library had a policy document with information about walk-in users' access to computers and online resources, the authors had expected this proportion to be even higher. The authors recognize, however, that some of the respondents may not have been aware of such a policy, even if one did exist at their institution at the time. Each of the 15 respondents who stated they had a policy document containing this kind of information also provided a link to the pertinent online information. At 11 of the 15 libraries with policies, respondents indicated that their policy did not place restrictions on the kind of content walk-in users were able to access online. In hindsight, a more important follow-up question would have been to ask whether access was restricted, regardless of whether the policy indicated restrictions. Technology and licences could restrict walk-in user access based on the type of computer login, so whether the policy clearly states a restriction is less relevant without that second piece of information. Nevertheless, if

policy did in fact align with practice at these institutions, the authors find it encouraging that more than two thirds of the libraries with policies did not restrict the kind of resources walk-in users could access, thus giving these users the freedom to explore the e-resources they need. This practice aligns with the Canadian Federation of Library Associations' (2015) declaration that "libraries are a key institution in Canada for rendering expressive content accessible and affordable to all" (para. 5).

The survey showed mixed results in terms of the kind of information a walk-in user was required to provide in order to obtain access to library computers. Over half of the respondents indicated that walk-in users at their library were required to provide a piece of identification. Additionally, the survey results showed that over one third of the institutions required walk-in users to fill out a form or had library staff fill out a form on a walk-in user's behalf. The survey did not ask for details about the kind of information asked for on that form or an indication of the length of time those forms are kept; this is an important area for future research in order to provide more context to the results found in this survey. The authors were impressed that none of the responding libraries indicated that walk-in users were required to pay a fee in order to access library computers.

The methods libraries used to give computer access to walk-in users also varied. In most cases, access to library computers was controlled in house, by the library. The authors found it interesting that only one library used a common walk-in user login credential, as this method seemed to be a relatively simple way to handle walk-in user logins.

Authentication and access control are part of providing access to electronic resources in academic libraries, and a variety of systems and rules were in place at the CARL libraries surveyed. Authentication to access library resources is complex and often complicated for users, requiring web proxy servers, IP authentication and virtual private networks (VPNs), and institution-specific usernames and gateways. It is also highly complex for institutions, likely requiring ongoing coordination between institutional IT departments and the library to implement highly granular access control. The multitude of user groups and licence agreements for resources adds to the complexity of authentication and access control. The blueprints to these systems are not readily available on the web for obvious security reasons, but having access to research on this topic would benefit the library community.

In every case except for access to the library's catalogue, walk-in user access to different resources, software, and printing/photocopying was greater on computers that required login credentials than on computers that did not require login credentials. With respect to digital resource access in particular, the results of this study echo those obtained by Weber and Lawrence's (2010) survey of ARL libraries. Weber and Lawrence found that in 87% of responding libraries, guest users had access to licensed electronic resources post-authentication, compared to only 67% of responding libraries that gave users access via library computers that did not require authentication (Weber & Lawrence, 2010). The values were different in this study: in 66% of responding libraries, guest users had access to digital resources on computers requiring login; in

38% of responding libraries, guest users had access on computers that did not require login. Despite this difference, both studies indicated a significant drop in access when using computers that did not require login: 20% in Weber and Lawrence's (2010) study and 28% in this survey.

The survey results indicate that CARL university libraries are making strong efforts to ensure access to their online resources and information for walk-in users. Restricting users to specific computers in the library is one measure that almost half of the libraries had in place. This may be done for any number of reasons; one key reason may be to ensure that walk-in users do not prevent affiliated users from gaining access to computers. This certainly makes sense, especially when computer workstations can be scarce during busy times throughout an academic term. Restrictions on time of day for walk-in user access were limited (three of 21 respondents), and the authors viewed these restrictions to be reasonable, considering that walk-in users may only be able to gain access during service hours when staff are present. Similarly, very few of the respondents indicated that their libraries placed or enforced restrictions on the amount of time walk-in users had to use a computer. However, when asked how long walk-in user guest accounts were valid, only two of the 21 respondents indicated that there were no limits placed on how long guest accounts were valid. Although there were only a few restrictions on gaining access to online resources, maintaining access over time was not as straightforward, and this could be viewed as one barrier to walk-in user access at academic libraries across Canada.

CARL has not reported data on the number of walk-in users visiting libraries (see CARL, 2018) and only four of the survey respondents indicated that they monitored the number of walk-in users. There may also be benefits to monitoring the number of walk-in users accessing library collections. If Concordia University Library (2018b) is representative of CARL libraries, then only one percent of visitors are walk-in users. Monitoring the number of walk-in users would help university library administrators decide whether they have the capacity to accommodate such users. If so, perhaps they would feel more comfortable explicitly promoting this service.

33% of the respondents reported that their library promoted walk-in user access to either online subscribed resources or computing facilities. Although higher than the 13.9% reported by Shires (2006) in his survey of institutions in Florida, this value still seemed quite low to the authors. The most common method of promotion, by far, was through a website, although one responding institution made the distinction of merely having information available on their website about walk-in user access, as compared to actively promoting it. Other methods being used for promotion included outreach and a print brochure/pamphlet. The Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities (1999) made a call for universities to improve their publicity efforts so that community members would know what was available to them, and the commission made this one aspect of "a seven-part test of engagement" (p. 11). The mission statements at 18 prestigious universities in Hang Tat Leong's (2013) study point to the importance of academic institutions benefiting society. Marketing public access to library collections is one potential way to show how this mission is being achieved. One possible reason for the lack of promotion indicated by this survey could be a conscious

decision to ensure that the needs of the institution's primary users base are being met ahead of the needs of the public. Without further investigation, however, this question remains unanswered and serves as a potential area for future study.

A lack of policy documents at some institutions combined with lack of promotion regarding walk-in user access could contribute to library staff being unaware that this service exists. If guest account procedures are not available on the library's website and there is no relevant policy, are staff using internal documentation to find out how this service works, and is this documentation up to date? In fact, four out of 21 survey respondents were "not sure" whether their library subscribed to online resources that permitted walk-in user access. This may indicate a lack of awareness about the standard permitted uses outlined in most vendor licences. Library staff should be familiar with the terms of service and licence agreements for library resources and be able to answer users' questions about the permitted uses for subscribed resources in their library.

Limitations

Although efforts were made to ensure a strong response rate for this survey, responses were not received from all 29 CARL university libraries surveyed. In order to encourage an improved response rate, the authors completed follow-up phone calls and emails at various times throughout the eight-month period following the initial survey deadline. This means that the survey results are not reflective of a single point in time, but rather a nine-month period over which each library's walk-in user access may have changed or been in flux.

Additionally, the results were not verified with information provided on library websites or within policy documents, nor by the experiences of actual walk-in users. The authors recognize that the individual who filled out the survey at each institution may have provided incomplete or inaccurate information based on their personal knowledge of their library's policies and procedures for walk-in user access to online resources.

Directions for Future Study

When analyzing the survey results, the authors identified various areas for future follow-up investigations in order to understand the context and reason behind certain limitations on, or methods used to provide, walk-in user access to electronic resources. These include:

- Whether the type of online content walk-in users may access is restricted in practice, regardless of whether such a restriction is stated outright in an institutional policy document;
- The potentially competing interests of maintaining both computer network security and the privacy of patrons as well as the privacy implications of requiring authentication or identification in order to access library resources; and

- Identifying the characteristics of walk-in users and why they use academic libraries.

It would also be interesting to study how walk-in user access to electronic resources changes over time. Along with the ways that changes in focus and ideals affect walk-in user access to online resources, constant evolution in technology could result in changes to a library's approach to this topic. Additionally, different types of libraries within one institution (e.g., medical school library, business school library) may take different approaches based on the kind of electronic content they provide, so an investigation that differentiates between these may lend an interesting perspective to the topic.

Finally, investigating the websites of the institutions that did not respond to this survey would allow the authors to gain additional information and enable them to make the results representative of institutions across Canada, as opposed to only the subset of institutions that did respond.

Conclusions

Although 90% of this survey's respondents stated that their library provided walk-in users with some level of access to online resources, and in all cases, walk-in users were not being charged a fee for this access, limitations in methods, modes of access, and availability of supporting resources such as software and printing varied between the responding institutions. The study also found that most libraries did not actively promote or monitor non-affiliated user access.

As academic library collections move away from print and towards purchasing increasingly convenient and space-wise online resources for their primary users, it will become important to consider the effects such a move may have on the public's access to the resources purchased by these publicly funded Canadian institutions. Ensuring that the public continues to be able to access academic library collections requires the ongoing coordination of IT departments in charge of authentication and access, collections departments in charge of negotiating licences, library administrators in charge of setting priorities and policies, and public services librarians and staff in charge of matching end users with services.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our editor and peer reviewers for their careful reading of our article and their well-considered comments and suggestions. We would also like to thank our Concordia University Library colleagues Susie Breier (for her valuable feedback and ideas on unaffiliated users' access to electronic resources and how it might influence patron-driven acquisitions), Michelle Lake (for reviewing and providing valuable feedback on earlier versions of this manuscript), and Katharine Hall (for her wise advice). We are thankful to Anne Le-Huu Pineault and Maxime Claveau for French translation.

References

- Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. (n.d.). [Our members](#). Retrieved August 13, 2019.
- Barsun, R. (2003). [Library web pages and policies toward "outsiders": Is the information there?](#) *Public Services Quarterly*, 1(4), 11-27.
- Busbee, M., Busch, H., & Nance, J. (2014). [Non-affiliated users' access in Tennessee academic libraries](#). *Southeastern Librarian*, 62(1), 3-9.
- Canadian Association of Research Libraries. (n.d.-a). [Members](#). Retrieved September 4, 2019.
- Canadian Association of Research Libraries. (n.d.-b). [Membership requirements](#). Retrieved September 10, 2019.
- Canadian Association of Research Libraries. (2018, October). [CARL statistics 2016-2017](#).
- Canadian Association of Research Libraries. (2019). [Canadian Association of Research Libraries 2018 annual report](#).
- Canadian Association of University Business Officers. (2019). [Financial information of universities and colleges: 2017-2018](#).
- Canadian Federation of Library Associations. (2015). [Statement on intellectual freedom and libraries](#).
- Canadian Research Knowledge Network. (2014). [Model license](#).
- Concordia University Library. (2018a). [2016-17 annual report](#).
- Concordia University Library. (2018b). [Visitor survey: Report of results](#).
- Concordia University Library. (2019). [Concordia University Library 2017-18 annual report](#).
- Conférence des recteurs et des principaux des universités du Québec. (2006). [List of deal-breaker clauses, along with recommended clauses, for collective purchase agreements of electronic documentary products or of collective access licenses to such products](#).
- Consortia Canada. (2017). [License agreement for electronic products](#).
- Council of Atlantic University Libraries. (2015, March 4). [Checklist for negotiating license agreements](#).
- Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries. (2013). [Model license](#).

- Courtney, N. (2001). [Barbarians at the gates: A half-century of unaffiliated users in academic libraries](#). *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 27(6), 473-480.
- Courtney, N. (2003). [Unaffiliated users' access to academic libraries: A survey](#). *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 29(1), 3-7.
- Courtney, N. (2004). [Authentication and library public access computers: A call for discussion](#). *College & Research Libraries News*, 65(5), 269-277.
- Doney, J. (2019). [Library services for unaffiliated patrons at Association of Public and Land-grant Universities \(APLU\)](#). *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 45(5), 1-11.
- EBSCO. (n.d.). [EBSCO license agreement](#). Retrieved August 8, 2019.
- Ellern, G. D., Hitch, R., & Stoffan, M. A. (2015). [User authentication in the public areas of academic libraries in North Carolina](#). *Information Technology & Libraries*, 34(2), 103-132.
- Elsevier. (n.d.). [Elsevier subscription agreement](#). Retrieved August 13, 2019.
- Fernandez, P. (2013). [Examining electronic resource access policies for unaffiliated patrons at ARL libraries](#). *Practical Academic Librarianship*, 3(1), 1-14.
- Hang Tat Leong, J. (2013). [Community engagement – building bridges between university and community by academic libraries in the 21st century](#). *Libri*, 63(3), 220-231.
- Holmes, C., Cole, G., Collins, I., Foster, K., Boyd, D., Mackay, E., & Chelin, J. (2012). [Audit of walk-in access for members of the public to online resources at higher education and further education libraries in the South West of England](#). University of the West of England, Bristol.
- Jones, G. A. (2014). An introduction to higher education in Canada. In K. M. Joshi & S. Paivandi (Eds.), *Higher education across nations* (Vol. 1, pp. 1-38). B. R. Publishing.
- JSTOR. (n.d.). [5 things you may not know about JSTOR](#). Retrieved August 8, 2019.
- Kaufman, A. (2011). [A different question of open access: Is there a public access right to academic libraries in the United States and Canada?](#) *Law Library Journal*, 103(3), 379-393.
- Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities. (1999). [Returning to our roots: The engaged institution](#). National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, Office of Public Affairs.

- Lenker, M. & Kocevar-Weidinger, E. (2010). [Nonaffiliated users in academic libraries: Using W.D. Ross's ethical pluralism to make sense of tough questions](#). *College & Research Libraries*, 71(5), 421-434.
- Ontario Council of University Libraries. (2016, March). [OCUL model licenses](#).
- ProQuest. (n.d.). [Terms and conditions](#). Retrieved August 8, 2019.
- Russell, R. E., Robison, C. L., Prather, J. E., & Carlson, C. E. (1992). External user access to academic libraries in urban/metropolitan areas. In G. B. McCabe (Ed.), *Academic libraries in urban and metropolitan areas: A management handbook* (pp. 27-32). Greenwood Press.
- Shires, J. M. (2006). [A library of one's own: A survey of public access in Florida academic libraries](#). *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, 45(4), 316-326.
- Shuler, J. A. (2007). [The civic value of academic libraries and the open source university](#). *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 33(2), 301-303.
- Statistics Canada. (2017, July 13). [Financial information of universities and degree-granting colleges, 2015/2016](#). *The Daily*.
- Times Higher Education. (2019). [World university rankings 2019](#).
- Universities Canada. (n.d.). [2018 full-time and part-time fall enrolment at Canadian universities](#). Retrieved September 4, 2019.
- University of Toronto Libraries. (n.d.). [Robarts Library stack access \(floors 9-13\)](#). Retrieved August 8, 2019.
- Weare, W. H., Jr., & Stevenson, M. (2012). [Circulation policies for external users: A comparative study of public urban research institutions](#). *Journal of Access Services*, 9(3), 111-133.
- Weber, L., & Lawrence, P. (2010). [Authentication and access: Accommodating public users in an academic world](#). *Information Technology and Libraries*, 29(3), 128-140.
- Wilson, K., Neylon, C., Montgomery, L. & Huang, C.-K. (2019). [Access to academic libraries: An indicator of openness?](#) *Information Research*, 24(1).

Appendix 1. List of Participating Libraries

- Brock University
- Concordia University (note: this was not filled out by either author of this paper)
- McGill University
- McMaster University
- Simon Fraser University
- Université de Sherbrooke
- Université Laval
- University of Alberta
- University of Calgary
- University of Guelph
- University of Manitoba
- University of New Brunswick
- University of Ottawa
- University of Regina
- University of Saskatchewan
- University of Toronto
- University of Victoria
- University of Waterloo
- University of Windsor
- Western University
- York University

Appendix 2. English Survey Instrument

English survey instrument

- Q1 - What is the name of your institution?
- Q2 - Do you have a policy document that contains information about access to computers and online resources (e.g., databases or ebooks, etc.) for walk-in users? If yes, please provide a link to that policy document (where possible), in the comments box.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
- Q3 - Does your policy document place restrictions on the type of content (e.g., no personal email access) walk-in users are able to access online? If yes, please explain the nature of those restrictions in the comments box.
 - No
 - Yes
 - Not applicable
- Q4 - In order to gain access to library computers, walk-in users must:
 - Provide a piece of identification
 - Fill out a form
 - Pay a fee - If so, please indicate the fee that is charged and what period of time that fee covers, in the box to the right.
 - Sign a user agreement
 - None of the above
 - Not applicable
 - Other - please explain in the box to the right
 - Not sure
- Q5 - What methods do you use to give walk-in users access to library computers?

- Guest accounts offered by central university IT
 - Guest accounts offered by the Library
 - One common walk-in user login credential
 - Specific workstations with no login required
 - None - walk-in users are not able to access library computers
 - Other - please explain in the box to the right
 - Not sure
- Q6 - Does your library subscribe to online resources with licences that allow for access to walk-in users?
 - No
 - Yes
 - Not sure
- Q7 - Which of the following resources are walk-in users able to access or use in the library, on library computers that require login credentials:
 - Library's catalogue
 - Websites on the university's domain (e.g., library.universityname.ca and universityname.ca)
 - Internet on a computer wired to the network
 - Digital resources (EBooks/EJournals/Subscription databases): Please expand in the box to the right if limitation noted
 - Productivity software (Microsoft Word, PowerPoint as examples)
 - Specialized software (EndNote, SPSS as examples)
 - Printing/photocopying facilities
 - Not applicable
 - Comments
- Q8 - Which of the following resources are walk-in users able to access or use in the library, on computers that DO NOT require login credentials:

- Library's catalogue
 - Websites on the university's domain (e.g., library.universityname.ca and universityname.ca)
 - Internet on a computer wired to the network
 - Digital resources (EBooks/EJournals/Subscription databases): Please expand in the box to the right if limitations noted
 - Productivity software (Microsoft Word, PowerPoint as examples)
 - Specialized software (EndNote, SPSS as examples)
 - Printing/photocopying facilities
 - Not applicable
 - Comments
- Q9 - If walk-in users at your library can get access to the University's wireless network, can these walk-in users also access the library's online subscribed resources through the University's wireless network?
 - No
 - Yes
 - Not applicable
 - Not sure
 - Q10¹ - Are walk-in users able to access digital resources (EBooks/ EJournals/ Subscription databases) from off campus? Please expand in the comments box if there are limitations.
 - No
 - Yes
 - Not sure

¹ After survey distribution, the authors realized that the content of question ten could be sensitive in nature, and therefore decided to exclude it from analysis and discussion in this article.

- Q11 - Are walk-in users restricted to using only specific computers in the library? Please elaborate in the comments box below.
 - No
 - Yes
 - Not applicable
- Q12 - Are walk-in users restricted to accessing library resources during a specific time of day? If yes, please elaborate in the comments box.
 - No
 - Yes
 - Not applicable
- Q13 - How long is a walk-in user able to use the computer at one time?
- Q14 - How long is the walk-in user's guest account valid?
- Q15 - Do you monitor the number of walk-in users you have? If yes, please elaborate on how you monitor this service in the comments box.
 - No
 - Yes
 - Not sure
- Q16 - If walk-in users have access to online subscribed resources or computing facilities, do you promote this?
 - No
 - Yes
 - Not sure
- Q17 - If yes, how do you promote these services?
 - Website
 - Outreach
 - Print brochure/pamphlet
 - Digital advertising

- Other - please elaborate in the comment box to the right
- Q18 - May we contact you by phone or email to follow up on questions in this survey? If yes, please provide your phone number or email address in the comments box.
 - No
 - Yes