

Academic Library as Place: Users and Uses

Steve Hiller

University of Washington Libraries

Lynne Porat

University of Haifa Library

8th Northumbria International Conference on Performance
Measurement in Libraries and Information Services

Florence, Italy 19 August 2009

Academic Research Library Use Trends

- On-site use indicators are down (in North America)
 - Library collections
 - Library services such as reference
- Remote use indicators are up
 - Information resource access & delivery
 - Service delivery
- Library entrance counts remain stable

Questions

- Who is coming to the physical library and what are they doing there?
- Is library as place still important to the academic community?

Potential Data Sources on Library as Place

- **Surveys and statistics**
 - Entrance/gate counts
 - General user surveys
 - **In-Library use survey**
 - Reference/instruction stats
 - Collections use stats
 - Photocopies/prints stats
 - Facility data (seats, carpet, noise levels, lighting)
- **Qualitative information**
 - Focus groups
 - Interviews
 - Usability/wayfinding
 - Observation
 - User centered design
 - Comments/complaints

Reasons for Running In-Library Use Survey

Washington

- Correlate w/user demographics
- Activities in the library
- Importance and satisfaction with services
- New or improved services wanted by users
- Comments
- Use trends over time
- Corroborate other data

Haifa

- Map user activities
- Services used
- Sections of library visited
- Input on current and future library services (new wing under construction)
- Comments & suggestions about library resources and services
- Baseline data

Improve library services & contributions to user success!

University of Washington Seattle, Washington USA



Comprehensive research university

- 27,000 undergraduate students
- 12,000 graduate and professional students (80 doctoral programs)
- 4,000 research & teaching faculty
- Strong in science & health sciences
- \$1.1 billion in sponsored research
- 16th in ARWU world rankings

Large library system

- \$40 million annual budget (2008)
- 15 libraries (as of 2008)
 - 3 large and 12 smaller libraries
- 4.3 million visits (2008)

University of Haifa

Haifa, Israel



Comprehensive university

- 10,000 undergraduate students
- 6,500 graduate and professional students (24 doctoral programs)
- 1,200 research & teaching faculty

Strong in humanities & social sciences

- \$.013 billion in sponsored research

One central library

- \$4.7 million budget
- Known for high quality user services
- Large English language collection

Library Assessment at Universities of Washington and Haifa

Washington

- Large scale user surveys every 3 years since 1992
- In-Library Use surveys every 3 years beginning 2002
- Focus groups/interviews
- Observation (guided and non-obtrusive)
- Usability/wayfinding
- Usage statistics/data mining
- Balanced scorecard (2009-)

<http://www.lib.washington.edu/assessment>

Haifa

- LibQUAL+® (2009-)
- Focus groups/interviews
- In-Library Use survey (2008-)
- Focus groups/interviews
- Usability/Wayfinding
- Usage statistics/data mining
- Reference feedback mini-survey

In-Library Use Survey

- One page survey handed out to users as they enter library during a specified two hour time block. Users complete and return survey as they exit library.
- 2008 Survey questions
 - What did you do in this library today
 - How often do you use this library
 - How important are these services to you
 - How would you rate the library on services/environment
 - Demographics (group, academic program)
 - Specific locations visited within the library (large libraries)

Survey Distribution

Washington

- 3 two hour sampling slots during a 4 week period in May 2008 at all 15 libraries
- Additional 2 sampling sessions at 12 smaller libraries
- 57% response rate
- Survey forms, results, and charts available at:

<http://www.lib.washington.edu/assessment/>

Haifa

- 10 two hour sampling slots during a 2 week period in July 2008
- 62% response rate
- Survey form, results and charts available in Hebrew on Library Assessment site at:
- <http://lib.haifa.ac.il/assessment/>

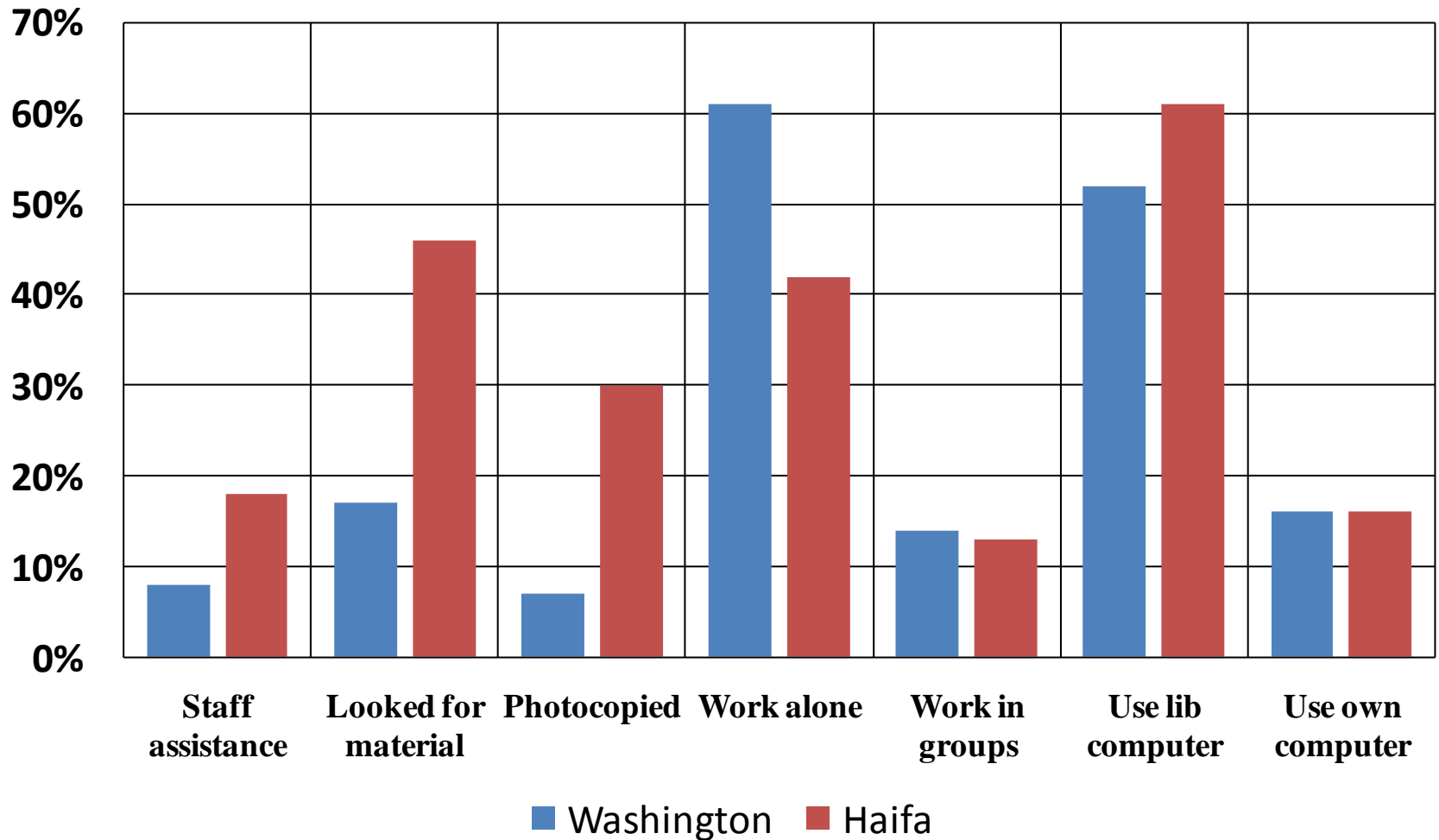
Number of Respondents and Group Composition

	Washington (3 sessions in common)		Haifa	
Undergraduates	2210	69%	418	68%
Graduate students	640	20%	139	22%
Faculty – Staff	166	5%	28	5%
Non-affiliated	154	5%	19	3%
Did not state/other	26	1%	18	3%
Total # respondents	3196		622	

Student Respondents by Academic Program Areas

	Undergraduates		Graduate students	
	Washington n=2210	Haifa n=418	Washington n=640	Haifa n=139
Arts-Humanities	14%	36%	21%	34%
Social Sciences	26%	32%	19%	32%
Science-Engineering	27%	2%	14%	0%
Health Sciences	5%	11%	26%	4%
Interdisciplinary/other/ none given	28%	19%	20%	30%

What Did You Do In the Library Today?

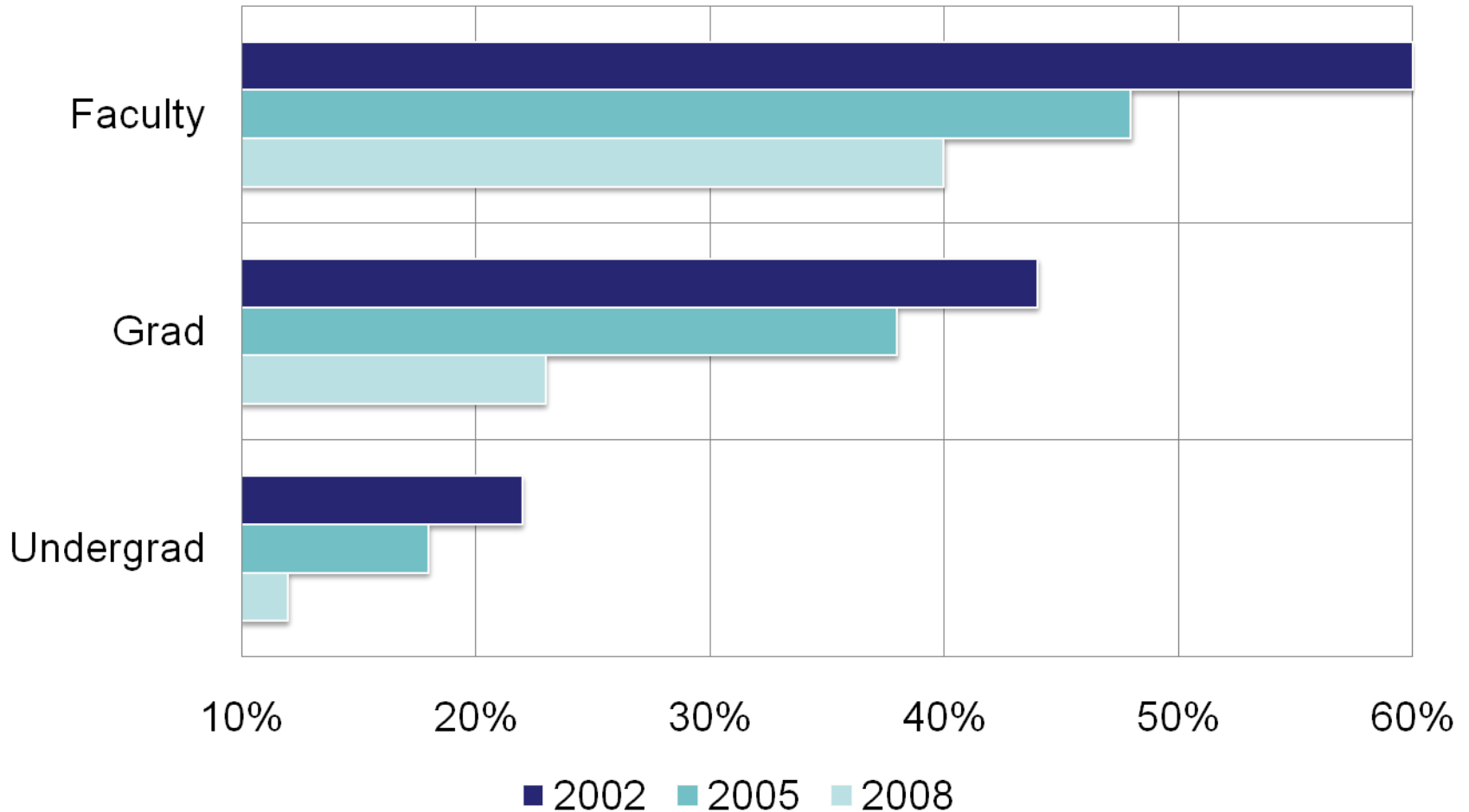


Does Use Vary by Academic Program?

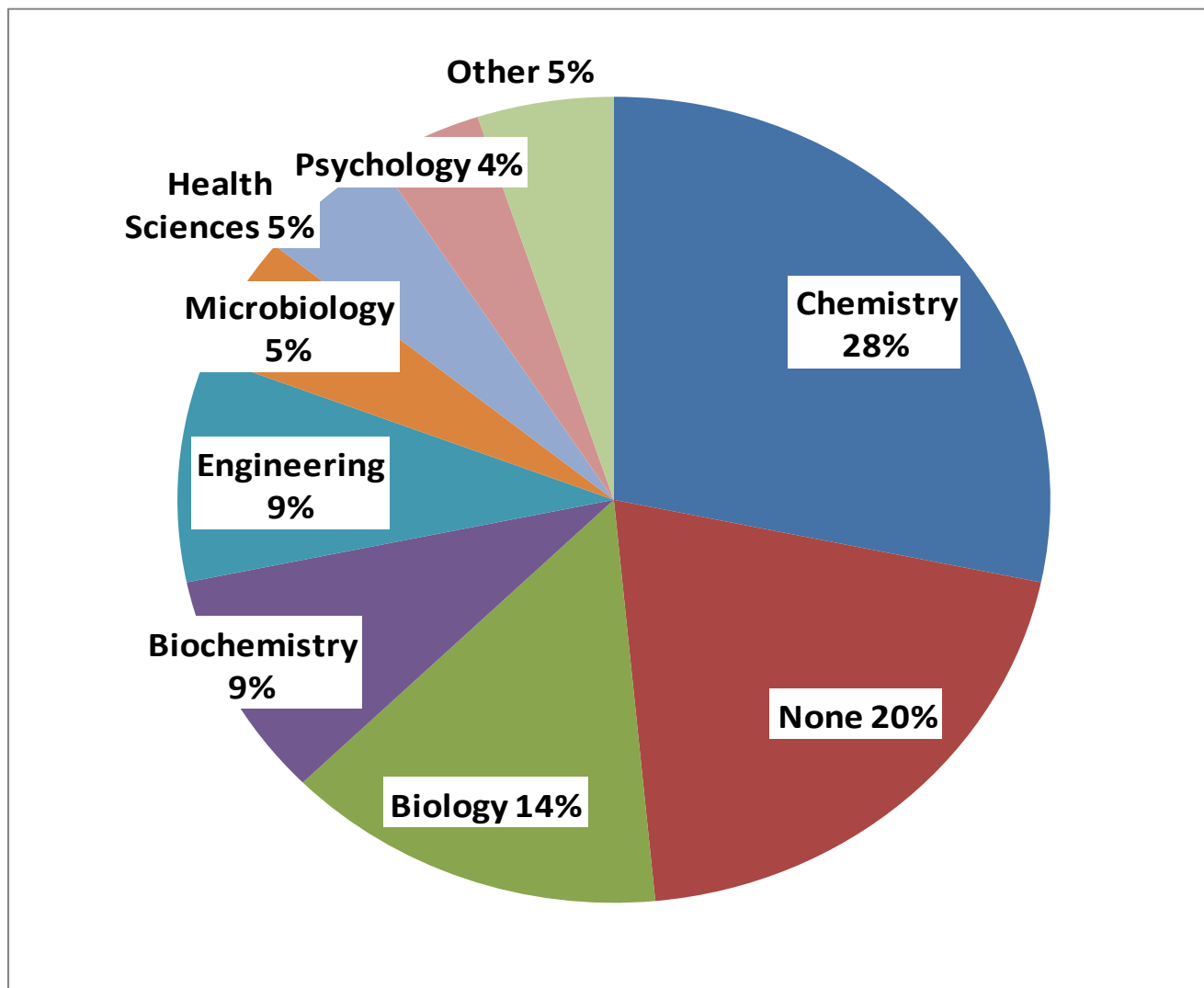
	Washington Undergraduates			Haifa Undergraduates	
	Humanities	Social Sciences	Sciences	Humanities	Social Sciences
Ask for assistance	8%	7%	6%	21%	18%
Look for material	17%	15%	10%	54%	35%
Use library computer	62%	62%	60%	63%	60%
Work alone	69%	68%	72%	48%	44%
Work in groups	5%	10%	17%	9%	20%

Compare Groups Over Time

UW Look for Material 2002-08

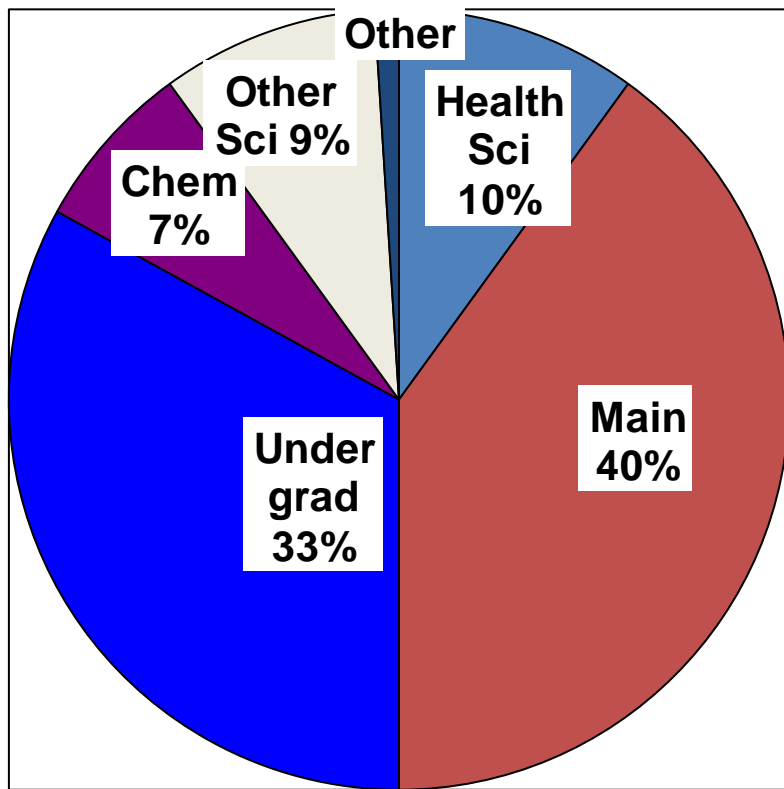


UW Chemistry Library Undergraduate Users by Major

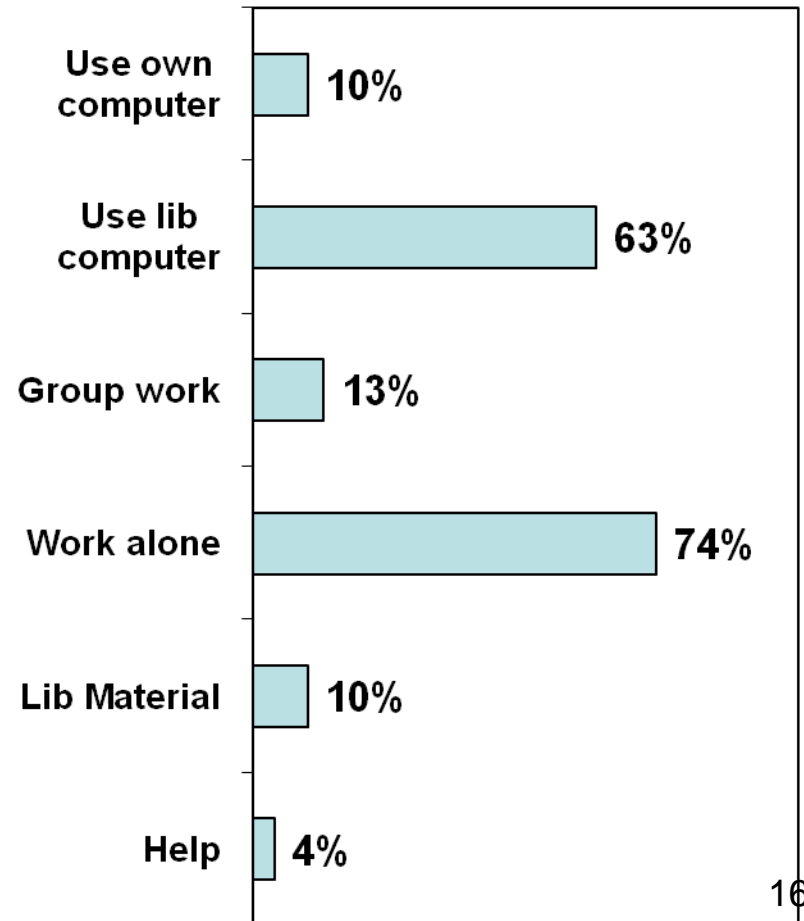


Drilling Down by Discipline: UW Biology Undergrads

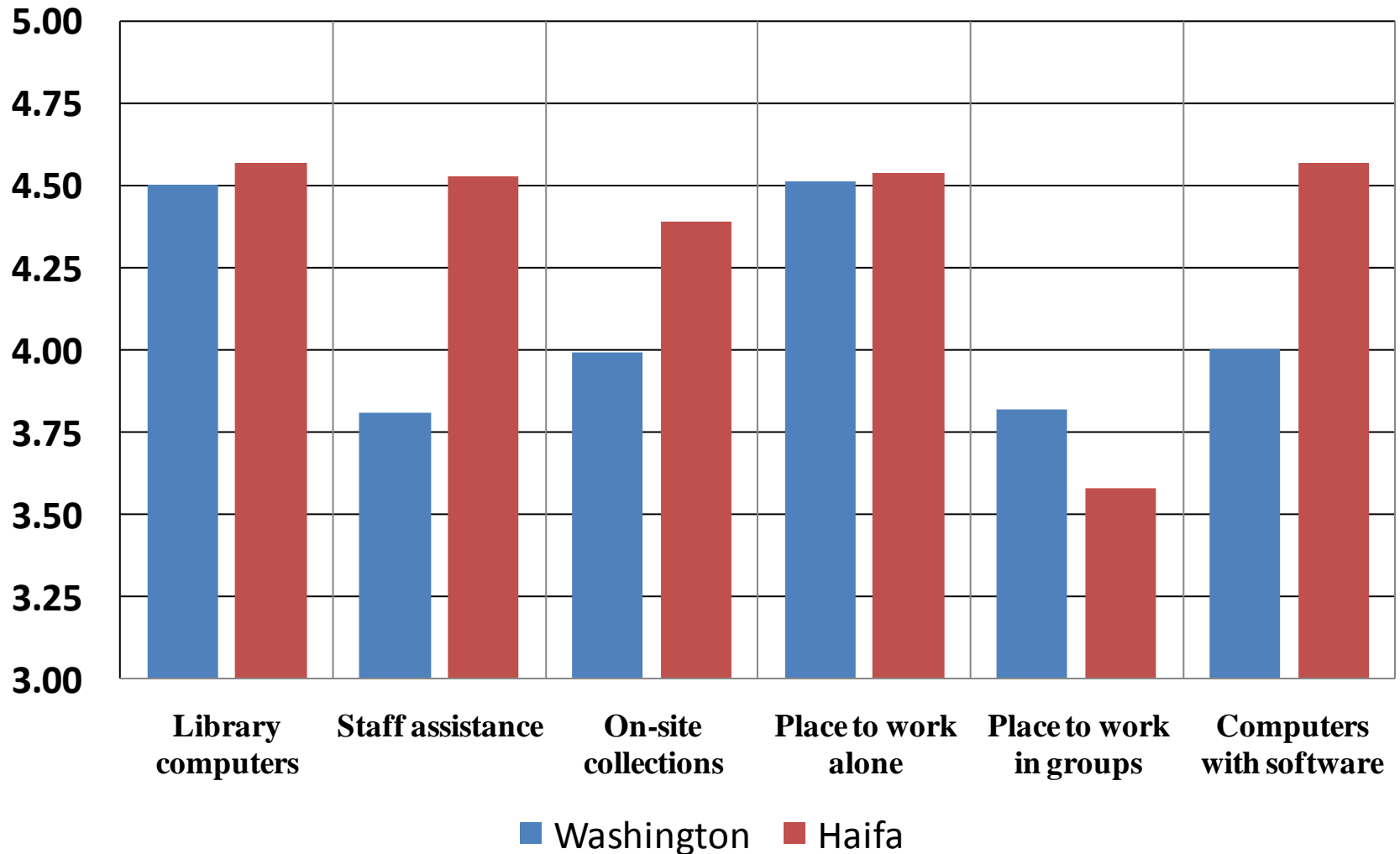
Libraries Used by Biology Undergrads (n=122)



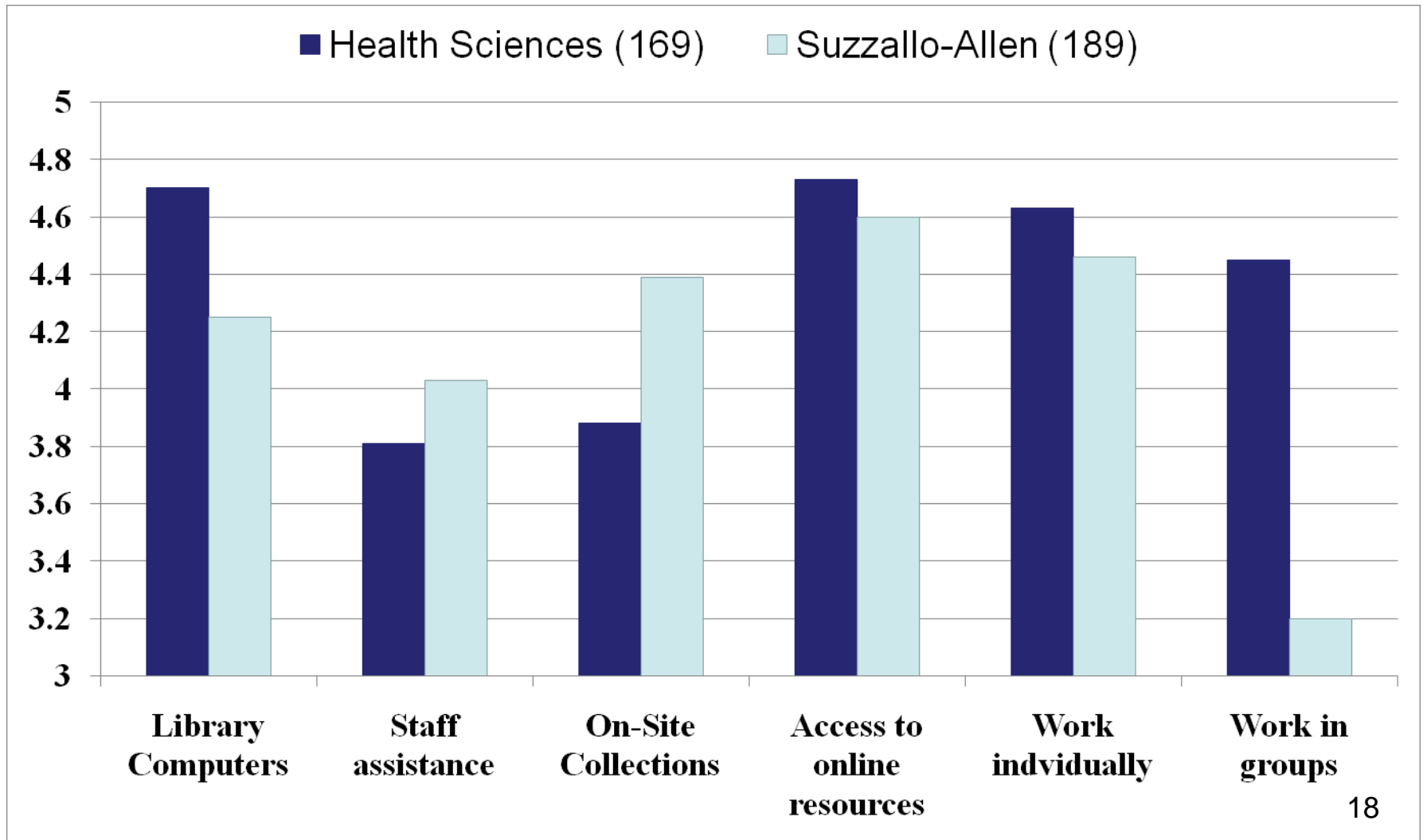
What Biology Undergrads Did in the Library



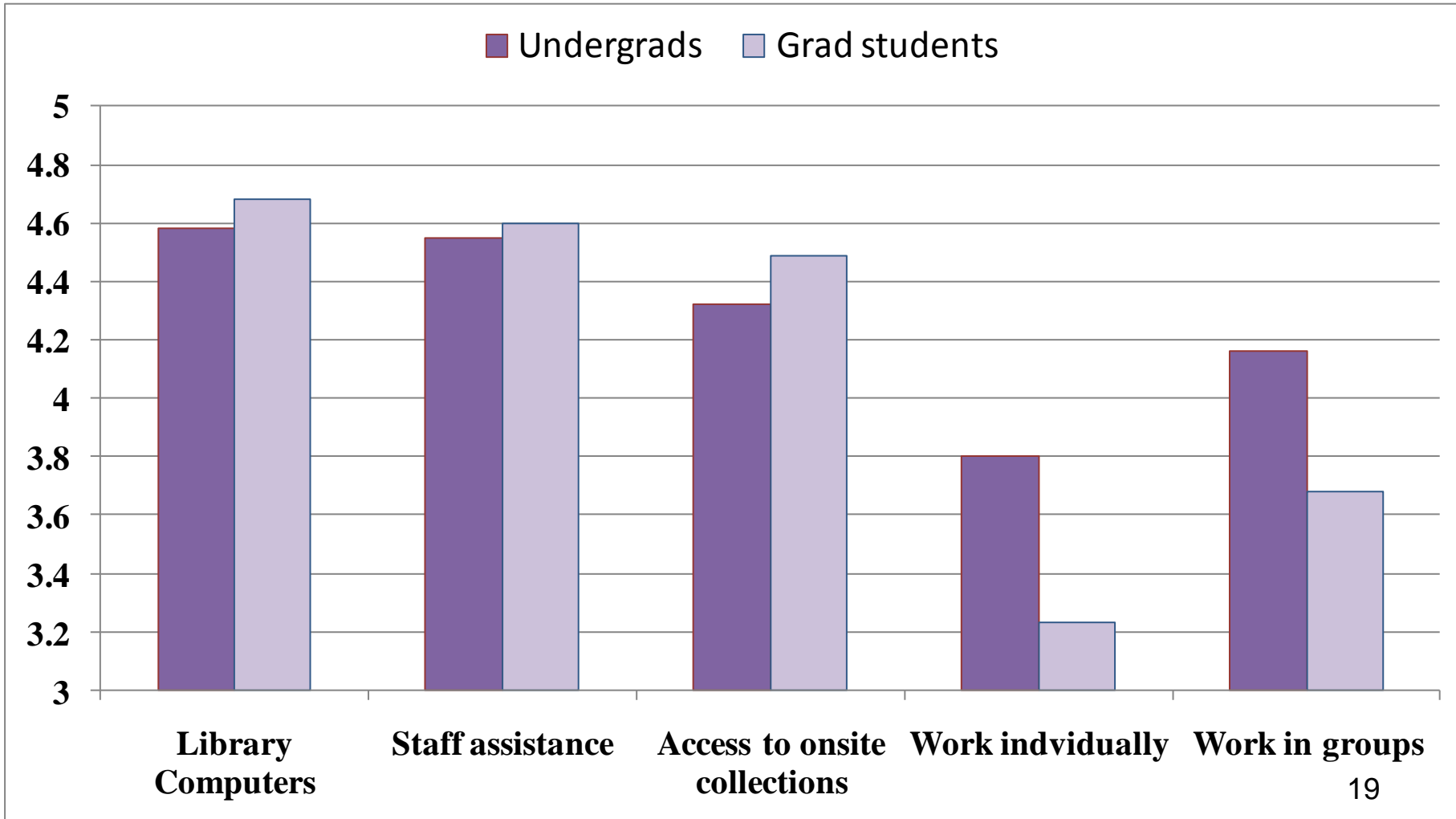
How Important Are The Following Services? Scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (very important)



Compare Libraries: Importance of On-Site Services for Grad Students in Two Large UW Libraries

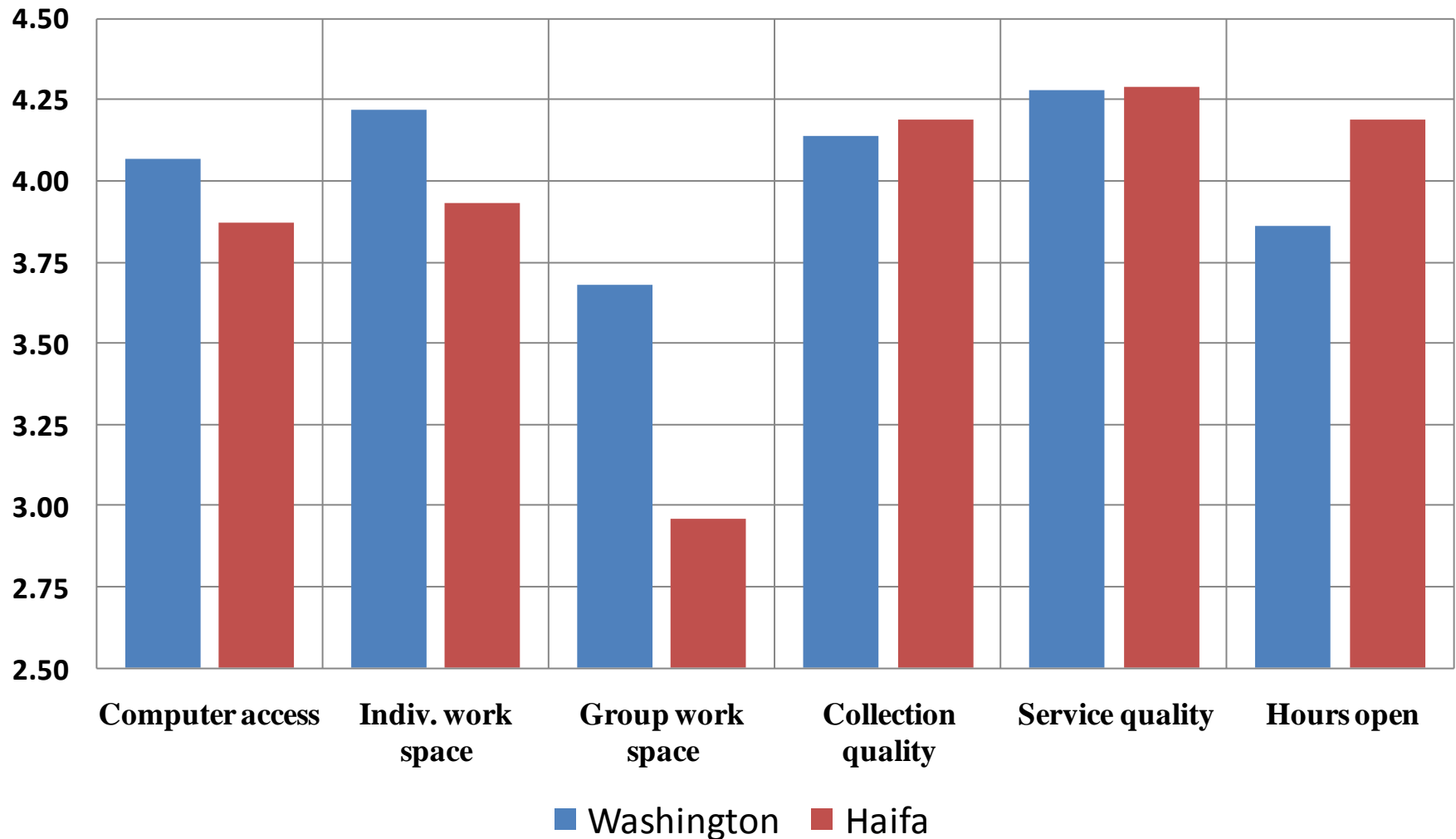


Compare Groups: Importance of On-Site Services for Haifa Undergraduates and Grad Students



How Would You Rate This Library on the Following ?

Scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent)



Comments by Category

Comment Type	Washington 50% of surveys with comments	Haifa 40% of surveys with comments
Facilities-related	43%	42%
Computer-related	23%	20%
Hours of opening	17%	7%
Collections (print & online)	5%	5%
Access services	3%	10%
Services	2%	4%
Other equipment	2%	
Signage	2%	8%
Staff	3%	4%

Comments Provide Context

Washington

What is so great about Suzzallo is that it is **so much quieter and less busy** than Undergrad. **I use the library mainly for studying** and I almost **always use online resources** because I'm **not sure where to find books** here. I'm sure staff here would help me, but I often rather use a **crappy article that "kinda works" from online** than go to the **hassle of finding a book in the library**.

Psychology undergraduate

Haifa

- My experience in the library is usually very good. The staff are very professional and always willing to help. The collection is excellent and so is the ILL service

English Language and Literature graduate

- Sometimes if I can't find material on my subject I give up

Arabic and French Literature undergraduate

Results Summary

Washington

- Confirmed long-term decline in use of print collections and mediated services
- Libraries are primarily work places for undergraduates
- Library computers still important but more bringing own computing devices
- Diversified and specialized spaces are important

Haifa

- Users viewed library positively
- Results confirmed the “library as place” for students to work, seek assistance, borrow books and photocopy articles
- Comments provided specific issues and concerns that library is addressing

Selected UW Actions

- Library renovation and refurbishment in high use libraries, especially undergraduate and health sciences
- Continue replacement and upgrade of library computers
- Close and consolidate libraries and service points
- Renovation proposals for more electrical outlets
- Provide more services online
- Better directional signage
- Reduce amount of stack space

Selected Haifa Actions

- Provide space for group work,
- Reduce noise levels from equipment, staff and other workers
- Add or relocate computers within the library to where they're needed
- Upgrade library computers
- Better signage for computers and electrical outlets
- Better assistance for users in the stacks through phones and student employees with identifying t-shirts

Conclusions

- The In-Library Use survey can capture information about physical library use and provide actionable data at reasonable cost and effort
- Local conditions and academic programs are important factors in use
- Use of multiple assessment methods provides best picture of library use, user needs, and importance