



Institute and Faculty of Actuaries

“400 Club” Feedback

1st Survey of 2013-14 Session

Library and Information Services

1. Introduction

During September 2013, the 400 Club Members were surveyed on the IFoA's Library and Information Services. Over the course of the next twelve months, the IFoA's offices in London and Edinburgh will be moving to new premises. This has provided an opportunity to consider how we provide a library service to our members and build this into the resources that we may offer from the new London and Edinburgh sites. In addition to new physical premises, a project is currently underway to re-design the IFoA's website and the feedback from this survey will also help to inform some elements of the digital library service that supports the IFoA's role as a Learned Society.

343 members of the 400 Club provided feedback, with around 25% of respondents based outside the UK. Around 30% of respondents are currently actuarial students.

2. Awareness of Current Services

2.1. Physical Library Facilities

The majority of 400 Club members have some awareness of the physical libraries in Edinburgh and London, with around 15% having actually visited one of the IFoA's libraries at some point in their career. The breakdown of all responses are shown in figure 1 below.

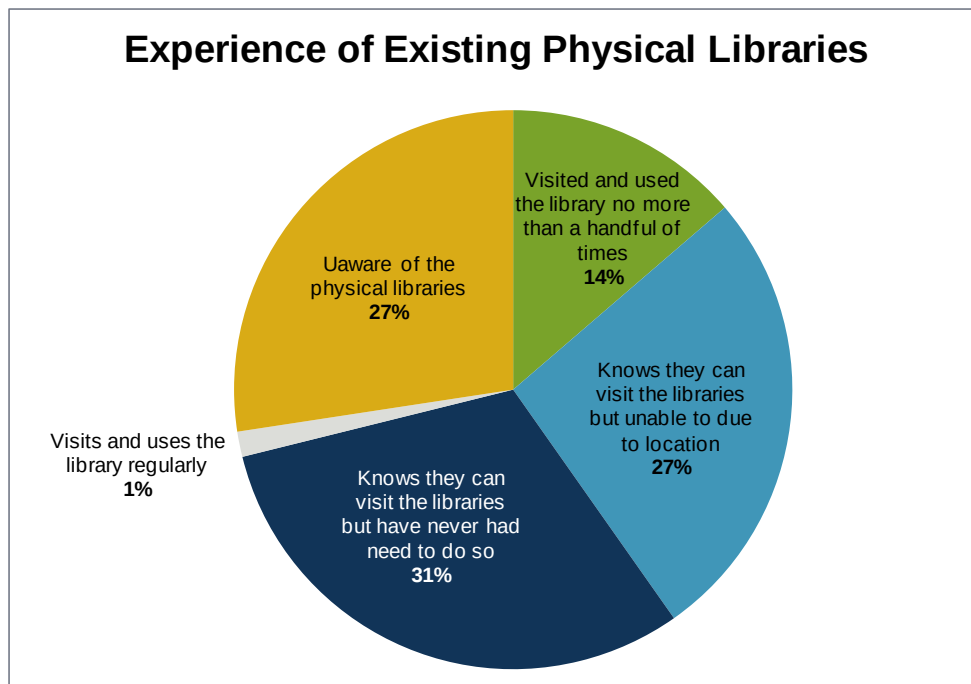


Figure 1: Respondents' use of the physical libraries in London and Edinburgh

Key points to note:

- As we would expect, a number of members know about the library but are unable to use the physical premises due to location – both from within the UK and internationally.
- A higher proportion (~30%) of UK based members are unaware of the physical libraries, compared to international members (~17%).
- The most common response was that there is an awareness of the libraries but that the respondents never had a need to visit the physical library space. Some of the feedback received in the comments and also in later questions suggest that this is because many members are really expecting a digital service, if at all.
- A number of respondents commented that just receiving this survey acted as a useful reminder to them that the IFoA has its two libraries, with others suggesting that we promote idea of this being a “club”.
- Many members commented that they had used the library space in the past and found it a useful resource to access.
- A couple of respondents requested that we consider setting up physical libraries in other parts of the world. An alternative suggestion put forward was that the IFoA consider linking up with other libraries/facilities (e.g. the British Council) around the world to provide something similar in different countries, not just restricted to London or Edinburgh.
- Some respondents also enquired whether there was any possibility of offering an evening service for the London library, increasing the number of study spaces and also making the library a dedicated study space for students.

Initial response to the 400 Club Members

- We will use the feedback to help shape the digital plans for the library service.
- Once the new libraries/resource centres have been established in the new London and Edinburgh sites, we will also seek to raise awareness of these services.
- We’ve taken on board the small number of comments that have been made about the IFoA opening additional libraries in other locations and also opening the existing libraries in the evenings. At the moment, the expected level of usage would make it difficult for the IFoA to justify taking this course of action. On our website, we currently offer a list of other libraries which our members may wish to access: <http://www.actuaries.org.uk/research-and-resources/pages/other-actuarial-libraries>. We will continue to review this list and explore any other facilities that could be a suitable alternative for some of our members.

2.2. Digital Resources

The Athens portal provides members with access to thousands of journals, articles and e-books (<http://www.actuaries.org.uk/research-and-resources/pages/online-resources-0>). Members can apply for free access from our library (libraries@actuaries.org.uk). 400 Club members were surveyed on their current level of awareness of the Athens portal and their responses are summarised in figure 2 below.

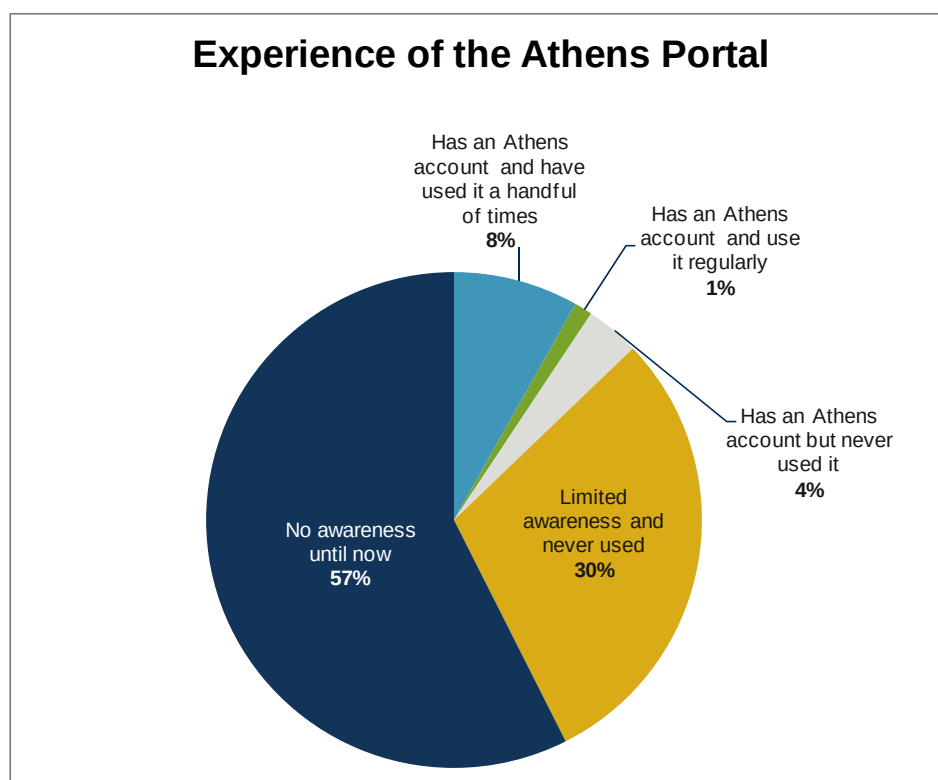


Figure 2: Awareness of the Athens portal

Key points to note:

- Overall awareness is quite low and broadly similar between Fellows and Students and there were a number of comments encouraging greater publicity of this service.
- Our international respondents have a slightly higher level of awareness compared to the UK respondents.
- We received a number of comments on the usability of Athens, including technology issues as well as the design of the Athens interface. In some cases, this discouraged a few people from using Athens. A couple of members indicated that they ended up looking at the online reading lists (see 2.3) as an alternative to Athens.
- We also received a more general comment about issuing a news alert or an *Actuary* magazine article on new issues of the *British Actuarial Journal* and *Annals of Actuarial Science*.

Initial response to the 400 Club Members

- From time to time, we place articles in *The Actuary* on the Athens portal and we will look at alternative ways of publicising this very valuable service, particularly through our research working parties.
- We will take into account the feedback on the usability of the technology as part of our plans for our digital service going forward.

2.3. Library Services

To assist our student members and members carrying out research, the IFoA's libraries provide reading lists on actuarial and related subjects; literature searches on specialist topics supplied on request; and learning portals for SA Exam Subjects to facilitate access to wider reading (eg <http://www.actuaries.org.uk/research-and-resources/pages/reading-lists>). Figure 3 illustrates the level of awareness that 400 Club members currently have of this service.

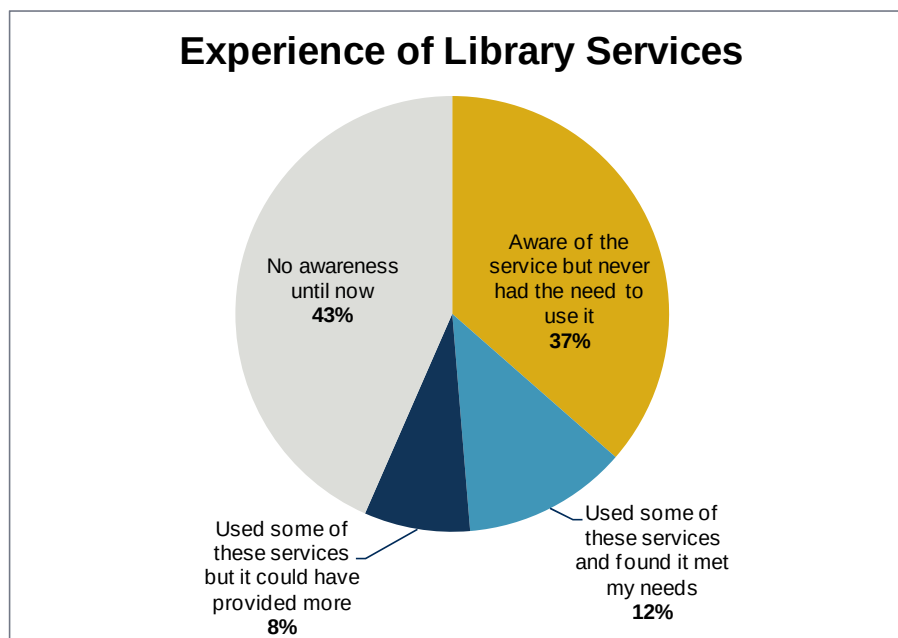


Figure 3: Awareness of Library Services (including reading lists and literature searches)

Key points to note:

- More than half of respondents are aware of these services. However, similar to the results under 2.1, many members feel they have not had the need to use the service anyway.
- Awareness is higher amongst Fellows compared to Students, although this could be a reflection of some students not quite being at the stage of the SA examinations.
- There was also an emphasis on this service being as digital as possible.

Initial response to the 400 Club Members

We will continue to review the relevance of this service and also seek to publicise it more as part of the library's overall service offering.

2.4. Enquiry Service

Members can make use of an enquiry service offered by the IFoA library. This service can include tracing and obtaining publications, tracing statistics and checking references. 400 Club members were surveyed on their awareness of this service and the results are summarised in figure 4 on the following page.

Key points to note:

- Awareness amongst members is quite low and regardless of geographical location or membership status.
- A couple of respondents commented that it was useful to be told about this service as they may use it for some working party research.
- Again, comments were received on trying to make this service as digital as possible.

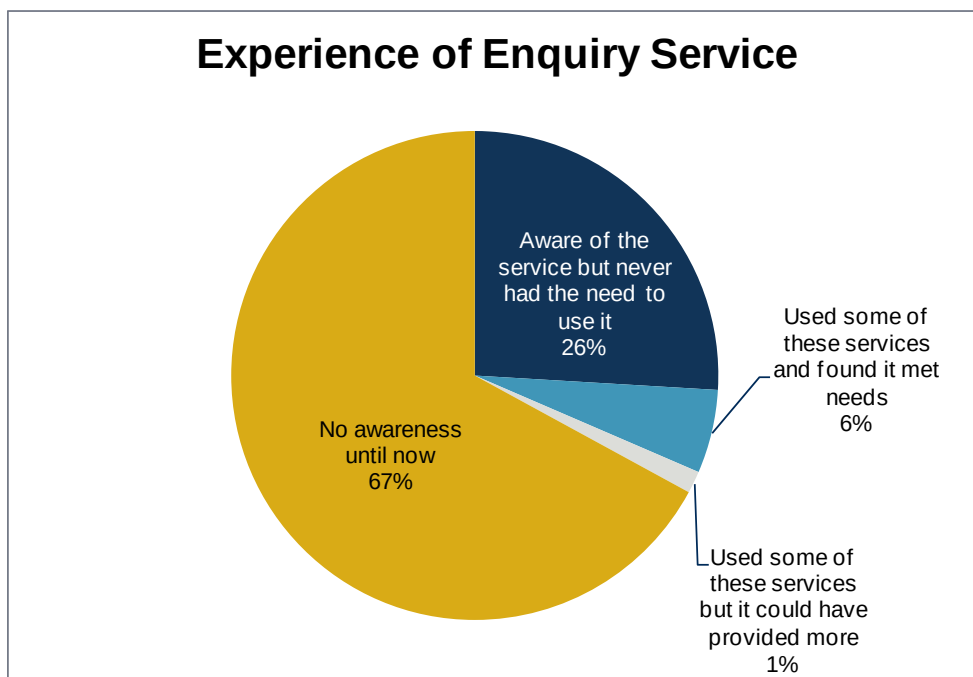


Figure 4: Awareness of Enquiry Service (including tracing publications, statistics, references)

Initial response to the 400 Club Members

- Information on items that can be sourced by users themselves can be found on our website: <http://www.actuaries.org.uk/research-and-resources/pages/how-trace-resources>
- This service is currently mentioned in our guidelines for new working parties and we will encourage working parties to utilise this service through the Executive staff who support the IFoA's working parties.
- We will also ensure that this service is publicised as part of the wider library offering.

3. Existing Sources of Information

As part of developing the service for members, the IFoA library was keen to understand where members currently access information for research and study purposes, with a view to ensuring that any future service can complement other sources. Figure 5 on the following page summaries the main sources (top 3) accessed by the 400 Club members.

Key points to note:

- The most common sources that stand out from the others are free internet resources, material from conferences and events and exchanging information with colleagues.
- Many members specifically referenced the IFoA website as a source of information.
- A number of respondents also mentioned proprietary information providers, such as Aries and Datamonitor.

Initial response to the 400 Club Members

This has provided the IFoA with some useful insight on where our members are currently accessing information. We will consider this picture as part of understanding our future digital strategy for the library, as well as the extent to which the IFoA's own conference papers are easily accessible through the IFoA website.

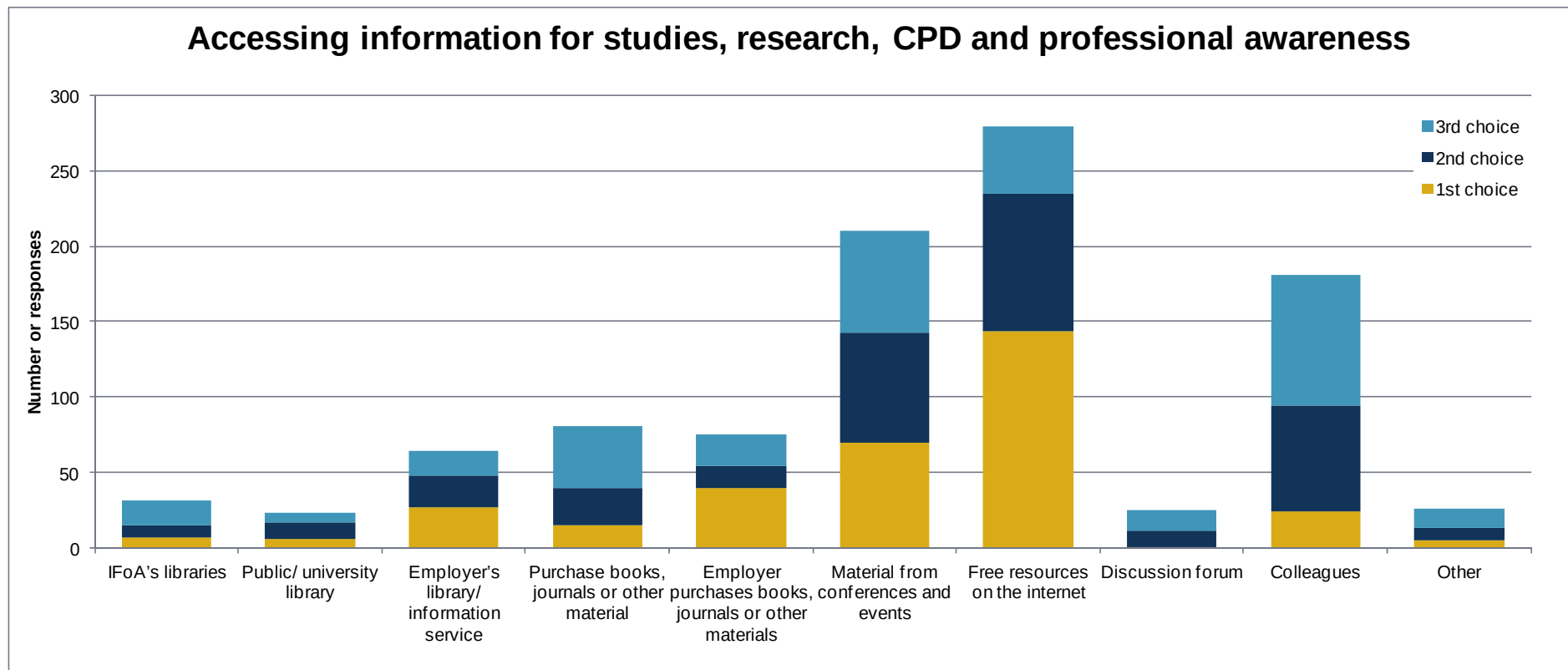


Figure 5: Existing sources of information for 400 Club Members

4. Feedback for the Future

4.1. Raising Awareness

Lack of awareness of the IFoA library has been a common theme across all aspects of its service, as evidenced under the previous sections. 400 Club members were asked how the IFoA should seek to raise its awareness.

The key findings from this part of the survey were:

- Across all regions and all membership categories, *The Actuary* magazine was the most common choice for doing this, as shown in figure 6 on the following page. This is also consistent with feedback received from the 400 Club last year on Research and Thought Leadership, where *The Actuary* was the channel of choice for research dissemination.
- Feedback also suggests that the eNewsletters would be a key way to raise awareness, although a number of members did comment on there already being a high number of e-mails from the IFoA.
- The IFoA website was also mentioned by a number of members as a key way to raise awareness, with feedback that the current library section on the website is not easy to find and that it should be on the front page of the IFoA website.
- Other suggestions included:
 - o a video on the website explaining how to use the library services
 - o introducing the library services as part of the professionalism courses, as well as alerting employers' CPD coordinators
 - o presentations to new students and at universities
 - o using social media

Initial response to the 400 Club Members

- We will continue to use *The Actuary* as one communication channel for the library service of the IFoA and also explore some of the other useful suggestions put forward.
- Using the CPD coordinators is a useful suggestion and we will seek to include something about this in a future CPD coordinators' newsletter.
- Since this 400 Club survey, the IFoA issued its first Research and Knowledge eNewsletter. This not only provides readers with an opportunity to find out about the IFoA's recent research activities but also provides an outlet for the vast knowledge base in the library. If you would like to subscribe to future editions, please e-mail research@actuaries.org.uk

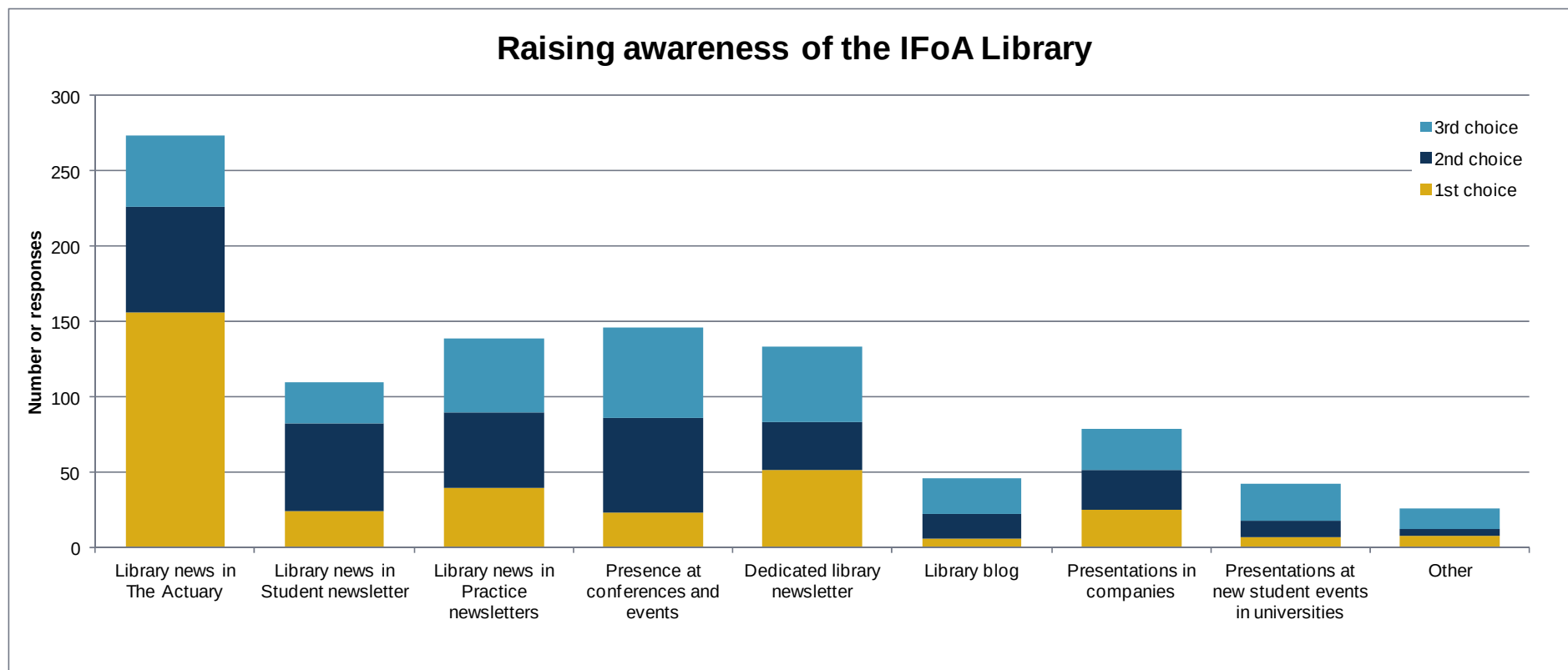


Figure 6: Preferred channels for raising awareness of the services offered by the IFoA library

4.2. Service Offering

To shape the IFoA's thinking on the future of the IFoA's library services, members were asked to provide their top three suggestions for what they would value the most. Responses are summarised in figure 7 on the following page. There is a heavy preference for digital resources, particularly online access to the IFoA's own research, online journals and e-books. Some of the more traditional "physical" library services are less favoured, with some of the comments actively discouraging anything onsite. Additional comments also included subject-specific suggestions.

Initial response to the 400 Club Members

The feedback heavily supports the need to make our service as digital as possible and we will ensure that this is taken into account as we shape the future offering from the library.

4.3. Additional comments and general observations

Members included a number of useful suggestions and observations in their responses. A number of themes emerged as part of this and we will consider how to take these forward as part of our planning for the future library service and member lounge areas in London and Edinburgh:

- **Digital:** While a small number of respondents requested that we consider setting up additional physical library facilities in other parts of the world, the over-riding message from most respondents (UK and international) was to be as digital and as online as possible. There is also a strong appetite for e-books as well as being able to access material on different devices.
- **Visibility:** Ease of access to the online services and visibility on the IFoA's website was also mentioned by a number of respondents.
- **Promotion:** Many respondents commented that this survey has brought to their attention the existence of many useful services at the library and that awareness needs to be raised amongst members.
- **Research:** A number of respondents suggested that the library should be providing access and alerts to research from outside the IFoA. In terms of helping members carry out their own research, some members referenced the need to have access to the right material through the library.
- **Timeliness:** Content needs to be kept up to date, particularly for technical content.
- **Content:** Suggestions for content also included free access to the core reading for Fellows, a dedicated catalogue of the main bodies of work in actuarial science, providing updates on industry news.
- **Relationships:** Using a key contact in employers (for example, CPD coordinators) to highlight the library services and how their actuaries can benefit from these services. Liaising with other bodies overseas for literature that might be relevant to the global membership base.

We also received feedback on additional support for examinations, such as discussion forums and tutorials for students. This feedback will be passed on to the IFoA's Education Directorate for consideration as some of these services will already be offered through ActEd. There was also feedback on whether it is possible to purchase study notes and calculators from the library. This can already be done through the IFoA's online eShop (<http://www.actuaries.org.uk/research-and-resources/eshop>).

One respondent also enquired whether WiFi could be provided on-site. Staple Inn and Maclaurin House currently provide WiFi for members who are visiting the sites and this will continue at the new sites. The reception staff at all IFoA sites can advise on the access code required when members visit our offices.

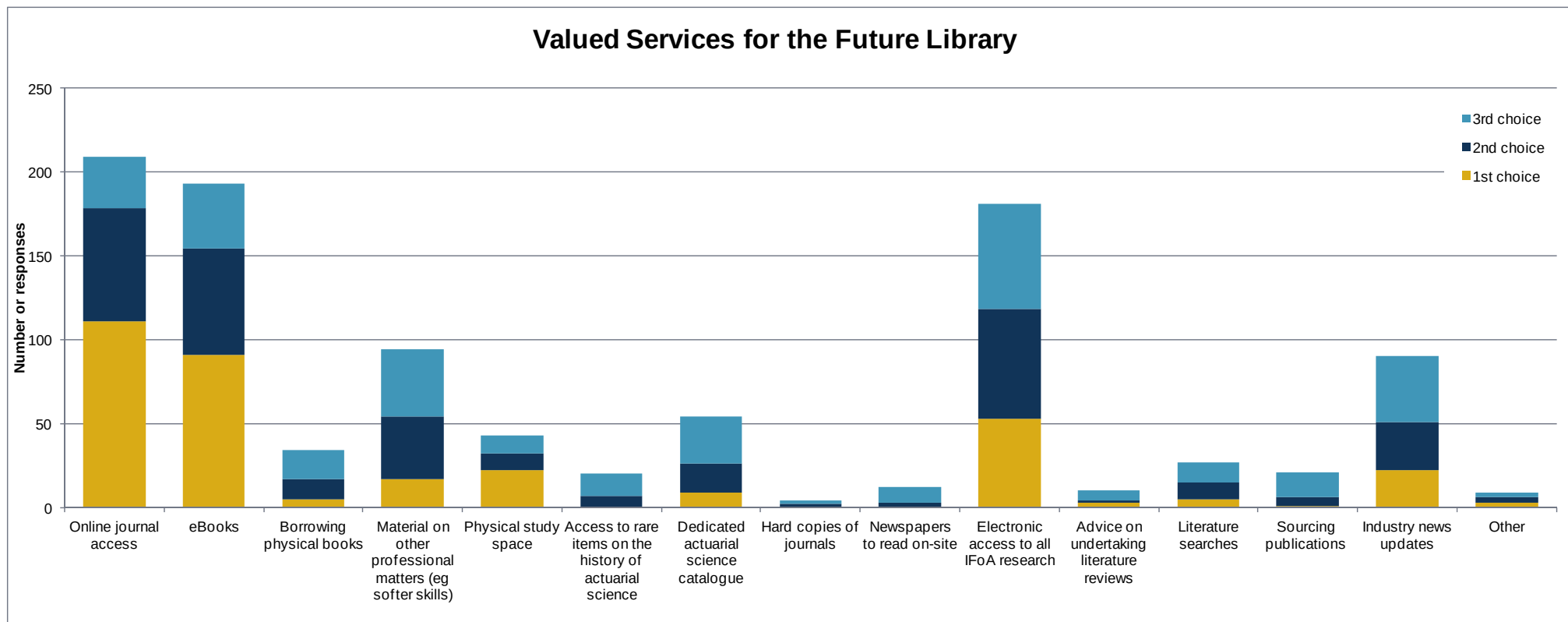


Figure 7: 400 Club member preferences for future library services

5. Conclusion

Overall, the feedback from the 400 Club members has helped to validate the direction the IFoA library is taking in making its service as digital as possible and available to all members regardless of location. Many of the comments from members have given us some useful ideas for the new IFoA website development and the physical library space in London and Edinburgh. We are extremely grateful to members for taking the time to provide the feedback. We look forward to bringing some of these ideas to life over the next couple of years and hope many of you will use our service.

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